

**SOCIAL WORK IN HIGHER EDUCATION:
DEMISE OR DEVELOPMENT?**

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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ABSTRACT

A prolonged period of Conservative government in Britain (1979-1997) has resulted in profound changes in the nature of social welfare, including education. One of the characteristics of this period has been a decrease in the status and autonomy accorded to professions; and a change in the relationship between 'the providers' and 'the consumers' of services. More specifically, the years from 1989 to the mid nineties have been marked by rapid legislative and organisational change in the personal social services. They have also seen significant change in the institutional policies and culture of higher education.

Changes in both these sectors have impacted on the arrangements for the education of social workers, responsibility for which is shared between the professional accrediting body, employing agencies and higher education institutions. The starting point for this research was a recognition that, in line with other moves promoting deprofessionalisation and instrumentalism, qualifying training might be relocated outside the higher education system.

An initial question, 'can social work survive in higher education?', prompted an exploration of the external influences and internal characteristics which have resulted in this sense of vulnerability. The research utilised interdisciplinary perspectives, grounded in a policy framework, and an inductive approach to collection of empirical data, to examine the view that social work education is open to conflicting policies and values from higher education and the professional field. The possibility that the subject would share similarities with other forms of professional education was also examined.

The thesis therefore presents a case study of the epistemology and relationships of a particular form of professional education. Consideration of the literature pertaining to the three contextual factors, social work, higher education and professional education, and of the empirical data derived from social work educators support the concluding argument. This posits that biography, culture and structure interact to produce a discipline with inherent tensions, partly due to its position on a boundary between two systems and partly reflecting the nature of the subject. While its location within higher education is deemed appropriate by social work educators, decisions about its location and form are largely exercised by other interest groups: its survival and development therefore require constant negotiation.

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PART ONE

Setting the Scene:

Policy Change and Professional Education

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the current state and prospects of education for social work in England and Wales, in the context of radical policy change affecting expectations of the personal social services, higher education and the professions. These changes date mainly from the accession to power of a conservative government in 1979, marking a sea change in ideology and policy paradigms, not least those affecting the public and welfare sectors. The changes gathered force and momentum with ensuing electoral victories (until 1997), and the rate of change has been at least as significant as its direction, in its impact on the providers and users of a range of services (Sullivan,1994). Established assumptions about the nature of the welfare state, the remit of higher education and the power of professionals have all been challenged and organisation and practice have been changed by political, legislative and fiscal means, within a broader reshaping of the economic and social structure of the country (Pollitt,1990; Burrage and Torstendahl,1990; Becher and Kogan,1992; Clarke et al,1994; Barnett,1994).

Origins, Aims And Parameters Of The Research

The recent changes in the fields of social welfare and higher education, together with the introduction since 1989 of a new qualifying award for social work, led to a sense in the early nineties of significant strain and even threat to the viability of social work as a subject area in higher education (for instance, see Cooper, 1992; Pinker, 1993). Significant changes in the roles and responsibilities of social work educators mirrored wider calls for accountability throughout the public sector, evident in challenges to 'professional discretion' in social services and 'academic freedom' in higher education. The new Diploma in Social Work (hereafter DipSW) was subject to requirements concerning partnership arrangements, content and outcomes, which marked a shift in power from higher education to the professional field. Such changes were taking place in the context of institutional change, aimed, not least, at addressing issues of resourcing.

It was against this background that the researcher identified the subject area as marginal in relation to the professional field of social work but also vulnerable in its institutional context, and posed the fundamental question, 'Can social work survive in higher education?'. This led to the articulation of further questions: 'why is social work education so vulnerable?'; 'is social work different from other forms of professional education and if so how'; 'how far is the current sense of crisis shaped by external forces or by innate internal characteristics'; 'what role do social work educators play in defining or developing, or even problematising the subject?'; 'how have recent

changes been experienced by social work educators and how do they view the subject and its future?'.

These questions, in part, reflected wider and long-standing concerns about the nature and status of professional subjects in higher education. For instance, a decade earlier Schon (1983) in the USA had written about 'the crisis in professional education'. In the British context, Becher (1989) had suggested a lack of research into the nature of professional subjects, as distinct from traditional academic disciplines, and his focus on the epistemology and culture of disciplines provided a useful starting point in beginning to theorise about the form an enquiry might take. There has also been a growing body of literature about both professional education (for example, Eraut, 1985; Schon, 1987; Eraut, 1996) and the specific subject (including Harris et al, 1985; Yelloly and Henkel, 1995; Gould and Taylor, 1996) and these have been drawn on, alongside policy texts, in developing further the theoretical framework for the research design and analysis.

Similarly the concern with 'survival' was apparently not unique. Becher's study (1989) concluded with a plea for mutual understanding between disciplines and recognition of the need to make common cause (in the face of external threats), evoking the analogy of groups of academics as tribes facing colonisation or even extinction. Additionally, Bines and Watson (1992) identified shared concerns among different forms of professional education (notwithstanding their varied histories and current manifestations) and urged co-operation in the face of many pressures.

Meanwhile, higher education itself was undergoing significant change in its scale, scope, resourcing and organisation alongside challenges to its autonomy and very purpose (Barnett, 1994; Schuller, 1995). The researcher's questions arose, therefore, in a broader climate of perceived threat to values, assumptions and methods in higher education. However, given the broad range of the above questions, and the implications for a research design, it was necessary to develop a more focused approach. The primary aim of the research was identified therefore as 'to explore the extent and impact of recent changes in social work education, as experienced by educators themselves; and to elicit their views on the current nature of the subject, with a view to identifying the characteristics which make it viable or vulnerable in the higher education setting'.

It was also hypothesised that the nature of the subject is significantly affected by policy changes impacting on both its professional field - social work - and its institutional context - higher education. Material derived from a literature review provided the basis for a wider consideration of the relationships between the subject and these 'external' factors. The relationship between the

subject and the generic field of professional education afforded a third perspective, and consideration of this literature brought into sharp focus questions about the nature of knowledge and competing paradigms, including in relation to the research process itself.

The professional field of *Social work* has been the object of various exercises to clarify its scope. A comparative perspective shows that the way societies 'define' the area, and the organisation and roles of social workers, varies considerably. A 'global definition offered recently by a joint working party of the United Nations and International Federation of Social Workers provides a useful starting point: 'Social work originates variously from humanitarian and democratic ideals. It focuses on meeting human needs and developing human potential and resources. Social work is a profession whose purpose is to bring about social changes in society in general and in its individual forms of development' (Centre for Human Rights, 1994:4).

The mandate and resources available to social workers are often contentious, and its boundaries disputed, and this has been particularly the case in Britain since the late seventies (Howe, 1986; Henkel, 1984). Chapter 3 provides an overview of some of the recent developments and issues in the British field: these obviously have implications for the form and content of the associated education and training programme which are addressed at various points in this thesis. In general, the term social work education is used to distinguish the subject area from its professional field, but the shorter form (social work) is used to denote the subject when the context is obviously higher education.

Higher Education in Britain now largely consists of the university sector, open to a recently increased proportion of young people (18 plus) and mature entrants (25 years and over). 'Massification', with concomitant budgetary and pedagogical implications, has been one of the significant features of the period during which this research was undertaken. A related feature has been the increase in measures to promote accountability and conformity with wider socio-economic goals, evident since the early eighties, and particularly in the nineties (Kogan and Kogan, 1983; Tight, 1988; Becher and Kogan, 1992). The major aspects of policy change in this field is reviewed in Chapter 4.

A particular change in 1992 was the granting of university status to institutions previously designated as polytechnics, with some accompanying recognition of the differing assumptions and practices of the 'old' and the 'new' university sectors. The history of the development of social

work education has connections with the changing institutional context, and the implications of institutional location are evident in some of the findings of this research.

Professional education is here taken to mean the acquisition through education and training, in the university sector and/or at post-graduate level, of prescribed knowledge and skills, with concomitant development of values and ethics, to secure entry to a given occupational group. This immediately raises questions about distinctions to be made between education and training which are discussed later. A fuller analysis of this basic definition and of issues common to professional education follows in Chapter 5.

However, initial consideration suggests a tenuous position for British social work in the field of professional education, both because of the relatively low level and short length of most qualifying courses; and also in view of suggestions that social work training might more appropriately be carried out by employing agencies (than from an academic base). The way in which social work education demonstrates characteristics common to professional education constitutes a third perspective used in the analysis of the research data.

Research Design And Methodology

The research was designed as an exploratory case study, that is, its focus would be on a particular subject, but its findings might have relevance to the wider field of professional education (Yin, 1989). The research approach would be inductive and interpretive, rather than positivist (Gilbert, 1993). Initial thinking had suggested a policy analysis approach, tracing the actions of varied interest groups through the use of secondary data and interviews with key players (Barrett and Fudge, 1981; Rein, 1983; Majchrzak, 1984). However, a narrowing of the focus to the perceptions of social work educators led to the use of survey and interview methods, as well as more limited documentary analysis.

Since the number of higher education institutions (hereafter, HEIs) offering social work courses is limited, and easily identifiable, it was possible to circulate postal questionnaires to all individuals with responsibility for the subject area. Additionally, a small number of senior people could be identified (through their writing or other activities concerned with development of the subject) who would reflect a range of experience and interests within the area, and whose views were sought through interviews. Records of an organisation representing social work educators provided the third source of data.

With regard to the time frame, the focus was specifically on change and characteristics in the 90s, with only limited reference to the situation prior to 1989, although the literature and documentary sources were important in illuminating relevant earlier developments. The survey was carried out in summer 1994, and the interviews two years later. This gap proved useful in that interviewees provided evidence of responses to further changes required in relation to the DipSW (effective from Autumn 1994); of a change in 'mood'; and of current and potential developments.

The role of the researcher, as also a social work educator and thus an 'actor' in the situation (Becker, 1958; Taylor, 1993), has influenced the formulation of research questions and aims, the conduct of the data collection stage and data analysis, and the resulting thesis. The advantages and disadvantages of such a position are discussed later, but it is acknowledged that underlying assumptions originated from a 'value- interested' rather than 'value- neutral' position, (Rein, 1983): examples and consequences of this have been made explicit, as far as possible.

It is clear that a focus on an internalist view, that is, of social work educators themselves, excludes the voices of other parties who have a legitimate interest in, and probably more power over, the nature and future of education for social work. There are clearly many factors which impinge on developments in the subject area - and the question of its continued location in higher education, and these are only indicated through the literature review. Another possible limitation of this study is the lack of a comparative perspective.

The research could have been differently designed to include the views of members of an additional interest group (for instance, representatives of the professional validating body, or of the employers); or to make direct comparisons between social work and one or more other forms of professional education; or to include more direct analysis of the position of British social work education, relative to its counterparts in other parts of Europe or the world. Any one of these perspectives would have taken the research in a different direction, and might have led to different conclusions. They are certainly avenues for further research.

Structure Of The Thesis And Contribution To Knowledge

This thesis is presented in three parts. Part I aims to provide both a theoretical and contextual basis for consideration of the data, which are presented with some commentary in Part II. Part III aims to relate material derived from the data back to the wider frame of reference, as identified in

the first section, and to extend the analysis by suggesting a way of understanding the nature of social work education through consideration of the influence and the interplay of particular forces.

The idea of triangular relationships has assumed increasing importance as the thesis has progressed. Chapter 2 reviews the history of social work in higher education in the UK: field placements were an essential component from the start, establishing the basic or micro triangular relationship of student, tutor, and practice teacher. This is echoed in macro terms by the relationship between the subject, its professional field and the higher education system, evident in different ways in all forms of professional education.

In the case of social work, a middle level of triangular relationships has been formalised since 1971, with the professional accrediting body, the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (hereafter CCETSW), operating as a quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation between academe and the field. The particular role of CCETSW, together with evidence of increasing government intervention, is an important theme of Chapter 2, which also charts the shifting balance between HEIs and employing agencies. The characteristics, concerns and policies of these forces, the profession and higher education, are discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, respectively, and implications of these systems for the form and future of the subject are a recurring theme in Parts 2 and 3.

The third perspective utilised in this thesis constitutes the literature about the generic field of professional education, including debates about the nature and validity of different forms of knowledge, discussed in Chapter 5. Overall, Part 1, including Chapter 6 about research design and methodology, provides an interdisciplinary framework within which the particular characteristics of social work education can be considered.

Part 2, (chapters 6 to 12) presents data on a range of issues which the researcher considered relevant to developing a fuller understanding of the nature of the subject (as perceived by social work educators), and aimed at identifying possible reasons for the apparent marginality and vulnerability of the subject. Thus, characteristics related to organisational location of the subject; its boundaries and alliances; the range and level of activities; curricula and pedagogy; research; identity of educators; resourcing; specific changes; and 'strengths and weaknesses' are identified, and their implications for possible future developments are considered. Where possible, the empirical data are augmented by literature from the social work field, but the relative absence of

material relating to some aspects regarded as significant by the researcher, suggests that there is continuing scope for research and theorising in relation to the subject.

Part 3 draws out the main issues from the preceding section and adopts again a three fold framework for analysis and relocation in the wider frame. The factors identified as significant in advancing understanding relate to biography, culture and structures. These in turn may be seen as closely related to professional origins (Chapter 13), particular features of professional education (Chapter 14), and the institutional contexts and policies within which the subject operates (Chapter 15). Diagrammatic representation of the theme, 'working in triangles', showing the different levels at which triangular relationships are in evidence, is contained in Appendix 1. The tensions inherent in the position of social work at the intersection of two separate 'triangles' is further explored in the concluding discussion.

A recurring theme throughout the thesis is the concept of power (Lukes, 1974). This is a relatively overt factor in shaping the relationships which govern the content and direction of the subject. However, it also has salience in considering the status of its epistemology and research paradigms. Moreover, a recognition of the existence of latent power assists in appreciating the relative invisibility of some factors related to biography and culture.

The use of a tripartite approach to analysis is not original: it has been used by others whose writing has been relevant to this research, including Clark's discussion (1983) of the state, the market and professions, and, more recently, Barnett's analysis (1994) of the relationship between society, knowledge and higher education. However, its current use in this thesis, together with the original empirical data, is intended to contribute to factual knowledge about an under-researched subject, social work; and to extending understanding about the nature of professional subjects and the relationship between them and the interacting forces within and outwith institutions.

CHAPTER 2:

SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION: DEVELOPMENT, ISSUES AND LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of policy developments and change in British social work education, illustrating the background to this research. It also provides a theoretical basis for the origins and focus of this thesis through a review of the literature. The chronological account of developments draws primarily on academic texts, though with occasional references to government reports, CCETSW documents and news items in the social work and higher education press.

Since the focus of the study is on social work education in England and Wales, and threats to its continued location in higher education in the 1990s, the origins of social work education are dealt with relatively briefly. However, a historical perspective gives evidence of early and periodic concern about the nature and status of the subject area and its place in the academy. The chapter then looks at events and debates in the 1970s and 1980s which formed a more immediate background to developments in the 1990s. These are discussed in some detail since they informed the research question and have influenced the progress and outcomes of the research.

There is a lack of material about British social work education as opposed to texts about the nature or aspects of the wider field of social work. There have been some notable exceptions (for example, Jones, 1978; Harris et al, 1985) and a relative flood of edited collections towards the end of the period during which this research was taking place (Yelloly and Henkel, 1995; Doel and Shardlow, 1996; Ford and Hayes, 1996; Gould and Taylor, 1996; Jackson and Preston-Shoot, 1996; Vass, 1996). While a cynic might see the pressure to publish prior to a research assessment exercise (1996) affecting social work educators no less than on other academics, the texts reflect a growing concern about the state of the subject area, although levels of analysis vary considerably.

Less detailed but discussions of British social work education can be found in books about comparative social work (Jones, 1992; Lorenz, 1994); in edited texts about the state of (British) social work (Parsloe, 1990; Timms, 1991; Jones, 1996a; Webb, 1996); in texts about other or wider subjects (Clark, 1991; Henkel, 1994); and occasionally in articles in journals in related fields (Cannan, 1995). An analysis of the two British journals ostensibly concerned with social work education (*Issues in Social Work Education*, *Social Work Education*) revealed relatively few

articles dealing holistically with social work education with some notable exceptions (Brewster, 1992; Cooper, 1992). However, this exercise gave useful insights into the importance attached by educators themselves to particular aspects of the social work education process.

Finally, the leading journal in the professional field, *British Journal of Social Work*, has carried very few articles in the 1990s about social work education with a recent important exception (Clark, 1995) although there is an annual presentation of (three or four) abstracts relating to the subject. In the wider field, recent editions of *Research in Higher Education Abstracts* reveal virtually no references to social work education with the exception of Henkel's contribution (1994) to a text about professional education; and a case study on teaching about gender in social work education (Reynolds, 1994). The implication - that there is either very little research being undertaken about social work education (see Chapter 9), or that publication of material relating to the subject area is largely confined to social work journals (which are not covered by the abstracting service) - or both - is one of the issues explored further in the context of this research.

The chapter concludes with a summary of some of the main issues identified. These include the recurring experience of conflict, crises and marginality; concerns about the theoretical and research base of the subject and its relation to practice; and about resourcing, 'ownership' and direction of the subject area. The implications of a female majority in the workforce and of the particular value position, as proclaimed by the regulatory body since 1989, are also raised in this overview.

Origins And The First Half-Century:

The identification and investigation of a variety of social problems in 19th century Britain led to a range of policy measures and practical responses incorporated into organisational frameworks (Walton, 1975; Parry and Parry, 1979; Jones, 1983). The establishment of social work education in the early 20th century can be seen as evidence of a growing sense of vocational identity among philanthropists and social reformers and a concern to provide 'professional' as opposed to amateur standards of intervention, - the initiation of the 'professional project' (Macdonald, 1995).

As early as 1896 a scheme of lectures on social work had been established for its volunteers by the Charity Organisation Society (COS). This organisation participated in foundation of a School of Sociology and Social Economics in London (1903) and a School of Social Science at Liverpool University, both offering opportunities for practical work as well as courses. Smith (1965)

describes how these schools provided a general training for social workers, 'not to be confused with special vocational training for a particular job' (Smith, 1965:54). Despite satisfactory operation over a ten year period, the School of Sociology experienced financial problems. It was taken over in 1912 by LSE and became part of a new Department of Social Science and Administration. Other courses were also established at around this time, for example, at Barnett House, Oxford, and Bedford College, London, the latter continuing a more sociological tradition than was now represented in the LSE course (an interdisciplinary rivalry which has continued throughout this century).

Courses at this time offered teaching in college on a range of 'academic' and 'professional' subjects (origins of status differences between social science academics and social work educators) and students spent an equivalent length of time in practical work (Smith, 1965). Thus, issues concerned with funding; the relationships between college-based learning and practice; and academic as opposed to professional knowledge were already on the agenda of social work education. More broadly, the subject area was already a site of conflict over the role of the state in welfare provision, (under discussion by the Royal Commission on the Poor Law), with implications for the role of welfare professionals (Jones, 1979:77).

Jones contends that early social work development laid a basis for a form of social work concerned to 'socialise its clients into appropriate social habits ... (and to reach) ... the common goal of maintaining and reproducing a reliable working class' (Jones, 1979: 75). It was also significantly based on the medical model, and notwithstanding the Settlement movement (Parry and Parry, 1979), social work education promoted a highly individualised form of social work which has persisted with only occasional challenges in the UK, and is widespread elsewhere (Suin de Boutemard, 1990).

Lorenz has identified the different ideological positions which informed the development of social work education in a number of European countries (Lorenz, 1994). Christian, philanthropic and feminist ideals all played a part in shaping the early course aims and content though socialist influences were perhaps less in evidence, with the exception of the course established at Ruskin College, Oxford. However, socialist ideals have periodically motivated some social work educators and had particular relevance to a more recent stage of development, discussed later in this chapter.

Three of the texts discussing historical beginnings (Smith 1965, Jones 1979 and Lorenz 1994) have illustrated, what Lorenz has described as, the need for social work education to 'grapple with the dialectic tension between, on the one hand, preparing (students) for very specific tasks and duties within given organisational parameters, and, on the other hand, relativising and questioning these organisational constraints from the transcending positions of ethics and fundamental views on the nature of society and human behaviour' (Lorenz, 1994:40). The education/training dichotomy, which played an important part in the earliest stages of social work education, has continued to be a major concern to a range of interest groups, not least social work educators, and is central to the current crisis and this thesis.

The inter-war years were noted by Jones (1979:72) as being 'a period of relative quiescence' in social work education, notwithstanding the social changes and economic problems of the time. This raises (again) the issue of relevance to the social concerns of the day. However, just as wider welfare policies were characterised by 'administrative responses', the organisation of social work continued through establishment of professional organisations. These approved a slowly growing number of training opportunities, that is, the professional project proceeded.

Social work education continued to be fragmented (reflecting organisational and professional divisions): the Institute of Almoners approved courses training people for social work in hospitals, while the Home Office approved courses initially in the Probation and subsequently Child Care fields. From the outset it was mainly women who took advantage of training opportunities and who predominated in the more overtly 'care' roles (in hospitals, schools and a few clinical settings), while significant numbers of (largely untrained) men worked in the 'control' areas (Probation, Mental Welfare, NSPCC), mirroring domestic roles and Victorian norms (Walton, 1975). The implications of gender of both staff and students in social work education, as well as of the wider workforce, is also further explored in this thesis.

The inter-war years saw the beginning of a form of social work research distinct from the important and well known social surveys (e.g. by Booth and Rowntree) which had informed earlier developments (Pinker, 1971). A ten-year study of social casework (1924-34), was summarised in an unpublished paper 'Social Casework in Action' by an LSE lecturer, Clement Brown (Walton, 1975). Although the precursor to a more flourishing period of (published) case studies in the 50s and 60s, its non-publication at the time raises questions, about social work academics' credibility and confidence - another area for exploration in this study.

The Late 1940s To 1969:

Jones identified a period of 'gradual but increasing ascendancy (in social work) in the post 1945 period' (Jones, 1979:72), related to significant changes in philosophy and policy regarding state welfare provision (Glennister, 1995), and reflected in social work education. In fact, Jones' publication in 1979, marked the very point at which this development could be said to have been reversed. The path of social work education, even in these expansionist days of welfare and professional enterprises, was not smooth. Jones mentions cryptically, that during the fifties 'social work successfully fought to keep its courses in the university sector, *despite the opposition from many social studies departments*' (Jones, 1979:78, authors italics), presaging one aspect of the insecurity currently being experienced by some courses.

Social work education at that time did have an influential advocate in Eileen Younghusband, who noted that 'the removal of social work education from the university sector would lower the standards and status of courses' (Younghusband, 1951:172). More recently, in a table depicting factors in the development of social work as an occupation, Payne (1991:13) highlighted the impact of developments in social sciences and the growth in academic social research in the 50s and 60s.

Younghusband subsequently contributed significantly to the further development of social work education through a report, commonly named after her (1959). This laid the basis for a move to a generic approach to training (pioneered at LSE in 1954) and also to the expansion of social work education, including at non-graduate level in the 1960s. This latter development coincided with the establishment of the polytechnic sector and a general expansion in higher education (see chapter 4) as well as growth in the personal social services (see chapter 3). However, with hindsight, this development may have been the precursor of a shift from post-graduate to non-graduate courses which subsequently became the norm. It also marked the first paradigm shift from specialisation to generalism, in education as well as practice, another issue of periodic concern to educators.

It is arguable that the academic disfavour towards social work education in the 1950s was related to its general adoption of perspectives derived from psychiatry, psychology and psychoanalysis, in tune with the emphasis then placed on family stability after the upheavals of war (Bowlby, 1951), but ignoring wider societal factors; and to the prevalence of individual case studies as a means of analysing and communicating ideas about social work practice. This trend, which continued into

the sixties, formed the basis of a relatively secure form of professionalism but would have been at variance with the positivistic approach of social sciences and their own efforts to establish academic credibility.

During the 1960s the psychodynamic approach became 'naturalised' (Payne, 1991). Structural analysis and the teaching of theory or skills relevant to intervention in community development or at policy level received less attention. While the 'rediscovery of poverty' was spearheaded by social scientists (notably at LSE) in the mid-sixties (Abel Smith and Townsend, 1965), it was not until the 1970s that social work courses became more influenced by sociological and policy perspectives and began to develop radical critiques of social work. From 1970 the differently informed and 'irreverent' Case Con (which produced 25 copies up to 1977, Langan, 1993:59), challenged the prevailing orthodoxy; and social work education itself became more heterogeneous.

This delayed response to changing circumstances contributes to a criticism made of social workers more recently, in a period of anxieties about child abuse - that they fail to use research findings and to adapt their organisation and practice. Thus, social work educators have periodically demonstrated a lack of timely attention to wider research and analysis, and have been criticised for failure to produce social workers equipped to deal with 'new' problems. Their belated adoption of 'new' knowledge and perspectives then puts them out of step with the demands and opportunities of the field, public and government attitudes, and the possible contributions of related subjects. The dangers of an introverted and 'precious' approach to social work education or, conversely, of over-confident assumption of the role of critics and conscience of society are examined later.

The 1970s:

The period 1970-71 marked an important point in the unification of British social work and an apparent strengthening of its role and identity. Along with the establishment of local authority Social Service Departments (SSDs) following the Seebohm Report (1968), the main professional associations (with the exception of the National Association of Probation Officers, NAPO), formed the British Association of Social Workers (BASW). Additionally, the government strengthened the regulation of social work education through the establishment of the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW). This body was a QUANGO charged with promoting the growth, rationalisation and standardisation of social work education. It replaced a smaller body, the Council for Training in Social Work established by legislation in 1962. The legislation was amended in 1971 to give the new council extended powers, and again in

1983 when the size of the council was significantly reduced and became less representative of the profession and more subject to government influence, a trend continued into the nineties.

A new professional qualification, the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (CQSW) was established replacing earlier awards and providing generic training, building on earlier experience and related to the changed external context of social work practice. SSDs had quickly become the major employers of social workers and had developed generic teams rather than perpetuating old divisions related to client groups. Social work education was unique in offering a professional qualification at any one of four academic levels - non graduate (two years); undergraduate (usually as part of a four year degree in social science or sociology); postgraduate diploma (1 year) or masters level (two years). This ensured the possibility of entry to the profession by a wide range of applicants. It could also be interpreted as the avoidance of conflict with established educational interests (since most post graduate courses were offered in the university sector) by a body whose powers were yet to be tested, in a period which generally demonstrated a consensus rather than a conflict approach to policy change.

The four academic levels may also suggest a degree of uncertainty about the academic status (and hence appropriate level) of the subject. The shift which occurred then to a preponderance of non graduate courses (about 50%) might also be seen as evidence of a degree of anti-intellectualism within the social work profession (Jones, 1996a), as well as scepticism about its academic credentials within academe. However, Jones had previously noted that a relative increase in the number of social work courses at masters level in the 1970s (partly through upgrading of post graduate diploma courses) could be seen as 'another example of the image creating manoeuvres of social work' (Jones, 1979:79). The issue of the appropriate level of professional qualification, combined with course length and content, became a major preoccupation for CCETSW in the eighties and continued into the nineties, when it was apparently resolved - at least in CCETSW's view - but later discussion in this thesis highlights continuing ambiguity, uncertainty or conflict about the qualifying stage of professional education for social work.

The 1970s were an important period during which tensions in the field around establishment and maintenance of professional values and authority were mirrored by similar conflicts in social work education, and when the professional values might be said to have 'lost out' to bureaucratic and technocratic pressures. Social work education was marked by a new wave of American theories and models which were apparently suited to the new conditions in British social services - crisis intervention theory; task centred work; and the systems model (Payne,1991). It was also

strengthened by larger scale and more credible forms of research, notably into organisational forms (e.g. Rowbottom et al, 1974); modes of delivery (Goldberg and Fruin, 1976); and the social work role (DHSS, 1978).

However, radical critiques were also being developed by British academics rooted in the wider social movements of the 1960s and informed by Marxist perspectives. Although not a uniform feature of all social work courses, they played a significant role in the shaping of some social work thought and action (Bailey and Brake, 1975; Corrigan and Leonard, 1978). Thus, the growth of unionisation and industrial unrest, including strikes, in a few social service departments in the late seventies, related to increased bureaucratic and financial stringency (and resulting polarisation between practitioners and managers, Langan, 1993) were seen as evidence of social work training failing to prepare students for the reality of life in a welfare bureaucracy. The earlier characterisation of social workers as 'lady bountifuls' was replaced by that of 'trendy lefties' at a time when a shift to the right was occurring in public attitudes.

In the early seventies, CCETSW had been more preoccupied with the *quantity* of educational provision, than its form, but from the outset it was heavily influenced by the 'needs' of local authority departments. The first CCETSW Annual Report (1971) recorded that, from 1961-1970, output of qualified social workers had increased from 325 to 1,521. By 1975, 130 social work courses recommended 2,650 students for qualifying awards (Jones, 1979:72). However, only about 40% of local authority social workers were qualified, predominately in the field rather than in residential and day care services; and growing demand, assisted perhaps by growing dissatisfaction with CQSW courses, led to the establishment in 1975 of the Certificate in Social Services (CSS) award. This two year non-graduate award was offered jointly by colleges outside the university sector and by employers and was sometimes referred to as an employment-based route. It set an important precedent for the development of social work education and training.

The two qualifications, although intended for people in different roles, became synonymous with training for field workers (CQSW) and for staff in residential and day-care settings (CSS). This exacerbated tensions and status differences between the two groups of workers and now reflected in the different institutional levels at which awards were offered, as well as course content and ethos. The CSS addressed far more directly the training needs of employing agencies, and brought into sharp contrast issues about professional loyalty and accountability, as well as critical thinking, emphasised on CQSW courses.

The fight for power between employers, educators and CCETSW was illustrated in microcosm by CCETSW's closure in 1977 of a course in the polytechnic sector which had resisted recruitment of an education welfare officer, employed by one of the institutions' funding authorities. This event brought social work educators into conflict with their own institution and resulted in a high court case against the institution which CCETSW won (Parsloe,1980). All the social work educators involved in the case at its inception (1975) had been replaced by the time a new course was approved (in 1980), and most had returned to the field.

Also at around this time, CCETSW issued proposals for CQSW reform to ensure its relevance to employer needs. This provoked a spirited response from a group of academics at Warwick university who suggested that the consultative document showed a preference for 'the pragmatic, the technical, the uncritically active ... (and) ... an indifference to social policy and macro-perspectives (with) an underlying contempt for theory' (Barker et al, 1978:18). They further criticised the document as 'educationally unsound, ... politically naive and set on getting social work education to commit suicide' (p.22). This robust defence of social work education (and outspoken attack on CCETSW) did not halt a process which saw CCETSW and employers gain increasing influence over the scope and nature of social work education during the 1980s and into the 1990s.

Thus, the end of the seventies could be viewed as a watershed in the development of social work education. Internally, the balance of power between CCETSW and academe was shifting and at least some of the theoretical perspectives being espoused by educators were increasingly viewed with suspicion. External factors included the election to power in 1979 of a conservative government with its new agenda for the public sector and welfare services, though as Glennerster noted 'it was the economic circumstances of 1976 that finally broke the continuity in social policies in the post war era' (Glennerster,1995:167).

The 1980s:

Social work education entered the 1980s with its confidence shaken and resources depleted (Brewer and Lait, 1980). The immediate result of the conflicts of the late seventies and concerns about relevance was more emphasis on skills training in social work education (Richards, 1985) and the decade as a whole was not characterised by significant theoretical developments. Relatively recently, two writers have produced useful overviews of the theories, methods and approaches taught on social work courses throughout the eighties (Coulshhead, 1988; Payne, 1991),

both of which illustrated an eclectic approach to theory relative to the dominance of the psychodynamic paradigm of an earlier generation.

There was little development of research about social work education with the exception of work by Gardiner (1988). Social work educators, for instance, were slow to appreciate the potential relevance of new thinking about reflective practice advocated by Schon (1983, 1987), although related ideas about the adult learner took hold (Harris et al, 1985). The shift away from radical critiques was replaced by research and teaching about developments in the field, for instance community social work (Brown et al, 1982; Hadley and McGrath, 1984) and a growing preoccupation with child abuse and protection (Howe, 1986; Stevenson, 1989). The latter in turn led to an increasing emphasis on law teaching on courses (Bray and Preston-Shoot, 1992) which formed a significant theme in the recasting of qualifying training for the nineties.

However, the influence of sociological thinking was not entirely quelled and found expression in the increasing attention on courses to the power differentials between different groups in society, notably, at that stage, ethnic minorities and women (Dominelli, 1988; Hanmer and Statham, 1988). These replaced an earlier preoccupation in the social sciences with class inequalities. Social work education developed anti-racist and black perspectives, and subsequently anti-discriminatory or anti-oppressive policy and practice (further discussed in Chapter 8).

Externally, the imposition of government cuts in higher education spending in the early eighties and reorganisation within and between institutions had some unplanned consequences, including the loss of three social work courses in London, at Bedford College, Brunel University and Chelsea College (all at masters level), but 'CCETSW was not consulted, nor did the DHSS ... participate in the process; perhaps they were not invited to comment' (Kogan and Kogan, 1983:106).

As has been indicated, CCETSW's earlier preoccupation with quantity of training had by now shifted very substantially to concerns about quality, (adopting a later definition of 'fitness for purpose') which CCETSW sought to address through structural changes. A major, though poorly prepared, proposal by CCETSW in 1984 (Paper 20.1), dubbed the X/Y debate, reflected an accepted division between two forms (levels) of training, and gave rise to acrimonious debate (Bamford, 1984). CCETSW subsequently produced a new proposal for a three year training programme leading to a qualifying diploma in social work (QDSW), citing in support, European

norms and the Commission's Directive on level and length of professional training. An internal paper by Barr was subsequently developed and published in 1990.

However, the British government was unmoved and declined to fund a third year of training. One explanation of this refusal was offered by Henke (1988) who saw the decision as a backlash against increased public expenditure (of £1.5 bn) from the Treasury Contingency Fund (for various unrelated purposes) rather than a rational response to a proposal costing at £140 million and which had received some support from six government departments, including the (then) Department of Health and Social Security. However, others might have interpreted the decision as part of a wider move to weaken a professional group which found little favour with either the government or the wider public.

Whatever the motives or reasons behind the refusal, this defeat, described by a leading academic in the context of EC recognition, as 'a blow to the standing of British social work and social work education' (Parsloe, 1990:20) had considerable impact on the morale of social work educators, who had been generally in favour of a longer training period. It resulted in a hastily revised set of proposals being put forward by CCETSW for a Diploma in Social Work (Dip SW). This retained some of the features of QDSW, but required it to be taught within two years, as a replacement for both the CQSW and CSS awards.

Developments In The 1990's:

The Diploma In Social Work

The Dip SW proposals, laid out in Paper 30, issued in 1989 and with minor revisions in 1991, signified the successful shift to a training paradigm in preparation for social work practice, relative to an educational one. With the exception of its adherence to anti-racist and subsequently anti-discriminatory perspectives, it demonstrated the dominance of political and employer influence over professional interests (including those of social work academics). Paper 30 specified the knowledge, values and skills needed to achieve competence in social work practice (CCETSW 1989:13) and required proposals for new courses (renamed programmes) to be submitted jointly by colleges and agencies; to offer an area of particular practice (APP), and to implement and monitor anti-racist policies.

The establishment of formal partnership arrangements drew heavily on the CSS model and formalised many existing informal relationships between CQSW courses and local agencies. Social work educators themselves had expressed support for partnership between courses and agencies in 1986 in one of 28 recommendations made in a joint report issued by the Association of Teachers in Social Work Education (ATSWE), the Joint University Council Social Work Education Committee (JUC SWEC), and the Standing Conference of Heads of CQSW Courses (SCHOC) (Hooper and Robb, 1986). However, in reality it introduced further bureaucratisation to qualifying training and a decade later Jackson and Preston-Shoot (1996:5) referred to DipSW partnerships as 'time-consuming and largely pointless formal structures'. This move could also be seen as an attempt to ensure relevance to practice, including limitation of 'academic freedom' of social work educators (see chapter 4), without necessarily achieving a particular goal, namely ensuring quantity and quality of placements.

Despite CCETSW's avoidance of the term, the second requirement firmly reinstated 'specialisation' within the curriculum, usually related to client (or now user or consumer) groups and reflecting the reorganisation taking place in social service departments in the early nineties (see Chapter 3). The third requirement reflected the patchy development of anti-racist training on CQSW courses in the 1980s, and repaid the efforts of the Mickleton Group, formed in the mid-eighties by social work students and educators to lobby CCETSW. As a result, a Black Perspectives Committee had been formed (1987) to augment the representation by the solitary black member on CCETSW Council (Pierce, 1994). This undoubtedly affected the emphasis placed on anti-racist values in the formation of professionals who would be operating in a multi-racial society.

However, this area in particular was to be subject to a backlash against politically correct social workers in the early nineties (Webb, 1990; Pinker, 1993) which triggered a review even before all revised courses were established. (The pace and impact of change is discussed in Chapter 11). The changes from CQSW and CSS to DipSW were originally to be phased in over the period up to 1995. It is perhaps not surprising that among the early validations, ex CSS programmes predominated, with later changes taking place to CQSW courses in the old university sector. By 1993, 46 new DipSW programmes were in place with only six CSS courses but 29 CQSW courses remaining (CCETSW 1993 Annual Report and see Part II).

While CCETSW did not specify a curriculum for social work education, the requirement to produce a practice curriculum, which addresses the competencies to be assessed, proved a

challenge and provided the stimulus for recent literature discussing the appropriateness or otherwise of a 'competency-led' approach to professional education (Timms, 1991; Jones and Joss, 1995; Yelloly, 1995; Ford, 1996; Parton, 1996; Vass, 1996). This issue will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

Two other developments were instigated by CCETSW in the early nineties. The first concerned *practice teacher training and funding* arrangements. The requirement that in future all practice teachers should have received training for this role, and some additional resourcing from Government, was partly a response to the lack of a third year at the qualifying stage, but also sought to address issues of quality. While it undoubtedly had some impact in this respect, it has tended to exacerbate the problems of supply of placements; to place further demands on college and agency staff; and probably to shift further the balance of power from academics to the field. A minimum of two placements, accounting for 50% of the overall programme, has remained the norm from the inception of social work education. By the mid-seventies the old-boy (or more appropriately old-girl) mechanism for securing placements from a network of past students and former colleagues was creaking under the strain of the rapid expansion of training opportunities and the impact of changes in the field. Nevertheless, one post-graduate diploma course, for instance, could still offer four placements to 50 students in the course of a year, at that time.

By the 1980s the placement situation had reached crisis proportions, prompting a survey by social work educators (Collins et al, 1987) and another by the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) (Parker, 1987). Meanwhile, in London, social work educators and agency training officers initiated regular meetings and developed the 'Cluster System' aimed at increasing the supply of placements and rationalising their allocation. An evaluation of this system in a report on the costs of social work education suggested that the system had achieved its first goal, if not the second (Rustin and Edwards, 1989) and it is likely that this activity also fed into the CCETSW thinking about the DipSW model of partnership.

More recently, under pressure from the Department of Health (DoH), and following an explosion of placements in the voluntary sector relative to a decrease in statutory placements, CCETSW has radically restructured the funding of placements in line with purchaser/provider principles, pushing social work educators into a competitive market place with potentially serious implications for the viability of some courses. This move is not reflected in the most recent literature about social work education, but the 'placements issue' is a recurring item in the documentary material analysed, and is further discussed in Part II.

The Continuum Of Training

The second development concerned CCETSW's promotion of *a continuum of training* and reflects an extension of its brief from qualifying training to an increased concern with the pre- and post-qualifying stages. The first flows from a recognition that only 10-15% of social service staff are social workers and reflects the governments' agenda to increase training opportunities for unqualified staff. Thus, CCETSW has been active in the Care Sector Consortium, with its remit to develop National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) for a range of pre-professional workers in the social and health care fields (Yelloly, 1995). Such training is generally offered within employing agencies in conjunction with the further education sector and is not of particular relevance to this study, except in so far as the extension of NVQ to level 5 'overlaps' with higher education and could be substituted for a downgraded professional education outside of higher education. Probation may well be the first such example of this development, to be discussed later and in Part II. It has also accelerated a trend in shifting agency resources from funding professional and post qualifying training outside the agency, to meeting the training needs of a larger number of workers within the agency.

The proposals in relation to the post qualifying stage (PQ) are built on the recognition that a two year training programme can only lay a basic foundation for practice, which needs to be consolidated (through post qualifying awards, PQSW) and extended (through advanced awards, AASW). While a small number of universities had previously offered courses and academic qualifications beyond CQSW, no distinction had been made between the post qualifying and advanced stages. Courses had been approved by CCETSW, but despite various lengths and models of courses (including part-time opportunities) and some CCETSW bursaries to cover fees of students, take-up had been relatively low. There were regional variations in availability, and there was no necessary correlation between the needs of the field, the courses offered and participation rates.

Social workers usually needed agency permission to attend such PQ courses, but applications were generally made on the basis of individual interest and initiative, and often bore no relation to either staff training and development profiles or workforce planning strategies of organisations. Indeed, there is impressionistic evidence to suggest that individuals attending part-time MA courses used them to progress their careers, often out of the organisations which had allowed, for example, half-day release for two years.

The only qualification previously offered in-house by agencies was a 60 day additional training courses for staff involved in mental health work leading to CCETSW award of Approved Social Worker (ASW). This had been introduced in the early eighties amid concern that one or two year generic courses were failing to provide sufficient training for this specialist role. Its introduction was resisted by many unionised social workers at the time as going against the principles of genericism and creating an elite group within the workforce. However by the early nineties this was a well established qualification, offered usually without formal HE involvement, and, given the increasing disquiet about practice in the child care field, some were surprised that a similar requirement had not been introduced in that area of practice also.

The new proposals developed further the requirements for agency/HEI partnerships in devising and providing PQ and advanced awards, already a requirement of practice teaching programmes. It also required the formation of regional consortia aimed at rationalisation - relating the supply and nature of such programmes to local needs - and standardisation - ensuring some uniformity of standards at different levels within a region, and nationally, through the operation of a national representatives group. Both the timing and the form of this new initiative were unfortunate. Agencies were preoccupied with the needs of large numbers of unqualified workers and developing NVQ provisions, and social work educators were still involved in devising or implementing new DipSW programmes.

However, both parties recognised a vested interest in involvement in the scheme, and initially, large amounts of staff time and CCETSW funding were committed to developing regional consortia (whose activities and business plans had to be approved by CCETSW) and in establishing criteria for approval of programmes by validation panels. In the event, very few programmes had been approved and awards made by the mid-nineties, provoking government pressure on CCETSW to achieve given targets. With the Research Assessment Exercise approaching in 1996, some social work educators withdrew or declined to be involved, and the impact of policies in this area has to date been relatively small or patchy in the face of other pressures within both agencies and institutions.

A further implication of the establishment of the continuum of training was the assumption that qualifying training would normally take place at the *non-graduate diploma level*, emphasising CCETSW's acceptance of the down-grading of the British social work qualification relative to

social work education abroad (Cannan et al, 1992; Hokenstad et al, 1992), and indeed relative to other forms of professional education in the UK.

Further Change

By 1992 (the starting date of this research venture), it seemed as if the new form and structures of social work education had been established, albeit they clearly placed increased bureaucratic pressures on social work educators; further prescribed their academic freedom; and posed fundamental questions about the nature of the educational process, content and assessment for professional practice. In 1992, Jones described the new Dip SW qualification as employment-led with 'regulations that are ... detailed, directive and technical ... (leaving) little opportunity for developing analytic skills' (Jones, 1992:55). Thus, the technocratisation of social work, increasingly evident in the seventies and eighties, would apparently be completed through the medium of the social work education process in the nineties. This was paralleled by its increasing bureaucratisation, also detailed in practice (Howe, 1986 and see next Chapter) and now evident in regulations concerning partnership arrangements for both DipSW and the post qualification awards.

But the opportunity to consolidate new developments was not yet available. The early nineties were a period of significant changes in the scrutiny of the quality of research; institutional arrangements; and teaching and learning opportunities in higher education. Thus, social work educators were involved to varying degrees in the Research Assessment Exercises (RAEs, 1992 and 1996); institutional visits by the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC); and subject area review by the Higher Education Funding Councils for England, Wales and Scotland (HEFCE, HEFCW, and SHEFC) (1994). These changes are further noted in the broader context of higher education policy in Chapter 4 and the particular implications for social work education are discussed in relation to the research findings in Part 2.

Nor were changes in the social work education area itself complete. Notwithstanding the funding by the DoH of a major research project into 'readiness to practice' of students of CQSW and DipSW courses in 1992 and 93 (Marsh and Trisselliotis, 1996), 1993 saw further changes, prior to any results from the funded research. The then Secretary of State for Health, Virginia Bottomley (herself a former social worker) announced the governments' intention to reform social work. This included a restructuring of CCETSW itself, including abolition of the Black Perspective Committee; a reduction in the size of the Council (further reducing professional participation and

excluding representation of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities (AMA); and a review of training under a new chairman, Sir Jeffrey Greenwood (Francis, 1994). The previous chairman, an academic, had resigned in February 1994 following a clash with Tim Yeo, then Junior Health Minister (Cervi, 1993).

The restructuring was apparently on the grounds of the need to adapt to changes triggered by the new legislation (in the areas of child care, community care [vulnerable adults] and criminal justice), introduced in the period 1989-91 with significant implications for social work organisation and practice (see Chapter 3). However, it was also intended that CCETSW should require courses to adopt a 'more common sense approach' to social work with less use of jargon, and it came in the wake of the previously mentioned accusations of political correctness and bigotry in social work practice, for which the education and training programmes were blamed. These issues are discussed further in the remaining chapters, but the immediate impact was the production by CCETSW of a revised Paper 30 heralded in 1994, but in fact not issued until February 1995, with a requirement that all programmes should be revised, submitted for re-approval and implemented by Autumn 1995.

This was an impossibly short timescale for many institutions and programmes, and particularly for the nine remaining CQSW courses which had only converted to DipSW in the Autumn of 1995. It may have been the last straw in the case of the LSE course, which had its last intake (to its new Diploma) in 1995, though doubtless there were other factors in this case. It was also apparently a factor in the near demise of the Barnett House course, which was 'saved' by the intervention of Baroness Lucy Faithfull (an ex Children's Officer from Oxfordshire and continuing supporter of the social work enterprise, including a three year period of qualifying education, until her death in March, 1996). A critique of the review is contained in Jones (1996b) who sees it as evidence of the governments' inner direction of CCETSW and of the influence of managerialism on CCETSW and social work education: it seems likely that the consequences of this policy development, alongside other changes, have not yet been fully realised.

Nor was the review of DipSW the only change in the 1992-96 period. In 1994 the government set up a review of education and training of probation officers which recommended that DipSW should no longer be the required qualification for entry to this field of practice (Dews and Watts, 1995). Ward (1996) identified a long-standing antipathy between the Home Office (which previously approved training) and CCETSW as well as disputes and criticisms among the educators responsible for probation training as the basis for this development.

Despite separately identified competencies for probation officers; additional requirements prescribing the content of probation APPs; the significant investment of Probation agencies in partnership programmes; and recent important evidence that the 'fit' between education and training of students and the requirements of employers were most evident in the probation field (whose students also proclaimed the highest levels of satisfaction with their education - Marsh and Trisseliotis, 1996) efforts to argue against this action have so far been ignored and 1995 was technically the last year for admission to DipSW programmes of students (with Home Office sponsorship) wishing to enter the Probation service. (Useful contributions to developing an understanding of the debates surrounding probation training in social work education are contained in Nellis, 1996; Ward, 1996; Williams, 1995). However, recent information, discussed in Part II suggests that this is another unresolved issue in relation to social work education in the higher education sector.

Concluding Comments:

This review of the field of social work education has described events leading to the sense of crisis in the subject area. It also identifies some recurring issues, and the increasingly turbulent environment in which social work educators operate. The 'associational effects' of social work with people in crisis and in conflict with or excluded from society must play some part in this scenario. Added to this is a sense of the marginal position of social work education. It is neither fully involved and respected in the field of professional practice, nor apparently conforms to the 'mainstream' of academic norms and expectations. This raises questions about the identity and careers of social work educators themselves, which are explored in Part II.

Other themes identified in this overview, which are further explored in this thesis, are the academic location of the social work subject area, and its relation to practice (in both epistemological and bureaucratic terms); the resourcing of social work education; the 'ownership' and direction of social work education; the implications of gender in the field and subject area; the place of research in developing its knowledge base; the effect of professional values as represented in recent tensions around education for anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice; and the possible influence of comparative European or international perspectives in informing and sustaining social work education in Britain.

The foregoing discussion demonstrates that social work education has a long established position in British higher education, but not a secure one. From a comparative perspective, with the exception of qualifying courses at masters level, the UK has the shortest length and lowest academic level of education and training for social work anywhere, but conversely the highest proportion of time spent in practice placements. Further, the UK is unusual in the extent of prescription exercised by a body which is not a professional association, nor an academic institution, nor a government ministry (although CCETSW is clearly an agent of the state). Additionally, it is probably the only country in which such concerted efforts are made to ensure that supply of places is matched by demand for trained workers (see next chapter) (Cannan et al, 1992; Hokenstad et al, 1992).

From this analysis social work education developments have clearly been increasingly influenced by CCETSW over a 25 year period. While CCETSW was viewed by social work educators as a relatively benign agency in the seventies, it was perceived as incompetent and lacking both intellectual and political capacity in the 1980s, and might now be seen as operating essentially as a conduit for government policies. Indeed, a debate staged at a conference run by the Association of Teachers in Social Work Education (ATSWE) in 1996 explored whether CCETSW had defended social work education against government attacks or had 'sold out' to government policies. Some would say that CCETSW, during the period covered by this study, became increasingly powerful vis-à-vis social work education, but increasingly weak in relation to a government which (up to 30/4/97) had seemed determined to curb the scope and powers of public service professionals and the welfare sector.

As demonstrated in many other areas, central government has the power to change the 'rules of the game' and the structures which operationalise policies; and social work education has been no exception to increased state intervention in the pursuit of the goals of deregulation, accountability, quality and consumer choice (Pollitt, 1990; Henkel, 1994). There are additional factors related to the nature and role of social work which compound its vulnerability (discussed in Chapter 3). What has also become clear is that early conflicts between the field of practice (agencies) and academic institutions, were originally, though not exclusively, mediated by professional associations which, since 1971, have been replaced by CCETSW, a body in which the participation and influence of social work educators, whether as council members or officers, have significantly declined. In this connection, it can be noted that the British Association of Social Workers has played little part in shaping social work education (though its role in relation to the wider field of social work will be considered in the next chapter).

Despite the significant role assumed by CCETSW in the developments outlined above, this research did not set out to chart specifically its role, nor that of any other particular bodies, but rather to explore the views of social work educators on the nature of the subject and responses to the recent changes, as outlined above. Before proceeding to discussion of the research methodology and findings, other debates and developments in the field of social work; higher education values and policy; and the nature of knowledge and professional education, are discussed. These provide the wider context within which social work education currently operates, and other influences on its current and future prospects.

CHAPTER 3: SOCIAL WORK CHANGES AND THE PROFESSIONAL DEBATE

Introduction

There is an inevitable inter-relationship between a specific area of professional education and its field of practice. In any field, practice predates the establishment of education and training programmes, but thereafter, the balance of power between the two varies: while education becomes a specialism relative to the profession, it also regulates entry to it and may constitute the 'cutting edge' of professional practice through research. In other cases may be out of step with the field, a criticism periodically levelled against social work education and one of the reasons given for recent changes.

However, educational arrangements and processes also sometimes *reflect* the uncertainties and turbulence of a profession. One of the contentions of this thesis is that recent trends in social work education mirror a weakening of the profession as a whole, which, *inter alia*, can increase distrust and competition between people who, at a meta level, share similar values and goals. This chapter, therefore, examines developments in social work since 1970, and identifies some recent and current debates and issues in social work. Passing reference was made in Chapter 2 to the origins and early history of social work and will not be repeated, but the more recent history illustrates paradigm changes in conceptions of the role of social workers and their organisation, with consequent implications for the education and training process.

Reference was made in Chapter 1 to the difficulty of defining social work, and its shifting nature, relative to changing social concerns and expectations. Payne (1991, p1) observed that social work is 'widely enough spread for international associations ... and a shared language and literature to exist ... but there is no agreed definition ... (decisions about boundaries, objectives and roles) ... vary according to the time, social conditions and cultures within which (they operate)'. The extent to which social work is organised as part of the state welfare enterprise or provided on a *morad hoc* basis by the voluntary or private sectors is variable, although it is often an occupation for which some aspects have a state mandate.

In the case of England and Wales, the close association of social work with local authority social service departments (SSDs) has been a particular feature of the past thirty years and a lack of differentiation in the use of the term, social worker, has been significant in public perceptions of

the role. In its statutory form it has also experienced variable fortunes, according to the political will and economic circumstances of local and central governments: increased levels of central government intervention through the 1980s and 1990s have been noted in the literature, related in part to a wider redefining of local authority roles.

Unification And Genericism

The Seebohm Report (DHSS, 1968), with its proposals for unified community-based, family-orientated social service departments, was written in the context of relative growth in the provision of welfare and in professional confidence. The rediscovery of poverty in the mid sixties gave rise to government initiatives to combat social disadvantage (Education Priority Area Projects, 1969-72, Community Development Projects, 1971-76) which enhanced the power of some occupational groups but also contained notions of prevention and participation. The new departments were established in accordance with the Local Authority Social Services Act (1970) and similarly espoused universalist and redistributive ideals alongside encouragement of individual effort.

The new departments reflected the influence of social work values concerning the uniqueness and worth of individuals and their right to acceptance and self-determination (Kogan, 1971), while also creating hierarchical and bureaucratic structures which some later saw as increasingly at variance with professional values. Hall (1976) suggested that the Seebohm changes were influenced less by strong public or political feeling about social work, than by social workers themselves (in the form of the Seebohm Implementation Group), unhindered by strong opposition from other interest groups. (The medical profession, for instance was preoccupied with reorganisation of the health service). However, underlying the initiative was a concern for better co-ordination of services, which 'one door' access aimed to provide.

The formation of new departments brought together social workers previously employed separately to respond to the needs of different client groups, with the important exceptions of workers employed in secondary settings, education, criminal justice and health (although responsibility for the last group transferred to SSDs in 1974). The contribution of the voluntary sector was apparently marginalised and social work in the private sector seemed to be a contradiction in terms. The move was paralleled by the incorporation of most existing associations into a unified professional body (BASW). About a year later, CCETSW was established to address the varied training needs of existing and potential staff in the new

conditions. This signalled the start of an increasingly close association between the goals of education and training and the needs of SSDs as the main employers.

In line with the expansionist mood of the times, SSDs grew apace. Bamford (1982) suggested that the number of social workers employed increased by 50% between 1971 and 1974; the number of people seeking help nearly doubled to 15% of the population by 1975 (Glampson and Goldberg, 1976); and social service expenditure in 1975 showed a 400% increase over 1948 (Judge, 1978). Analysis of organisational form, and of the basis for emerging levels and other divisions of work, was a feature of academic inquiry into social work (as social services) in the 1970s (BIOSS, 1976; DHSS, 1979).

However, social workers, managers, politicians and the public still struggled to agree on the nature and scope of the social work task. Additionally, the pace of growth, the variable levels of staff training (including at management levels) and the raised public expectations and demand produced strain in the system at a relatively early stage. An early mood of optimism was shaken by the first in a series of child abuse scandals (the Colwell Report 1974) which led to significant changes in the management of social work and inter-professional relationships and heralded an erosion of public confidence in the profession (Stevenson, 1989).

The increase in bureaucratic controls, combined with resource constraints (arising from the mid-seventies oil crisis) led to growing social work dissatisfaction, including strikes, in the late seventies. This industrial unrest coincided with the election of a conservative government with radically different views on the role of the state and professionals relative to individual responsibility; the bases for distribution of wealth; and the powers of the local state relative to central government or the market. Personal social services were not the main target of policy change in the initial stages of the new regime but there were early indications of a shift in focus from the 'monopolistic' position of local authorities as the primary source of social work and social care, and of attempts to control professionals and alter the culture of departments.

Continuity And Change: The Return To Specialisms

Ten years after the establishment of SSDs, a new 'enquiry into the roles and tasks of social workers' was initiated by government. The resulting preface to the Barclay Report (1982) stated 'There is confusion about the direction in which (social workers) are going and unease about what they should be doing and the way they should be organised and deployed'. It also suggested that

'Too much is generally expected of (them)' and described social work as a 'relatively young profession' (pvii), excuses which failed to convince an increasingly sceptical public as the decade progressed.

The Barclay Report concerned itself with social work in all its forms (including outside SSDs) and across all settings, and generally supported a move towards community social work, which 'requires of the social worker an attitude of partnership' with clients, relations, neighbours and volunteers (p209), with intimations of the philosophy underpinning legislation nearly a decade later. Some departments actively promoted the development of community social work in the early eighties (Hadley and McGrath, 1984), informed by both practitioner concerns about client and community empowerment and management hopes of containing costs, but even given the 'generic' basis of the Seebohm departments, many maintained or developed some specialist teams (Lyons, 1984).

Continuing anxieties about child abuse resulted in local authority policies and social work practice that was increasingly reactive and constrained by both procedures and economic stringency, but rising demand was also occasioned by growing numbers of frail elderly people. Reviewing 1984, the ADSS 'warned' of the effect of cuts in government expenditure relative to needs of this client group, and drew attention to a rapid growth in the private care sector. They also noted large variations in local authority spending (per head of population, still evident in later research (Bebbington and Kelly, 1995); and an absence of data about the workforce (since a survey in 1976) on which to base planning (ADSS, 1985). A ministerial speech in 1984 also heralded the start of government intervention to promote the development of a mixed economy of care, although the full impact of a split in purchasing and providing arrangements was a result of later legislation and not felt until the early nineties (Langan, 1993).

Meanwhile, SSDs were being more tightly managed within the bureaucratic framework as evidenced in the growth of guidelines and procedural documents (particularly in relation to child abuse) and in the use of performance indicators, target setting and other mechanisms indicative of the new managerialism (Pollitt, 1990). The way in which SSD priorities and social work practice became increasingly dominated by the claims and anxieties of child protection work, and the effects of failures in this area, have been well documented (Howe, 1986; Stevenson, 1989). It was also a significant factor in the juridification of social work (Stanford, 1992) and a new phase of legislation around 1990 which resulted in reorganisation of services into specialisms by client group, or now 'users' or 'consumers', in line with the commodification of welfare.

Further features of the (late) eighties were a more public acknowledgement of the particular needs of minority ethnic groups (and the failure of SSDs to organise appropriate responses (ADSS, 1989); and some attention to the development of open records, though departments lagged behind their counterparts in the education sector in both these areas. Despite growing public perceptions of social workers as preoccupied with issues of racism and discrimination, it seemed that anti-oppressive values were not dominant in the policies and practice of many departments and workers, and that their absence affected the quality of care received by some client groups (for example, Bebbington and Miles, 1989): such concerns had a direct effect on the framing of DipSW requirements.

There had also been some growth in the voluntary sector, usually assisted by funding from SSDs, and the beginnings of the contract culture were in evidence. Specialist services were provided both by established voluntary organisations, such as the NSPCC, and by the formation of new organisations to address unmet needs, including those of minority ethnic groups. Some of these initiatives gave greater emphasis to user involvement and sought to implement ideas about normalisation and empowerment (Lyons, 1992), to a greater extent than was evident in the statutory sector. New forms of response, such as telephone helplines, and new roles, for example 'advocates', were also established, largely outside SSDs.

By the end of the 1980s, it was clear that social workers were being required to operate within a supply-led welfare system, 'determined by budgetary resources rather than by the needs of clients' (Jones, 1992, p51). The passing of new legislation around the turn of the decade reflected some public concerns, but also signalled the clear intention of government to limit the powers of professionals and the scope of public services in welfare, as in other sectors. The 1989 Children Act, 1990 National Health Service and Community Care Act, and the 1991 Criminal Justice Act had considerable implications for both social work practice and the organisation of services, and marked the most important change since the Seebohm reorganisation.

The Children Act maintained social work in the field of child care as predominantly still the responsibility of SSDs, although with increased emphasis on the need for partnership, both with other agencies and professionals in planning and delivery of services, and with parents and other family members in devising and implementing care plans. The emphasis remains on protection of children at risk (see later) and the narrow interpretation given to 'children in need' has resulted in a lack of resources for family support work (despite a growth in family centres, but see Cannan,

1992); and for work with children with disabilities or mental health problems or at risk of offending, as well as young carers. Recent intentions to 'hive off' adoption and fostering tasks to the voluntary or private sector have been averted (for now) by the change in government, but there is considerably more use (than a decade ago) of services provided by voluntary organisations under contract. (Hill and Aldgate, 1996).

The NHS and Community Care Act, concerned with services to vulnerable adults in the community, has arguably had the most impact on social work practice and the position of SSDs. It represents most clearly the marketisation and commodification of welfare, and the limitation of (professional) discretion. It formalised the purchaser-provider split, with SSDs as the purchasers of services which should be provided by agencies in the voluntary and private sector, or through the informal sector. The implications of these arrangements in terms of expectations placed on women, whether as family members or low paid carers, has been remarked upon (Langan and Day, 1992). While social workers and other staff, now usually renamed care managers, retain responsibility for some assessment work and care planning, direct work with users is carefully prescribed and limited by budgets. There is growing public concern about the level and quality of services available (from which ever sector), particularly in relation to people with mental health problems (see later).

The third Act clearly incorporated the Probation Service into a criminal justice system which some would see as now more concerned with retribution than rehabilitation, in the face of rising crime levels. The role of probation officers has been redefined as about 'policing' offenders in the community and social work skills and approaches are no longer thought to be appropriate. This is reflected in the plans to remove probation training from DipSW programmes, referred to in Chapter 2, and also in the impact of the changes in probation (Harris, 1996), which have resulted in 'exit' and been voiced in research studies (Hirschman, 1970; La Valle and Lyons, 1996a).

Thus, as the nineties have progressed, social work has become a more fragmented occupation, with an increased range of work carried out by people who may not be called social workers (for instance, care managers), who are thought not to need social work qualifications (probation officers) or who operate outside the statutory sector and have other, or no, qualifications. Increasing numbers of staff work on temporary contracts and their commitment to particular employers or users is short term: their training, supervision and affiliation needs are also different. Characteristics of the workforce and their perceptions of recent changes, including how these have been managed, have been explored (NISW, 1995; La Valle and Lyons, 1996a, 1996b). The range

of job titles listed by respondents to CCETSW's annual 'first destination' surveys gives evidence of the increased range of posts and settings which newly qualified staff are entering (Wallis Jones and Lyons, 1996).

As on other occasions, social work might be described as being at a cross roads in terms of its future development, with pessimists seeing evidence of deprofessionalisation and even 'erasure' (Pietroni, 1995) while others have more confidence in the ability of social work to adapt to the changed conditions, including opportunities which may be afforded by a change of government. Recurring themes in this account concern the nature of the task, in particular the social work role in relation to protection of children and other vulnerable people; and the professional, or otherwise, status of social work, (and associated issues of accountability and regulation) and these are now further examined.

Task And Mandate: Care, Protection And Control

One possible explanation for the current problematic position of social work lies in the apparent recent growth of violence within families, and the failure of social workers to prevent abuse of various kinds. Child deaths are not a new phenomena (the 1948 Children Act, in part had its origins in the death of a boy who was fostered (Heywood, 1978), nor did the British 'discover' 'baby battering' (Kemp et al, 1962), but child protection work assumed an increasing profile following the death of Maria Colwell in 1973 and some thirty subsequent public enquiries into child deaths (Stevenson, 1989). Additionally, more recent concerns about child sexual abuse and ritual abuse have also brought into public question social work judgements and intervention as well as issues about training and inter-professional co-operation.

Public criticism had largely focused on the practice (and training) of fieldworkers, but from the early nineties events in the residential care sector (Kincora, Staffordshire) prompted investigation and calls for improved scrutiny and training of residential workers (Warner, 1992). While these events in the community and (to some extent in the residential sector) have had a significant impact in relation to training (qualifying and in-service), the other response has been organisational and administrative, reflected in central and local government guidelines and procedures, including the establishment of area review committees and child protection registers. Anxieties about child protection work were also an important spur to the establishment of specialist teams, even before the changes resulting for the 1990 legislation. (Ottway, 1996).

However, it has become clear that violence is not restricted to children, although initiatives in relation to 'wife battering' from the late seventies on have occurred in the voluntary rather than the statutory sector and links between domestic violence and child abuse have only been made relatively recently. Since the mid-eighties there have also been (usually less publicised) concerns about 'elder abuse', either in the form of neglect of isolated old people or maltreatment of people by their carers (Eastman, 1994); and such concerns have extended to other vulnerable adults in the community or in residential care. In the nineties, the experience of violence has taken a new turn with the murder of a member of the public by a person discharged from psychiatric hospital and supposedly in receipt of 'community care' (The Clunis Enquiry, 1994), resulting in the requirement placed on health authorities to keep registers of discharged patients who are mentally ill, and for all such people to be allocated a key worker who should be either an approved social worker *or* a psychiatric nurse.

The rise in violence in society can be linked to a variety of factors; increased attention (including more developed assessment and other responses); greater levels of poverty; a reduction in community-based resources and preventive strategies; and to the increased responsibilities placed on informal carers, in a society which Jones has described as having 'minimalist and authoritarian social policies' (Jones, 1992, p48). Indeed the reported words of Thatcher in 1987, 'There's no such thing as society, only individual men and women' (Benton, 1987) and the consequences of community care legislation and other measures (including those aimed at unemployed 17 and 18 year olds) have placed families (or often women) under increasing pressure.

The effects of policies in the eighties on people who were traditionally clients of social workers have been documented (Becker and Silburn, 1990); and, links have been drawn between the increasing desperation of users of social services and the violence and stress experienced by social workers (Payne, 1991; Jones, 1992; Lyons et al, 1995). While previous connections have been made between the poor standing of social work in the public esteem and the stigmatisation of people who use social services, Jones (1992) goes further in suggesting that working with the new poor has produced 'a harder face of social work as it moves increasingly towards becoming an agent of a restrictive and punitive state' (p52). This has chilling echoes (noted also in Payne, 1991) of the subversion of social work in pre war Nazi Germany (Lorenz, 1994) and is a far cry from the aspirations of social work denoted in the introductory chapter.

There are additional levels of explanation and perspectives on why social work experienced such a loss of public confidence and became increasingly a target of hostile intervention by government.

Government agendas are assumed to reflect the will of the people (through the ballot box), and one of the criteria on which they are periodically judged is their effectiveness in dealing with the perceived social problems of the day. They thus have a considerable interest in how policy is implemented. The political will is generally marked by legislation (but thereafter by funding decisions), and British social workers over the past thirty years have been responsible for implementation of an increasing range of Acts, some of which have marked significant changes in policy direction.

The possible reasons for the implementation gap between policy intent and execution have been discussed by policy analysts, and include insufficient resources or knowledge and skills (Rein, 1983) and conflict of values (noted in a different context by Kogan (1975)), each of which might have underpinned actions (or lack of actions) by social workers which were subsequently perceived as inadequate or at variance with government intent.

From a different perspective, Parton (1996), has summarised the growth of social work as occupying the space which can be called 'social' between those already occupied by health, education and the justice systems, but the boundaries are unclear and periodically subject to contest and renegotiation. In addition, effective care often requires the active collaboration of professionals across disciplinary and organisational boundaries, and the apparent inability of social workers to secure this, in relation to particular cases, has been a significant cause for criticism and loss of public trust. This has been coupled with an apparent inability by social workers to 'explain' their role, not only to other professionals, but also to the media, and thus to the public, creating a vacuum to be filled by misunderstanding and distrust.

The third perspective which can help inform an analysis of the role of social work and reasons for its difficulties is loosely based in psycho-analytic theory: it concerns the part which social work plays in addressing the problematic within society and reflecting back to society the worst aspects of itself. Recent decades have seen a growing list of social workers apparently 'discovering' (and then failing to deal adequately) with aberrant behaviour - child abuse, sexual abuse, ritual abuse and, most recently, paedophilia. These can be seen as things the public would rather not acknowledge or which, if believed, they want someone to 'deal with' (Campbell, 1993). In similar vein, social workers have also clearly failed to stem the increase in homelessness, addictions, marital breakdown, single-parenthood, and juvenile and adult crime, and have become an easy target for 'blame' in some cases. Do they not, after all, sympathise with feminism, homosexuality

and ethnic minorities, which, for some of the public, are the root causes of society's current problems?!

So, the nature of social work is difficult because the subject matter is problematic, and the form and quality of the response is determined not just by the values, knowledge and skills of workers and managers, individually or collectively, but also by the demands of government and the perceptions of other professionals, the press and the public. Societal attitudes are ambivalent: social workers may be regarded as necessary, but too closely associated with the poor and deviant to be respectable; or too concerned to operate as a counter-profession and conscience to be comfortable colleagues and citizens. In any case, their actions require careful scrutiny and control, hardly appropriate to an occupational group which might aspire to professional status.

Professional Status, Accountability And Regulation

The establishment of social work within unified departments in England and Wales in 1970, apparently marked a strengthening of the social work professional project (Macdonald, 1995), but in fact paved the way for increased governmental intervention and the potential deprofessionalisation of social work. Henkel (1994) has pointed out the inevitable relationship between social work and the social policies of states, and its mandate to carry out functions which reflect the differing agendas of governments; and the previous section illustrated some aspects of this relationship in the recent British context. The foregoing is not unrelated to debates about the professional status of social work, which can be viewed in relation to the theory of professions, as well as to policy directions affecting all professionals.

In 1991, the outgoing chief of the Social Services Inspectorate (Department of Health) said, 'Profession is perhaps a courtesy title, since social work possesses few of the distinctive characteristics of the established professions. Employment is unregulated, without minimum requirements for education and training. Satisfactory means do not exist for debarring incompetent, criminal or otherwise unsatisfactory practitioners. Social work possesses a core of knowledge derived in part from the intellectual product of other disciplines, and a developing methodology, as yet largely untested by research' (Utting, 1991).

This statement reflects a view of what constitutes a profession propounded by sociologists in the 1960s, defining professions on the basis of possession of key attributes, notably, a body of knowledge, a code of ethics and control of training (Volmer and Mills, 1966). Under this rubric,

social work, along with teaching and nursing, was deemed a semi-profession by Etzioni (1969), an epithet which has persisted.

Subsequent writers have modified or challenged earlier conceptions of 'profession', and Johnson (1972) suggested that the functionalist account of professions distorts reality 'because it neglects historical evaluation' which indicates that a given reward structure is 'the result of the arrogation by groups with power to secure claims and create their own system of legitimation' (p37). Thus, some saw the establishment of SSDs as an opportunity for social workers to increase power at the expense of other occupational groups (Hall, op cit).

However, problems were identified around the professionalisation of social work: Howe (1986) saw these as being for technological and ideological reasons. Certainly, the period of industrial unrest in the late seventies reflected a general mood of egalitarianism, or even radicalism, in SSDs which had resulted in large scale unionisation and only a relatively small number of the increasing workforce joining the professional association. BASW's efforts to keep in step or regain ground resulted in the publication of a pamphlet ('Clients are Fellow Citizens', 1980) and the opening of its membership to unqualified social workers soon after.

But scepticism remained about the desirability of social work seeing itself as a 'profession' (regarded as self-seeking and remote from the needs of clients), and some social workers were openly hostile to any suggestions of elitism in their ranks. This was illustrated in the problems surrounding the introduction of the 'approved social worker' qualification in the early eighties, and in previous debates about the establishment of a General Social Work Council.

A view of the professions noted by Schon (1987), saw a relationship between the mandate (and status) given by society to certain occupational groups to exercise social control and operate autonomously in specialised fields, in exchange for their specialised knowledge and skills. In one sense, this applied to social work in the early Seebohm departments, and it was doubtless, in part, social work's failure to demonstrate sufficient knowledge and skill and to exercise control in relation to abuse, which led to the withdrawal of public support, quite apart from the values and divided views of social workers themselves on the matter. However, Schon also noted the difficulties of professionals meeting expectations in periods of increasing turbulence and regulation, factors which are salient in relation to the wider social conditions within which social workers operate and the particular bureaucratisation of SSDs in the 1970s and 1980s.

Friedson (1986) also noted the extent to which bureaucratisation of professional groups results in increased rules and sanctions with a concomitant decrease in professional authority and power. The other side of this coin had been noted by Mishra (1981, p129) 'Where the professional element is weak, services may have a greater tendency towards bureaucratisation'. The extent to which professional autonomy varies between different branches of social work was explored by Roach Anleu (1992) in the Australian context, and her findings about varying levels of autonomy between social workers in different settings (hospital, child care department, and probation) had recognisable parallels with the British scene, at least until the early nineties, when the effects of managerialism were impacting on professional autonomy, universally.

A more recent contribution to the sociology of the professions also has relevance to the professional status or otherwise of social work. Witz (1991) asserted that 'the generic notion of profession is also a gendered notion as it takes what is, in fact, the successful professional projects of class privileged male actors at a particular point in history and in particular societies to be the paradigmatic case of professions'. She further suggested that 'the creation and control of occupational boundaries and inter-occupational relations may be crucially mediated by patriarchal power relations' (p675), points with undoubted significance for the semi-professions which are characterised by the predominance of women in the workforce. This position is reinforced when linked with different training patterns and paradigms, as discussed later in this thesis.

As intimated earlier the position of social work has also to be seen against the backdrop of policy change affecting all professional groups, summarised thus by Henkel (1994), 'the combined forces of managerialism, market philosophies, consumerism, technological and concomitant societal change seem likely to force a reappraisal of occupational categories and power' (p101). The fragmentation of social work can also be seen as increasing specialisation which gives rise to sub-groups with differential status, including some who experience deskilling and deprofessionalisation (Shaw,1987). Some of the debates around the redrawing of occupational roles and organisational boundaries, as well as about current and future developments in social work education, thus contain questions about the survival of some forms of social work (and concomitant training) relative to the demise of others.

However, the principle that professionals have to be accountable, has gained increasing recognition and one of the arguments in favour of social work within local authority structures was the assumption that this ensured accountability, and a measure of representation and participation. Social workers are accountable to the public via departmental directors, answerable to locally

elected representatives on social service committees. One of the concerns about growth of service in the voluntary and private sectors is this loss of democratic accountability, (underpinning the growth of inspectorial systems administered by SSDs); as well as the possibility of territorial injustice, due to the uneven spread of services.

But even in the statutory sector, this 'straight line' of accountability (electorate-politicians-employees-consumers) may be disrupted in various ways (Bolderson and Henkel,1980). Social workers may have divided loyalties, where professional practice in relation to a particular consumer (or group or community) conflicts with departmental policy or resourcing. If welfare policies and practices fail to protect the interests of individual consumers, they can then seek redress via commissioners, tribunals, professional regulatory bodies, or agency complaints procedures.

In the case of social work, although CCETSW regulates education and training, and BASW has produced a Code of Ethics and has a well used Advice and Representation Service for its members (separate from any services which might be available through union membership), there is no universal regulatory body, despite periodic and partial recognition that this would be in the interests of the public and of the profession.

The most recent efforts to secure such a body were signalled by the publication of a report (Parker,1991) which advocated a Social Services rather than a Social Work Council, in recognition of the wide range of workers whose activities impact on the daily lives and prospects of people needing care, protection or control. This would be phased in over a period of time with social workers in the first wave of registration. Costs would be met through registration fees and the Council, while representative of the professional/ occupational groups registered, should also ensure some representation of service users. Despite a high level of support from within the occupational field and associated interest groups, (costed) proposals, submitted in 1993, were not acted on by the previous government.

However, a GSSC Development Project has continued to press for implementation as indicated in its response to a recent White Paper, 'The Obligations of Care' (1996). The White Paper stated the (then) government's preferred reliance on employers to define and enforce expected standards of conduct and practice, but in a situation where an increasing range of agencies offer social work and social care, and where workers are less likely to have secure, long-term employment with one employer, a Council would seem more necessary (Brand,1997). The question has arisen of

whether a body such as CCETSW would have the capacity to form the basis of such a Council, and there is speculation that the new government may view the proposals more favourably. While critics would see this as another step in the (virtually derailed) professional project, the hope of supporters of the move is that the formation of such a body would assist in raising and maintaining standards in the personal social services, and re-establish public confidence in social workers and others engaged in social care.

Concluding Summary

This chapter has reviewed changes in social work over a thirty year period, noting particularly the paradigmatic changes in 1970 and around 1990. The development of social work during this time has been intimately bound up with the fortunes of SSDs (although, even towards the end of this period, social work practitioners formed only 15% of the departmental workforce (SSI, 1995/96). The shift in professional and public values between 1970 and the mid-nineties has played a significant role in the extent to which social workers have been seen as being in or out of step with public and governmental expectations.

However, while, like any other professional group, social work may be expected to support the dominant values of society, (reflected in its control role), it is also in its nature and ethics that it should mediate tensions within society, often experienced as value conflicts between the majority and marginalised or excluded minorities. A further aspect of its role is its mandate to protect vulnerable members of society: it was its apparent inability to do this from the mid-seventies on that led to its increased regulation and a loss of public trust. Its role in bringing to light previously hidden aspects of sexual abuse, and revelations of (sexual) abuse of those in the care of SSDs by workers, have further alienated the public and demoralised the profession.

This demoralisation has been exacerbated by the nature and pace of policy and practice changes in the early nineties, coupled with resource constraints and an increasing climate of violence and blame from service users. This has been linked to the worsening of social conditions for a minority of the population as well as the encouragement of a competitive and individualistic society. Social workers are seen as having borne the brunt of policies formulated by a government unsympathetic to the goals of a welfare state (Jones,1992, Langan,1993), although other services and professionals have also felt the impact of these different political values.

In the welfare field, recent changes have led to concern about the 'break-up' of SSDs and the deprofessionalisation of social work. Certainly, the monopoly position of local authority departments as the providers of social work and care services has been shifted within a more pluralist system, and the role of British social workers seems more prescribed than their counterparts elsewhere. But some of the more recent developments also suggest new opportunities for social work practice, with concomitant challenges for the education and training system. There are also recent indications of effectiveness studies which suggest that not all practice has been bad (Cheetham, 1996). Thus, the key question underlying this thesis, about the 'survival' of social work education, in part reflects uncertainties about the future of the wider occupational group from which it derives. The other significant determinant is the system within which it is located, which is examined next.

CHAPTER 4:

HIGHER EDUCATION: CHANGING POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Introduction

Changes in higher education over nearly two decades provide a backdrop against which to explore developments in professional education and in social work education in particular. These changes are here examined from a policy perspective, with a focus on events which signify value shifts in expectations about higher education. After a brief resume of the state of higher education reflected in its post-war development, changes and issues since 1979 are discussed. The chapter concludes with a review of the debate about academic freedom and accountability, provoked by recent changes, and then of the 'Enterprise' and related schemes which are indicative of change in the functions of higher education.

Discussion follows on the changing relationships between the individual academic, the basic unit, the institution, and the central authority: and to the dominant values which these elements in the system may represent. Broadly speaking, these can be identified as professional (individual academic and basic unit); managerial (institutional); and market values (government). These in turn correspond to a classification of phases in the development of UK higher education policy from a position of autonomous institutions, through the domination of central management to a preoccupation with external markets (Becher and Kogan, 1992).

Post-War Development Of The Higher Education System

Higher education up to the 1940s was described as having 'evolved by drift and policy accretion ... the result of centuries of disjointed incrementalism' (Stephens and Roderick, 1978:167). It consisted primarily of universities offering discipline based degrees and postgraduate research opportunities to an elite minority. The value shift promoted by the second world war, and the passing of the 1944 Education Act, laid the basis for a more egalitarian system and for the growth of a wider range of opportunities at further and higher education levels.

In 1963 a report by a government established committee recommended rationalisation and extension of the higher education system, primarily through the establishment of polytechnics (Robbins, 1963). The report maintained the objectives of higher education was to promote general

powers of the mind, transmit a common culture, and ensure the advancement of learning, but also included 'instruction in skills'. It took as its guiding principle the social demand principle, that is, extending the availability of courses of higher education for all qualified by ability, attainment and inclination to follow them; and it saw the new polytechnics (based on existing colleges of various kinds and firmly rooted in their localities) as affording a major expansion in opportunities for access to a wider range of courses.

The creation of the binary system with (initially 29) polytechnics as 'equal to but different from' the (45) universities signified both a concern 'to meet the growing demand for vocational, professional and industry based courses which could not be met by the universities' (Kogan and Kogan, 1983:21), and an early attempt to bring part of the higher education system under public control. Establishment in 1964 of the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) to validate courses offering awards in the new public sector HEIs also indicated a concern with standards (and status) which has persisted in more recent changes. The establishment of the polytechnic sector (and also of the Open University) exemplified policy innovation (Hall et al, 1975), in a period of incremental policy change in the educational field during the sixties and seventies (Kogan, 1975).

A significant feature was the consensus between both major political parties as to the need for higher education expansion, and the liberal educational values underpinning it: 'higher education was thought to be good both for individuals and for the country' (Kogan and Kogan, 1983:19), and even in 1972 this 'benevolent orthodoxy' prevailed as shown in a government white paper, 'Education: a Framework for Expansion'. Such values underpinned a considerable expansion in student numbers in the higher education sector (a four-fold increase from 1945-70) although numbers did not quite reach the recommendation of the Robbins Report for a doubling of the progression rates (that is of 18 year olds to HEIs) from 8% (1963) to 17% (by 1973), reaching only 13% approx. in 1982 (Kogan and Kogan, 1983:15-18).

However, there was a considerable increase in part-time student numbers, (mainly in the polytechnics and Open University), marking the beginning of a more diverse and flexible sector, with access for a wider range of the population. While the seventies generally lacked a clear policy direction for higher education, the system continued 'edging towards a mass rather than an elite system, and one more responsive to social need' (Becher and Kogan, 1992:37), despite downward revisions of the higher education student targets and cash limits on university funding from 1975 onwards. The mid-seventies saw the beginning of a move away from consensus in the

policy process and increased recognition of the role of conflict in policy formulation (Hall et al, 1975), evidenced in the field of higher education as elsewhere.

Professional academic values continued largely unchallenged in to the 1970s, despite the relationship between local authorities and the polytechnics and Crosland's introduction of the audit of universities(in 1967): they underpinned the widespread autonomy of HEIs and their structure as self-governing communities of scholars. Becher and Kogan (1992:23) noted that academic values were 'assumed to be invariant and unassailable'; but that they were beginning to be challenged from within by professionals espousing vocational and multi-disciplinary, rather than mono-discipline based, values. Differences existed not only in attitudes to the growth of more varied courses and open access but also in the emphasis given to research (creation of knowledge) and teaching (transmission of knowledge) related to status differences between pure and applied theory.

It has been suggested that the notion of vocationalism, now so prevalent, took root in the seventies, amidst growing unemployment and technological and industrial change (Stephens and Roderick, 1978). This division in the academic community was later to be exploited by a government committed to decreasing the power of the professionals and to changing the culture of all public services.

Policy Change Since 1979

Barrett and Fudge (1981) identified the time when political power changes hands as signifying a paradigm change (rather than incremental shifts) in the policy making process, as a different value system informs government intent. Certainly, the period since 1979 has been marked by increasing intervention in a range of areas by governments determined to reduce public spending. Despite the economic boom years (for some) of the 1980s it has been a period during which economic considerations and instrumental values have prevailed in the formulation of social policy. The government 'think tank' (Central Policy Review Staff) in the early eighties suggested public spending cuts in four areas - health, defence, social security and higher education, and withdrawal of government funding from HEIs at this time was only averted by ministerial resistance (Deakin, 1994).

Effects of policy change involving a value shift at governmental level, were soon felt in the higher education sector with 13% cuts in funding (less fee income for home students, compensated in

part by increased fees for overseas students) over the period 1979-82. Kogan and Kogan (1983:12) described the government of the early eighties as having 'little notion of the consequences and costs of its actions (but) its policy, begun in ignorance and confusion, gathered particular biases as it developed ... it led to changes in the purpose and running of higher education ... and shifted the line between universities and polytechnics'. Decreased funding impacted on HEIs across the binary divide, affecting humanities and social sciences in particular, and resulted in cuts in staffing (mainly through retirement and voluntary severance schemes) and widespread reorganisation or 'rationalisation' within institutions. (For instance the faculties of one polytechnic were reduced from seven to four in 1981, with loss of staff at various levels and relocation of a number of basic units).

The cuts had unanticipated consequences in that there was not an overall reduction in student numbers. While the University sector generally chose to reduce its intake to protect staff student ratios (SSRs) and research activities, the polytechnic sector cut the unit of resource and continued to increase its intake. In 1981/82, 13.2% of 18-21 year olds were in full time higher education of which 7.5% were in the university sector and 5.2% in the polytechnics. By 1982/83 the proportion had shifted to 7.2% in the universities and 6% in the polytechnics (Kogan and Kogan,1983). Additionally, between 1979 and 1987, apart from an increase in full time students (19.3%), graduates (20.9%) and postgraduates (27.1%) there was also a considerable increase in the numbers and proportion of part-time students (34.2%), predominantly in the public sector HEIs (DES, 1989).

One consequence of the continuing rise in student numbers was the creation in 1982 of the National Advisory Board (NAB) as a national planning body for local authority controlled higher education, charged with approving student numbers in subject areas across the sector. A further consequence was the strengthening of the managerial role within institutions. Growth had taken place on a relatively ad hoc basis, subject mainly to the criterion of academic viability, but reductions and restructuring had to be 'managed'. Policies aimed at promoting government priorities were also introduced, for example, assistance with redundancy schemes, funding for 'new blood' appointments, and money to purchase information technology equipment. Additionally, income generation activities began to play an increasing part in higher education resourcing, for instance, money from research grants, consultancy contracts and services generated 16% of university income in 1981, but 27% by 1987 (Walford, 1991).

The polytechnics, subject to local authority control, were already structured hierarchically and the managerial rather than academic roles of senior staff gained added prominence during the eighties (and has been further emphasised in the nineties - see later). In 1985, the Jarratt Report recommended that university vice-chancellors should take on the explicit role of chief executive and adopt a strong corporate planning approach. It proposed managerial rather than collegiate ways of working with devolution of financial responsibilities to cost centres and monitoring and evaluation, for instance through the use of performance indicators.

Boys et al carried out a study in 1985/86 and stated that the most strongly established HEIs 'continued to work on the autonomous model of academic government' but that there was evidence of increased emphasis on managerial ways elsewhere. Noting the limited manageability of academic institutions, the authors nevertheless recognised the need for leadership in managing change in a turbulent environment, and identified the performance of the leader as a key factor in how well an institution maintained its position in the mid-eighties (Boys et al, 1988:162-63).

External auditing and monitoring exercises have led to increased managerial control and accountability within institutions; and the managerial role was given further emphasis in the 1987 White Paper, 'Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge', which preceded the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA). The transfer of managerial thinking into HEIs resulted, by the early nineties, in a shift from the highly general public statements of the mid eighties (noted by Boys et al, 1988) to a preponderance of mission statements, logos and other manifestations of corporate image, previously associated with the business world.

Another indication of the shift to management values was the adoption of performance related pay, agreed between the CVCP and Association of University Teachers (AUT) in 1987, and finally agreed in the polytechnic sector in the early nineties. This followed a threat by the DES to withhold a proportion of funding from dissenting institutions, but exacerbated difficult relations between staff and management in many institutions. The introduction of new style management (managerialism, defined by Becher and Kogan (1992:179) as 'a pathological obtrusion of management values as promoted by a particular government ideology') has been as much about effecting a culture change within institutions as about extending the regulation and rationing functions which are fundamental to the policy making process (Hall et al, 1975), as evident in HEIs across the binary divide, as in other publicly funded organisations (Pollitt, 1990).

The 1988 ERA heralded the independence of polytechnics from local authority control (from April, 1989), and from CNAAC accreditation; and the replacement of NAB by the Polytechnic and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC). The Act disbanded the UGC (established 1919) and finally removed dispersal of funding between universities from the hands of academics, giving both its successor body, the University Funding Council (UFC), and the PCFC, stronger powers to implement government policy through funding mechanisms, thus 'effecting a nationalisation of higher education funding' (Letwin, 1992:274). However, both these bodies were relatively short-lived, being combined into national Higher Education Funding Councils (HEFCE, HEFCW and SHEFC) in 1992.

Policy Developments In The 1990s

The early nineties and a change in leadership of the conservative government did not see the advent of 'new policy trajectories' in higher education, but rather continued vigour in implementing policies initiated under 'Thatcherism' (Sullivan, 1994). An important theme has been competition, emphasised under John Major's leadership as a concern for consumer choice and rights (citizens charters of various kinds). The 1980s had seen a steady increase in the age participation rates of traditional entrants and an increasing number of entrants from non-traditional backgrounds (Schuller, 1991). Becher and Kogan (1992), commenting on the move to a mass education system, identified a shift from a strong centralist approach in higher education policy to one based on market values, with three key players, the government (via the funding bodies), the employers and the consumers, that is students.

In relation to *government* influence, the funding councils require institutions to bid for allocations; and these are dependent on certain criteria being met. Thus, for instance, in the case of recent subject area reviews, varying proportions of funding have been allocated depending on the judgements made about quality. These are based partly on 'value for money' and 'fitness for purpose' criteria, relating back to earlier concerns about the relevance of what courses offer, gauged by responsiveness to the market (that is, employers). Research Assessment Exercises (RAEs, 1992, 1996), have been another important device for assessing quality and distributing funding, and have resulted in increased research output (McNay, 1996) but also increased institutional competition. Both these mechanisms have been influential in promoting market forces within higher education, and in shifting the balance of power between HE and government (Barnett, 1994).

Various policies have been introduced from the mid eighties on, to promote increased contact between HEIs and *employers*, and responsiveness of the former to the latter's requirements (Boys et al, 1988), including in 1987 the Enterprise Initiative by the Department of Employment (see later). The 1988 ERA pushed the public sector institutions to become 'entrepreneurial, flexible and responsive' after vesting day, for example through the appointment of members of industry and commerce to newly constituted governing bodies; the break up of national negotiating machinery on academic pay; and competitive development of courses and services (Walford, 1991).

This process culminated in a White Paper (DES 1991) which laid the basis for the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act which abolished the binary divide. Thus, polytechnics which satisfied certain criteria were designated universities and the framework for a mass higher education system was established, though without increased resources. Sullivan (1994:41) has suggested that 'one of the reasons behind (the abolition of the binary line) ... was that the new universities had developed as successful polytechnics by adopting market values. The insertion of these institutions into an enlarged university sector would, it was hoped, encourage the old universities to compete for contracts in the real world of markets'. The expansion of higher education, catering for a more diverse student population through more varied and flexible programmes (with modularisation, credit accumulation and transfer, or approval of prior (experiential) learning), accompanied an increasing emphasis by government on technological change and modernisation of industry to promote British competitiveness and economic growth (Sullivan, 1994).

In relation to the *consumer* element, privatisation has not been a significant feature of the higher education sector (Hill and Bramley, 1990). However, the burden of funding is gradually being shifted from the state to the consumer (or students' families) through the effective reduction of student grants, the introduction of a loans scheme and the debate about fee levels and payment, with consequences for the egalitarian ideals underpinning higher education for most of the post-war period. The government has tended to use fee levels as a way of exercising some control over demand, as evidenced in the early eighties and again in 1993, following a £6,000m overspend in student funding in 1992/93 (Leader in The Times Higher, 16.7.93). The full cost basis for overseas student fees has established a broad minimum and some (prestigious) institutions charge more, according to what the market will bear.

This approach is also evident in intended 'top-up fees' and in variable fee levels of postgraduate courses. Undoubtedly, one consequence, if not a motive, of the government's encouragement of

increased part-time and open learning educational developments will be a direct shift of costs from LEAs to consumers - or perhaps to their employers. While there are concerns that increased costs may deter some students, there is no indication overall of a decrease in demand: a 43% increase in student numbers between 1989 and 1994, continued to grow (but more slowly) in the mid-nineties with a 2% increase in enrolments (to over 1.6m) from 1995 to 1996, of whom 32% are part-time (HESA Reports, 1995-97). However, demand varies between subjects and there have been recent closure of some departments (for example, physics) and even suggestions that the system needs rationalisation through (further) mergers of smaller institutions, across the former binary divide (Gould, 1997).

Apart from the marketisation and massification of the system, another contentious area of higher education policy in the 1990s is the monitoring of processes and outputs and their relationship to funding. The issue of accountability is inescapable in publicly financed services but the establishment and operation of separate bodies, the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC, concerned with institutional processes) and the quality assessment divisions of HEFCs (concerned with teaching and learning in subject areas and research) led to a sense of overkill in external scrutiny in the early nineties and has exacerbated concerns about academic freedom now considered.

Accountability And Academic Freedom

Accountability has been defined as ‘... the obligation of professionals, individually and collectively, to justify their actions and decisions to legitimate audiences’ (Becher, 1994:161). The cumulative effects of policy change in the eighties and early nineties has prompted considerable debate, both about accountability and the nature of academic freedom. Kogan suggested (1988:18) that the problem with accountability in education is that, while education is financed and sponsored as a public activity, it is carried out in institutions which are largely closed to public scrutiny and difficult to supervise from outside. Additionally, in the face of multiple interest groups to whom the teacher or lecturer should be accountable, (s)he may claim ‘the right to self accountability on the basis of expertise and the moral authority of a profession’.

Writing subsequent to some of the measures established to effect public scrutiny, Ferguson (1994:93) stated that reform of education was central to the public policy reform project - it was seen as ‘expensive, not self-evidently adequately productive, insufficiently accountable, monopolistic, producer dominated, resistant to consumer demand and, at worst, self-generating

and self-serving'. However, he noted that in higher education 'more academic autonomies' had been retained, relative to the position of school teachers, notwithstanding the ubiquitous penetration of managerialism, including in the higher education sector.

It is debatable how far policy change has penetrated higher education at the level of individual academics and basic units. Becher has suggested that there have been some signs of 'collective resistance against the coercive demands from central policy makers ... many centrally announced reforms leave no lasting deposit because internal constituencies are not effectively summoned to support them. When a system is bottom-heavy, groups at the grass roots are key participants in implementing policies and reforms' (Becher, 1994:178). However, one effect of ERA was to change the conditions of academic tenure, and this and fiscal pressures have altered the composition of the workforce, in line with other parts of the economy, to a core of permanent staff and a periphery of temporary (and usually poorly paid) employees, for whom the notion of academic freedom may seem remote.

Concerns about the position of academic freedom were illustrated in 1988, when the Society for Research in Higher Education took this theme as its conference focus. The concept was defined by one speaker as 'the right of academics and other scholars who need to exercise the same functions, to pursue research, to teach and to publish, without control, restraint and the threat of sanctions from the institutions that employ them': he linked the threat to academic freedom to a wider government agenda to suppress freedoms of all kinds (Turner, 1988).

Another speaker, Barnett (1988) described academic freedom as 'the self-serving rhetoric of an interest group' and apparently challenged the relevance of the concept: in fact, he was questioning the extent to which academics are expected, or accept the responsibility, to perform a critical function in society, ideas he developed further in two subsequent publications (Barnett, 1992; Barnett, 1994). Concern was expressed that academics have moved from a professional to a technocratic role, an idea paralleled in debates about other professional roles and professional education, and linked to the development of utilitarian values in higher education. In a review of the edited collection of the conference proceedings (Tight, 1988), Flood Page observed that there was too little mention of responsibility, and if not coupled with this, 'academic freedom degenerates into selfish privilege' (Flood Page, 1989:631), echoing the views of critics that academic freedom is a discredited and outmoded concept.

Observing the changes experienced by British academics (as reported in Eggins, 1988), an American reviewer commented, 'These papers (illustrate) the degree to which the government has been successful in dictating the agenda for debate and the terms of the discourse. Change, even turbulence, has become the order of the day in British higher education' (Foster, 1989:624). He characterised British higher education as 'an academy in retreat' but also noted 'a fine mist of resistance, reserve and reservation (floating) through the essays' and some evidence of 'ingenious adaptations and coping strategies' (Foster, 1989: 625-26). Such commentary accords with policy writers' views on the role of professionals at the policy implementation stage (Barrett and Fudge, 1981; Rein, 1983). It illustrates the way in which academic freedom is a variant of professional autonomy, to be used responsibly, in this case for the purpose of developing knowledge, understanding and critical perspectives in the interests of society (Barnett, 1994).

Writing in defence of the first publication of League Tables of HEIs, Cannon (1993) proclaimed 'accountability is at the heart of publication', and suggested that previous strands of accountability (through open collegiate structures in the universities, and local democratic controls in the case of polytechnics) had been undermined by the growth of managerialism and the severing of links with local government. He further stated that the increasing complexity and diversity of the sector, and consumer needs for accurate data on which to base judgements (choices), justified publication (in *The Times Higher*) and that this should be seen as being of potential benefit to all participants. This new openness about higher education's achievements and failings can be seen as a response to criticism and the declining reputation of the sector in the preceding decades, chronicled for instance by Silver (1990), as well as a plank in the marketisation strategy, and a corollary of the 'painful transformation' from an elite to a popular system (Ball and Eggins, 1989:1).

Some of the recent literature, and the more recent debates about a restructured quality assurance system, suggest a shift to a more proactive stance by academics in the face of government pressures on higher education, and the perceived threat to academic freedom. However, traditional conceptions of higher education, including ideas about research, the learning process, the role of students and relations with employers and communities, have been substantially challenged, and some of these changes are now explored through examination of a particular policy, the Enterprise Initiative.

Enterprise In Higher Education

The Enterprise Initiative, launched by the government via the Manpower Services Commission (MSC), continued a broader strategy (including the technical and vocational educational initiative (TVEI) in schools and funding of technical equipment) to upgrade the skills of the British workforce, and to ensure that higher education courses provided education and training relevant to the country's economic needs. A decisive shift from liberal educational values to the imposition of instrumental values was evident in a government White Paper of 1987, which stated 'the Government and its central funding agencies will do all they can to encourage and reward approaches to higher education which bring (institutions) closer to the world of business' (Boys et al, 1988:12).

The government had already established the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ and a parallel body in Scotland) in 1986, and the Enterprise programme and related initiatives (for instance, the PICKUP scheme providing pump-priming funds for HE courses for managers) have had a significant bearing both on the amount and source of funds available to HEIs and, *inter alia*, the nature of changes promoted in teaching, learning and assessment. Some HEIs, particularly in the public sector, were already promoting an 'entrepreneurial strategy' in the early eighties (Lockwood and Davies, 1985), and universities in particular were increasing their income from research contracts (from 16% in 1981 to 27% in 1987, but still only 3% from industry) (Walford, 1991:175). The Enterprise scheme injected a substantial sum into selected HEIs over the first five years of operation (£100m in 1987-92) for projects which would 'inbed (*sic*) initiative into the curriculum' (Becher and Kogan, 1992:48).

The broad objective of the Enterprise Initiative was to promote teaching, learning and assessment strategies which would produce self-reliant students with specific skills (competencies), readily transferable to the world of work. As part of this exercise, initial funding criteria required proposals to be jointly submitted by HEIs and industrial or other external agency partners. Tasker and Packard (1993) suggested that this resulted in mutually profitable relationships between industry and higher education, but that continuing differences in the value systems and interests of each remained and should be respected.

Wright described the Enterprise Initiative as 'the most important instance of planned curriculum development in higher education' (Wright, 1992) and saw this as a means of promoting a more active student role in the learning process. He related it to the development of modularisation

and credit accumulation and transfer schemes (CATS), though these were also responses, in part, to the declining resource base of HEIs, and recognition of the increasing difficulty for some students of sustaining full time attendance. The emphasis on skills, divorced from historic associations with specific trades and occupational cultures, has also been seen as promoting abstract qualities in an individualised and mobile workforce (Cohen, 1990).

While advocates of the scheme appreciated its practicality, its capacity for income generation, and the employability of its graduates, it was also found to require planning to harness and focus its effects. If initiatives were not built into the strategic developments of units and institutions, results were likely to be random and short-lived. It is not surprising, therefore, that a subsequent development, promoted by the HEFCE (1993/94), made available £0.7m to support effective teaching learning and assessment by projects which span more than one HEI. The focus of the five projects approved in the later scheme (out of 118 proposals received) is also indicative of government priorities: maths learning and assessment; supplemental instruction; effective teaching and learning in fieldwork (archaeology, geography, geology); course design for resource-based learning; and effective engineering education (HEFCE, 1993).

Meanwhile, the disbanding of the Department of Employment and the aggregation of its former training functions with the Department for Education (into a combined Department of Education and Employment, 7/95) regularised the increasingly close relationship between education and training in the service of the economy, and reconceptualised a higher education objective as the development of transferable skills. Thus, some of the issues which have long confronted educators of students for the professions have become more general questions for all academics; and a shift from educational values favouring theoretical knowledge to those valuing applied knowledge seems to have been achieved, though not without the continuing reservations of some academics (Barnett, 1994).

The question posed by Halsey and Trow in the sixties in response to the Robbins Report, 'How would academic men (*sic*) in Britain adapt themselves and their institutions to a period of expansion and redefinition of higher education' (Halsey and Trow, 1971) has been posed even more acutely in the past decade. The Enterprise Initiative, amongst other policies, has played an important part in attempting to reconstruct HEIs on lines suggested by commercial and industrial undertakings. However, Halsey, is confident that the essential idea of the University (a place for pursuit of truth and intellectual development) will remain (Halsey, 1992).

Concluding Comments

This chapter has traced policy changes affecting higher education over the post war period, and particularly in the eighties and nineties, emphasising the values informing these changes. Ferguson (1994:96) has summarised the objectives of educational reform (since 1979) as follows:- 'the creation of competitive markets in service provision; establishing the powers and rights of consumers; the subordination and curtailment of producer power and interests; the pursuit of efficiency and economy (in the interests of reduced public expenditure); the promotion of excellence over equity; and the encouragement of diversity in the interests of consumer choice' all to be achieved by empowering the consumer, controlling the producer and promoting the role of the (industry inspired) manager.

As Kogan noted in 1988, in an afterward to his 1986 text, the extent of changes taking place in the purposes and organisation of the education system could not have been readily envisaged (Kogan, 1988), a sentiment which continued to resonate into the 1990s. At the time of writing, the outcome of a major inquiry into higher education (the 'Dearing Report', 1997) and the recent election of a New Labour government suggest that changing policies are likely to be a continuing feature of the higher education scene. The relationship between HEIs and society is still in the throes of redefinition. However, a mass higher education system with limited resourcing is now an established fact, and corollaries such as increased student responsibility and new thinking about teaching, learning and assessment methods require system wide adaptations, not least at the level of the basic unit. The extent to which changes in higher education have affected a particular subject area is one of the issues explored in this study.

The effects of significant and continuing change on academics and other staff in the system have been considerable, and the strategies for resisting and adapting are varied. There is some impressionistic evidence of individual 'exit' rather than the raising of a concerted academic 'voice' (Hirschman, 1970) in the face of new conditions, but increasingly the changes are producing important debates on accountability and academic freedom; and on the values, knowledge and skills to be promoted and the means by which these may be transmitted. These debates - about higher education purpose, content, form, resourcing and academic role - are considered further in relation to professional education and the nature of knowledge in the next chapter and subsequently re-examined in Part III in the light of the empirical data about the subject of social work.

CHAPTER 5: PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND KNOWLEDGE

Introduction

The changing ethos of higher education, promoted by policies outlined in Chapter 4, has coincided with a growth in interest in the place and form of professional education in HEIs. Becher (1989:32) noted the 'near total neglect' of professional subjects as the focus of academic inquiry, and attributed this to the difficulty of distinguishing them from their 'surrounding domains of professional practice'. But there has been a burgeoning of literature about professional education since the 1980s, and this material, together with wider literature about conceptions of knowledge, is the main focus of this chapter.

Some characteristics and issues of the professions themselves are examined first, pre-figured, in part, by discussion in Chapter 3 in relation to the field of social work. Writing in the sixties, Parsons described academics as 'the keystone in the arch of a professionally oriented society' (cited in Curry et al, 1993:282) and their changing fortunes (particularly in autonomy and accountability, already described) illustrate a general weakening of professional power in recent decades.

Policy change in higher education has affected all academics, but professional educators have also been subject to shifting expectations (related to developments within their field of practice) and have experienced the closer scrutiny of employer interests, through professional accreditation bodies, for considerably longer periods than their disciplinary colleagues. The tensions between professional education and professions and the criticisms, from within and without, of these related elements are examined.

The other significant bases for distinctions between disciplines and professional education relate to the epistemology of particular subjects, and to the notion of a hierarchy of knowledge, both in higher education and in the wider society. Traditional conceptions of knowledge are being challenged, and the changing role of HEIs has led to a reappraisal of teaching, learning and assessment methods: some of these developments are further discussed in the particular context of professional education. Thus, the chapter explores some of the wider issues common to all forms of professional education, which have a bearing on the particular challenges and changes which social work is experiencing.

Some Characteristics And Issues Of The Professions

Siegrist (1994:3) has summarised the history of the professions as intimately linked with 'the social processes of modernisation and rationalisation; with professionalisation and bureaucratisation, with the development of school cultures and the meritocratic system and with juridification, medicalisation and technical and economic progress'. He also comments that there is no single theory of the professions or an adequate definition: this can be linked to the observation that, although used as a generic term, it is a changing historic concept with particularistic roots (Freidson, 1986). Earlier writers in the field advanced a 'trait model' by which to define professions, related to expertise, ethics, education, and entry, in which knowledge was seen as a core trait (Macdonald, 1995).

The process by which some occupational groups have become professions has been summarised thus: random and haphazard entry to an occupation has given rise to voluntary formation of associations or guilds, which subsequently organise training. There follows the imposition of entry and training requirements, with accreditation of courses and licensing of practitioners (Matarazzo, 1977). Johnson (1972) had earlier described this professionalising process as one among a number of devices for asserting occupational control, and others have also commented on the notion of occupational closure, implicit in the concept (for example, Torstendahl, 1994).

The question of which occupations are designated 'professions' is a source of continuing debate - not least within aspiring occupational groups, as illustrated earlier in the case of social work. Any list produced is likely to be longer than those professions originally recognised - law, medicine, the clergy and the military - but additions are likely to be contentious, or may be appropriate and acceptable in one country but not elsewhere. Thus, American writers recently suggested a list which they classified into three clusters, that is, helping, entrepreneurial or technical professions (Curry et al, 1993:xiii), which would be arguable or incomplete in a British context. A recent British writer takes a pragmatic view, 'contemporary academic approaches to professionalism tend to be eclectic. This mirrors everyday usage, which extends the term to groups of employees that lack many of the attributes functionally associated with professional status. So whether teaching qualifies, depends on what criteria of professionalism one adopts' (Taylor, 1994:43).

While class, with its associated variations in opportunities for education, has been recognised as a factor in entry to and status of professions, recent literature has also questioned the role of

gender for individuals and for particular occupational groups. As long ago as 1975, Blackstone and Fulton examined the position of women in entry and progression in academic posts, and there is now some monitoring of both gender and race in the statistics gathered by the Higher Education Statistics Agency. Theoretical work by Witz (1991) on the topic of professions and gender was alluded to in the earlier discussion about social work (Chapter 3). Her arguments have particular significance in relation to occupations where women predominate, sometimes referred to as the 'caring professions', and their associated educational fields. Thus, Becher could write that 'women are significantly under-represented in the physical and social sciences but they appear in sizeable numbers in female oriented subject areas such as ... home economics and in relatively low status fields such as library science and education' (Becher, 1989:125).

Concerns about how professions are defined have arguably been less important in the UK recently than the internal and external changes affecting most professional groups, also noted earlier (Henkel, 1994). The implications of such changes for a particular subject is an important theme of this research, and is now examined further in relation to the wider literature about professional education.

Education For The Professions

The relationship between professions and the professional schools has always been complex, and variable between professions. Professional schools regulate initial entry to and standards achieved by those aspiring to a particular profession, but are themselves regulated by representatives of the relevant profession, as well as by academic peers. Since the universities act as a certifying agency for professions it is appropriate that professional education should be closely aligned to the external professional requirements. However, the relationship between the professional practitioners and managers, and professional educators and researchers may well be a site for conflict.

Concerns about the nature and standards of professional education are by no means new, nor limited to the UK, nor to one profession. In 1910 the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Training sponsored the Flexner Report into (the state of) medical education and, subsequently, the Reed Report on legal education in 1921, both in the USA (Boyer, 1990). Much more recently, an American national project was established in response to widespread dissatisfaction with the prevailing model of scholarship (based on European traditions). This recommended a

broader conception of scholarship more congruent with the diversity of HEIs and 'more appropriate, authentic and adaptive' (Boyer, 1990).

Also writing of the American scene, Hixon Cavanagh (1993:107) states, 'evidence suggests a discontinuity between the education to which aspiring professionals are exposed and the nature of work demands encountered in professional practice'. She cites the work of Wingard and Williams (1973) as evidence of the mismatch between professional education and practice. This research found no relation between academic grades and subsequent professional performance in the fields of medicine, business and teaching. (A more recent British study (Lyons et al, 1995) also found no correlation between the career patterns of social workers and the academic level at which they obtained their professional qualification, although the authors did not suggest that this indicated irrelevant or inadequate education).

Hartman (1989:500), looking at six professional schools in an Australian university, found that 'control from outside (the HEI) is seen by academics to retard change ... and (to create) too little flexibility in syllabus operations ... (conversely, university courses are) ... typically seen by outside professionals to be removed from the world of practice, too theoretical and quite radical in orientation'. He also noted the tension between commitment to traditional academic norms and scholarship relative to the transmission of distinctly vocational skills and attitudes' required of professional educators. A Swedish writer notes 'There has been a growing tension between the interests of the practitioners and the interests of teachers and researchers, who are seeking more control over a distinct discipline' (Svenson, 1994:133).

Similar concerns are apparent in relation to British professional education, and public criticism has, in part, provided legitimacy for increased levels of government intervention. As Becher has stated, 'the professions themselves are facing a difficult period, and one in which Government intervention seems in a number of countries to have become more active than at any other time in their long existence. That intervention has commonly taken the form of exercising direct control over the process or outcomes of initial training' (Becher, 1994:ix).

This is perhaps most clearly seen in Britain in the case of teaching and social work (Graham, 1996; Jackson and Preston-Shoot, 1996), but has also been experienced by educators in more established professional fields. (Vang (1994), writing of changes in Health Care in the 1980s, noted consequent challenges to medical education). Further, Graham (1996) has suggested that government sponsorship of research in the teacher training field (through the Teacher Training

Agency) may result in government control and redefinition of the knowledge base, a salutary warning for all forms of professional education, and not unrelated to concerns about the whole enterprise of higher education (Barnett, 1994).

Thus, there are a range of concerns and criticisms of professional education, which can partly be explained by its position on the boundaries between academic institutions and the competing claims of professional fields. Conflict because of differing value systems and more or less overt power struggles are not unusual and may be compounded by societal dissatisfaction with particular professions, or 'experts' in general. Some of the issues are related to conceptions of knowledge and the status given to particular forms of research and pedagogy, both within institutions and by wider society, and these are considered further in the next section. However, there is a final aspect of the relationship between the professions and professional education which merits discussion first, that is the form which accountability to the field might take.

Partnerships And Accountability

Reference has already been made to the necessary relationship between professionals and professional education, and, in Chapters 3 and 4, to issues of accountability facing all professionals, including academics. What range and nature of external relationships do professional educators experience? Burrage (1994) has suggested that professional education is the product of the interaction of four sets of interests - the profession/practitioners; the state; the educators; and the users. Whether by users he means students, or users of the 'products' of higher education (employers) or consumers of the services which resulting professionals provide, is unclear.

At one level, the users of education are clearly students, and current changes in educational resourcing and methodology, as well as the philosophy underpinning notions of reflective practice (see later) and student self-responsibility suggest an increasing role for them. The extent to which this is formalised in the representation of students in the various systems for planning and monitoring educational programmes seems likely to be variable. The previous government's promotion of citizen charters of various kinds suggest that professional education should be more susceptible to feedback and input from users of professional services, and there is some evidence in the literature that this is a matter of wider concern in higher education (Haselgrove, 1994).

Government influence, previously discussed in relation to British social work and higher education, can be regarded as a relatively recent innovation in contrast to continental Europe where professional education has long been more formally prescribed by the state (Burrage, 1994; Heidenheimer, 1989). In the main, formalised relationships have traditionally existed primarily between representatives of practising professionals and the educators. Bodies to restrict entry to particular professions have existed since the 19th century (the General Medical Council was established in 1858); and most of them also regulate the training which their aspiring members should undertake, for example, engineering institutions have supervised 'schools' since the 1920s (Torstendhal, 1994). There is thus a very direct link in terms of accreditation of courses in Britain and elsewhere. In the USA, for instance, Burrage (1994) notes that systems for external scrutiny and accountability, including by professional bodies, have been in place 'for decades'.

More locally, recent government and professional initiatives in the UK have also encouraged or required the active participation of representatives of the professions, particularly employing bodies, in planning and delivery of educational programmes. As mentioned, this has been particularly evident in the areas of teaching and social work (Taylor, 1994; Henkel, 1994). The British requirements for partnerships in both social work and teacher education puts into practice a proposal by an American writer for 'deliberative curriculum enquiry as a strategy for curriculum design that more closely mirrors reflective practice' including deliberation among the stake holders (Harris, 1993:18).

The trend towards closer collaboration is also observable in other areas, not least due to the Enterprise Initiative. Thus, work placements, have become an increasingly important aspect of many courses (whether concurrent, or offered on a 'sandwich' basis as a year or shorter periods outside the institution). But placements exert their own demands on practitioners and educators if students are to derive maximum benefit, and 'Neither funding nor training is necessarily available to develop ... the role of the practice teacher/professional mentor ... or the contribution of practising professionals to the course as a whole' (Bines and Watson, 1992:22). In general, it is unclear whether partnerships secure enhanced development of professional knowledge or increased tension between professionals and educators, but some findings about the resourcing implications of them are reported in Part II.

On The Nature Of Knowledge

It was mentioned earlier that knowledge is a 'core trait' of professions but it can be argued that the particular forms of knowledge created and utilised in professional education differ from traditional conceptions of knowledge, based on the Cartesian paradigm (Henkel, 1995). Some of the literature about the nature of knowledge and about epistemological issues raised by education for the professions are now considered.

Over thirty years ago, Polanyi proposed that knowledge is a function of the whole personal experience. He used 'the idea of 'personal knowledge' as the basis of an attack on the scientific notion that real knowledge is public and objective in character'(Barnett, 1994:106). Polanyi elaborated the notion of *tacit knowledge*: this suggests that all new learning takes place in the context of existing knowledge derived from the totality of individual experience, some of it beyond the conscious recollection of the learner (Polanyi, 1962). This concept has proved important in developing ideas about curriculum and pedagogy in the area of professional education, and builds on ideas originally propounded by Dewey, in support of liberal education. Dewey's view that 'knowledge is humanistic in quality, not because it is about human products.....but because of what it does in liberating human intelligence and human sympathy' (Dewey, 1916:23) has echoes in some of the subsequent literature presented here.

Ideas about knowledge in relation to the individual learner can be placed alongside more structural approaches to an exploration of its nature and place in society, developing in Britain in the 1970s. Thus, Bernstein wrote, 'How a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers to be public, reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control'; and suggested that formal educational knowledge is realised through the 'message systems' of curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation, the last being the 'valid realisation of this knowledge on the part of the taught' (Bernstein, 1971:202-203). Barnett (1994:26) expressed this slightly differently: 'knowledge is not so much transmitted as painfully authenticated by each student'. Both these points have considerable relevance to current debates about professional education - how far curricula should be prescribed and whether methods of pedagogy enable and appropriately assess the individual learning of students (see later).

Habermas, writing during the 1970s and 1980s about different forms of knowledge, suggests that scientific knowledge (concerned with predicting the workings of the natural world and controlling it) has been valued in society at the expense of hermeneutic knowledge and emancipatory

knowledge (concerned with comprehending and communicating with each other, and developing views of the world which lead to changed self-understanding, respectively, (Habermas, 1978)). This public prioritising of different forms of knowledge has been reflected in the higher education system where scientific knowledge, representative of instrumental interests and strategic rationality, has often predominated over communicative and critical interests.

These ideas are central to any consideration of societal values and culture, and underpin Habermas' espousal of a revaluing of the place of communicative action and critical reflection, in the interests of developing a healthy 'life world': both necessitate the development of a more open society, where knowledge and actions are not distorted by power relations. Such ideas also illuminate the relationship between and relative status attributed to different forms of knowledge, as represented by disciplines.

Toulmin suggested that knowledge is developed by 'communities of knowers' and that each discipline is characterised by its own body of knowledge (concepts), methods and fundamental aims (its epistemology). Academics are concerned with issues of stability and transformation, in terms of transmission to the next generation and modification by research (Toulmin, 1972:139). He further identified disciplines as constituting both 'a communal tradition of procedures and techniques for dealing with theoretical and practical problems' and 'a profession comprising an organised set of institutions, roles and men whose business it is to apply or improve these procedure and techniques', that is, disciplines have both an internal and an external 'life story' (p142). Toulmin also advanced the notion of the 'enculturation' of students into the collective concepts of the discipline through a form of apprenticeship, successful completion of which is marked by the student's ability, not only to internalise the knowledge, but also to critique and develop it (p159).

The relationships between epistemology and knowledge communities were further explored in Becher's research (1989) about the culture of disciplines, and in the distinctions he drew between hard, soft, pure and applied knowledge forms, which he also related to the likely learning styles of students (see Appendix II). These dimensions (knowledge and the knowers) are as relevant to a discussion of professional education as they are to thinking about traditional academic disciplines, and are explored in this research.

More recently, Barnett's work, about the changing perceptions of the nature of higher education, (1990) and about the relationship between knowledge, higher education and society (1994) have

underlined the shift which has taken place in conceptions of knowledge and the role of academics in transmitting and assessing it. He suggests that the predominance of instrumental values in society have resulted in knowledge itself being commodified, and increased emphasis being placed on the acquisition of skills and functional knowledge. In these circumstances, academic work increasingly resembles training rather than education, and the development of critical thought, once the aim of higher education, is discouraged.

In place of terms such as understanding and wisdom, Barnett (1994) identifies a new vocabulary which superficially suggests some convergence between disciplines and professional subjects, in terms of goals and methods. However, there is a danger that this is at the expense of critical reflection in *all* subject areas. Barnett also cites Scott (1984) in noting a shift from 'knowledge as a process' to 'knowledge as a product', and sees modularisation as a device for the fragmentation of knowledge and weakening of disciplines (Barnett, 1994), both matters of concern to professional educators.

Finally, the concept of inter-disciplinarity is relevant to professional education. Barnett (1994:127) suggests this was 'more a feature of the higher education discourse than its practice', and concludes that new forms of organisation and thinking, including the weakening of disciplinary frameworks, diminish the possibility of inter-disciplinarity developing at other than a superficial level. If the potential for inter-disciplinarity has been minimised, this may also in part explain the vulnerability of some forms of professional education which require interdisciplinary approaches. However, it can be questioned whether individual forms of professional education, while drawing on knowledge from other areas, make it their own in the particular way that concepts are combined and used.

It would be appropriate now to review some of the literature about knowledge *vis a vis* professional education more particularly and about the specific aspect of its assessment in this context.

Knowledge And The Reflective Practitioner

Jones and Joss describe 'The nature and application of knowledge ... (as) a key dimension of professional work' (Jones and Joss, 1995:21), and have noted the inadequacy of single conceptions of knowledge. They cite Walker (1992) in referring to three forms of knowledge considered appropriate to professional performance, namely, content knowledge (public bodies of

theories, procedures and information); knowledge as a cognitive process; and practical knowledge of the practising professional (p21). They further suggest that while a knowledge base is essential for all professionals, the degree of theoretical orientation, the values attached to the knowledge, how knowledge is applied and the existence or not of explicit practice theory vary between professions.

In the same volume, Henkel has examined 'some of the profound shifts in theories of knowledge that have been made in the course of the 20th century' exploring particularly pragmatism and hermeneutics (Henkel, 1995:68). She suggests that both these paradigms (the first emanating from a scientific tradition, the second humanistic) reject the Cartesian view of knowledge and replace it with one which has 'action embedded in it'. Within these paradigms both (social) scientists and professionals are reflective participants in, rather than privileged observers of, particular phenomena or situations. Further, knowledge has moral, intellectual and personal dimensions and its development requires continuing dialogue between and within communities. Within these frames, professional education can be seen as 'a process of moving between grounded understanding of one's own practices, strengthening ... (them) ... and confronting theories, paradigms and practices which challenge them' (Henkel, 1995:78).

These ideas relate to the emphasis in much professional education given to recognising and even starting from the 'situation and experience' of students (McNamara, 1990) and the value placed on learning by doing or experiential learning (Gibbs, 1988); and have a clear association with the works of Schon, concerning the nature of and conditions for producing reflective practice (Schon, 1983, 1987). Schon, drawing on the work of Dewey (1933) and of Polanyi (1967) and others, advocated the redevelopment of professional education to combine the teaching of applied science with coaching in the activity of 'reflection in action'. He described artistry as 'the exercise of intelligence', 'a kind of knowing', and suggested that while applied science and research-based techniques are important, they are 'bounded by the art of problem framing, implementation and improvisation' (Schon, 1987:13).

He further contends that learning all forms of professional artistry requires the use of practicums - specially designed settings and scenarios where students individually and collectively 'practice' under supervision. These 'virtual worlds' with their own culture, language, norms and rituals must have legitimacy in the academic world and not be isolated from their professional world ... rather they should provide 'a bridge' between the two worlds (Schon, 1987:347). Schon's work has

been widely used recently on both sides of the Atlantic to advance debates about the conditions necessary for professional learning and the appropriate forms of knowledge in their education.

One such writer, in the USA, states 'This (new) epistemology suggests the importance of systematically eliciting the general principles and strategies embedded in the knowing-in- action of expert practitioners ... (and) extends the sources of knowledge for practice from university based basic and applied ... research to knowledge-of-practice emanating from the analysis of masterful practice' (Harris, 1993:50).

Rice and Richlin (1993, citing Boyer *op cit*) summarised four dimensions of scholarly work - discovery of knowledge; integration of knowledge; transmission of knowledge (requiring synoptic capacity and knowledge of pedagogical theory); and the scholarship of practice - suggesting that giving recognition to the third and fourth areas in higher education would have a significant effect in halting a drift by professional educators away from promotion of knowledge relevant to professional practice. They quote Brown and Gelertner (1989) in support of their concern about and reasons for the mismatch between professional education and the needs of practice: 'academics (wish) to make the discipline more academically respectable and theoretically credible and less like practical training' (p.64).

Rice and Richlin further suggest that fields in which educators retain a role in professional practice (for example, accountancy, architecture, business) have adopted a more pragmatic view of research, and they follow Schon in advocating that the wisdom embedded in practice (phronesis), and theory derived from practice, should be given equal weight with more traditional forms of academic research and scholarship (Rice and Richlin, 1993:313). In summarising the various themes in this American text about professional education Curry and Wergin suggest that 'Faculty need to reflect on ... how their teaching, research and service activities take place not in an academic sanctuary but in an environment that models the kind of professional expertise increasingly demanded by the larger society' (Curry et al, 1993:322).

Assessment And Competencies

The relevance for professional education of traditional assessment methods has recently come into question, with, at least in some fields, an increased emphasis on the need for assessment to reflect, not just what the student has learned in relation to content knowledge, but also whether

this learning can be demonstrated in practice. A shift towards outcome based assessment, including the use of 'competencies' is evident in a number of fields of professional education.

The origins of the competency movement in British higher education lie in government attempts to create a national framework of vocational certification across a range of occupations. The Training Agency in 1988 defined competencies as follows 'the ability to perform the activities within an occupation or function to the Standards expected in employment'. Competence includes the ability to transfer skills and knowledge to new situations; to organise and plan work; to innovate and cope with non-routine activities; and to deal effectively with co-workers, managers and customers (Yelloly, 1995:53).

Writing of social work, Henkel (1994) described competencies at NVQ level, as 'reductionist and atomistic' and suggested that the challenge to professional education is to devise competencies which reflect the holistic and reflective conceptions of professional practice. However, the assessment of competencies involves complex judgements and Jones and Joss (1995:20) suggest that in some situations competence can only be inferred rather than directly observed. In fact, it is precisely in assessing key attributes of professionals such as artistry and judgement that assessment using a competency based approach may fall short. This would seem to throw assessors back on their own professional or intuitive judgements about standards of performance - a subjective position which the use of competencies seeks to avoid. Jones and Joss suggest that professional competencies must include elements of knowledge, values, understanding and behaviour and must be combined in ways appropriate to a given situation.

Assessment of work-based competencies are also seen as appropriate to post qualifying or continuing professional education which is often part time, learner directed and/or making use of credit accumulation schemes and assessment of prior (experiential) learning (APL/APEL) (Bines and Watson, 1992; Curry at al, 1993; Yelloly, 1995). While the competency approach is not yet well established in HE assessment, it obviously has relevance to the future development of professional education, and a start has been made on developing competencies which addresses the cognitive, reflective and affective processes involved, in the area of post-qualifying education for social workers (Winter and Maisch, 1992).

From the foregoing, it is clear that, while the location of professional education in the university sector may add legitimacy to the status of professional knowledge and promote extension of knowledge through research, it also poses questions about discipline-based assumptions about the

value of particular forms of knowledge, scholarship and research as well as about the practical aspects of how learning is structured and assessed, which extend beyond the particular subject which is the focus of this research.

Conclusions : Professional Education And Higher Education

Professional education is of necessity closely related to the professional field of practice and some of the tensions experienced can be attributed to turbulence in the field, or to conflict on the boundaries between two systems. However, the position of professional education in higher education may also be questioned, carrying with it dangers of either too close an association with academic norms and values (and thus remoteness from the field) or insufficient attention to research and theory development (and thus lacking academic credibility). There are deeper questions related to how knowledge is conceived and the value placed on particular forms of scholarship and pedagogy, and to the expectations society has of higher education.

In 1989 Becher wrote of the low status of professional education in the universities, attributing this to its role in transmitting knowledge rather than creating it (Becher, 1989:3). However, professional schools are beginning to challenge the hierarchical conception of knowledge that makes application of knowledge derivative and consequently second best, and it has been suggested that scholarship must be put in a broader context, including application and relevance (Rice and Richlin, 1993:310).

An American writer has suggested the following reasons for the mismatch between academic environments and professional education :-

- (i) academics are influenced by a culture that rewards scientific knowledge and research (more than practice);
- (ii) the disciplinary specific organisation of academic institutions creates barriers to curriculum integration (necessary in most forms of professional education);
- (iii) the effects of poor curriculum integration are made worse by inappropriate evaluation methods (Hixon Cavanagh, 1993:109).

These are all issues also identified in recent British literature and summarised in the foregoing discussion. Further, as Schon suggested in 1987, greater confidence in the value of practice knowledge (and research in this area), as well as an expanded definition of what constitutes scholarly work would undoubtedly benefit professional education and enable it to develop in ways

more appropriate to professional needs, without jeopardising its place in higher education (Boyer, 1990; Rice and Richlin, 1993). At the moment professional educators may feel between a rock and a hard place, either pursuing research calculated to establish academic credibility (and with perhaps little immediate value to the field) or undertaking applied research (for which they gain little academic credit).

Both Toulmin (1972) and Becher have made connections between the culture of disciplines and the people who create and transmit their codes and values. Becher has also suggested that many academics in the soft pure and applied areas could be regarded as 'late bloomers' (Becher, 1989:120) in research terms - a notion of particular relevance to professional educators who may have spent time in professional practice prior to changing career. These themes are further explored in the context of research findings in Part II.

However, as has been pointed out, 'the research culture, the essence of the university stamp, demands a considerable theoretical input which ultimately differentiates professional training from trades' (Hartman, 1989:507). Other writers mentioned here have written of the vulnerability of professional education in particular, associated with changes to the professions externally, in addition to the changes taking place in higher education, including the declining resource base (Bines and Watson, 1992, Henkel, 1994). It is possible that the shift to more utilitarian values prompted by government policy in the UK, and also evident in higher education in other parts of the world; and some of the changes in relation to expectations of students and outcomes, will promote re-evaluation of the role and status of professional education, as part of a wider renegotiation of the relationship between higher education and society.

Certainly, some professional schools have long been concerned with promoting educational approaches in teaching, learning and assessment which are now gaining greater currency in higher education, and ideas of partnership - notwithstanding the value conflicts and tensions inherent in them - are not new to many professional educators. Bines and Watson (1992), while recognising the impact on professional education of recent policy and societal changes, go on to give examples of a range of innovations and developments which have taken place in professional education in one British university, notwithstanding the threats and restrictions commonly being experienced.

In conclusion, it seems as if some of the trends and practices evident in professional education are being given greater legitimacy, both by recent research and literature and by more general

concerns about the role and nature of higher education outlined in the previous chapter. However, the question arises about whether this is at the expense of some necessary autonomy in the relationship between academics and society and in the scope for critical thinking (Barnett, 1994), not least in relation to education for the professions. This literature review suggests that some of the issues raised in the research about social work are general to the wider field of professional education, and this supposition will be returned to in the light of the empirical data in Part III.

CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter, with its focus on the research process, acts as a bridge between the contextual and theoretical framework provided by the literature review in Part I and the empirical data analysis in Part II. It commences with an overview of the main themes from the preceding discussions about policy developments in the fields of social work and higher education, and the characteristics of professional education, before considering the theoretical and practical aspects of the research design, methodology and implementation.

The research originated from the writer's experience of the day to day issues and concerns of social work education, and of its relationships within HEIs and with the external field. A retrospective policy analysis based on secondary sources and interviews with key informants was set aside after an early period of 'reading around', in favour of a contemporary inquiry into the nature of the subject area, the effects of changes in the early nineties and prospects for the demise or development of the subject in higher education. This focus was in part suggested by other studies on the nature of disciplines (Toulmin, 1972; Becher, 1989).

Becher (1989:180) identified his study of the epistemology and culture of disciplines as a 'prolegomenon not an epilogue', and said 'Much more remains to be done in the way of a systematic study of the nature of knowledge fields and the cultural aspects of communities engaged in their exploration. *In the first place, it could be useful to undertake further case studies of some of the disciplines not included in the current sample*' and he referred specifically to the scope for 'concentration on such applied fields as ... education and *social work*' (op cit. p179, writer's italics). However, this thesis places less emphasis on the epistemology of the subject, and more on the policy context and process, and the relationship between the subject area and its external worlds.

The key question, 'can social work education survive in higher education?' and its elaboration into 'what are the characteristics which make social work education viable or vulnerable as a subject area?' informed the choice and design of the research tools. The methodology used by Becher (1989) for his data collection was considered, and some similar procedures were utilised, but this was not designed as a replication study.

The research was conceived as an exploratory study, using an empirico-inductive approach, and taking the perceptions of social work educators about the subject area and current changes as the main data. It presents a case study about the characteristics of one area of education for the social professions. Before proceeding to look in more detail at the research design and methodology chosen, and the research process itself, important themes from the preceding chapters are summarised.

Themes From The Literature Review

A central theme emerging from studies about social work, higher education and other forms of professional education is the extent to which the concept of 'profession' has changed over the past two decades, (although, arguably, challenges to the privileged position of professionals originated in the 1960s). There is now less debate about whether particular occupations constitute professions and more concern about the relative balance between autonomy and accountability of varied occupational groups. Basic questions about the organisation and goals of professionals, and the agencies and institutions within which they practice, have been raised; and political power has been wielded to alter interprofessional boundaries and relationships with the state (Barnett, 1994; Becher, 1994; Macdonald, 1995).

This can be linked to a second theme concerning the political goals of controlling public expenditure and ensuring value for money which underpin considerable public scrutiny and control (by various mechanisms) of a whole range of organisations, departments and institutions which have managed to maintain a place in a much reduced public sector. Related aspects of this policy strategy have been the selling off, hiving off or otherwise reducing, the responsibilities of the public sector, which in the case of welfare services has meant a move to a mixed economy of care. This has been less evident in the education sector which has, however, been subject to a considerable sharpening of the competitive element, and to a similar commodification of the 'product' (Deakin, 1994; Glennerster, 1995).

A third theme has been the emphasis given to the rights and responsibilities of consumers in a market economy, effected through the introduction of charters in virtually all settings, as well as in actual or potential shifts of the costs of the commodity to the 'customer'. This is evident in situations as diverse as home help services for elderly people, the decrease in student grants relative to loans, and the shift to private (insurance-based) schemes to protect individuals from ill

health, unemployment or old age. It is also linked, of course, to the increase in quality monitoring and complaints procedures required of all public organisations (Haselgrove, 1994; Clarke et al, 1994).

The fourth theme both exemplifies and supports the above changes - a culture shift within public sector organisations, achieved through the medium of managerialism. This device, based on industrial organisational models and concepts of management, has been particularly out of step with professional and public service values, (and in fact, is now increasingly viewed as inappropriate in the most thriving companies in the private sector). It was seen as a necessary tool to shift organisations and employees to a contract culture where economy and efficiency take precedence, including over the third espoused goal, of effectiveness (Pollitt, 1992; Clarke et al, 1994).

A fifth theme is related to the prevalence of instrumental values and implications for the world of work. An emphasis on evaluation of performance, and on outputs and outcomes, combined with a preoccupation with efficiency gains, has affected the relationship between the education sector and the world of work as well as employment practices and opportunities. A 'job for life', including in the local authority and university sectors, has been replaced by the notion of the portfolio career and the flexible workforce (Handy, 1993).

It is against these broad policy trends, or macro themes, that the events and issues identified in this thesis have unfolded, and it is the impact of changes in the relevant fields and their implications for, or relationship to, the subject area that has formed the basis of the research. Becher's study (1989:4) provided an essentially 'internalist' perspective on the nature of disciplines 'deferring until its last two chapters even a limited consideration of contextual issues and influences'. He alluded to the competition for resources (op cit. p141) and concerns about autonomy and accountability (op cit. pp166-170) which might be experienced by all academics. These pressures, he suggested, may be ameliorated or enhanced by the nature of the discipline, and its standing in the academic and wider communities - a point of potential significance in relation to social work education. It can also be argued that the importance of contextual factors had increased significantly by the time this research commenced (relative to a decade earlier when most of Becher's research was undertaken), and is particularly relevant to a study of professional education, a view reflected in a later text edited by Becher (1994).

Research Design And Methodology

The research thus set out to identify the characteristics of a subject area perceived as marginal and vulnerable within higher education and to explore why this may be the case. The research design was located within a qualitative frame of reference and based on an empirico-inductive approach. Majchrzac (1984:103) defines this as 'describing a research process where concepts and causal theories are induced from the empirical dynamic study of the social phenomena' (in contrast to a hypothetico-deductive approach testing a predetermined hypothesis). The approach derives from work by Glaser and Strauss (1967) concerning the nature of qualitative research and grounded theory. They described the latter as *the discovery of theory from data*, which had been systematically obtained and analysed through the social research process; and suggested that qualitative approaches were more suited to *developing explanations* than a quantitative approach.

In this sense, the two approaches derive from different paradigms and the positivist tradition, represented in established scientific research and underpinning quantitative approaches, is considered to be less appropriate for explanatory work in the field of social science. Glaser and Strauss suggested that, while the researcher initially needs to be theoretically sensitive, s/he should not be over committed to a pre-conceived theory, and that the generation of theory from the data was a primary goal of the researcher. Other labels sometimes used for this approach to research are 'interpretive' or 'ethnographic', the latter deriving from the (participant) observation traditions of anthropology.

At a different level, Robson (1993:38) has described research design as being 'concerned with turning research questions into projects' and the strategies and tactics adopted are related to the type of research question to be answered. He also cites the view that research design is 'very much about *style*, the (researcher's own) preferences and ideas' (Hakim, 1987:1). Thus, personal interest and experience, through the researcher's role as a social work educator, had a clear bearing on the choice of research focus; formulation of the research question; and the approach used to explore it. Robson comments 'some would doubt the feasibility of the insider carrying out any worthwhile, credible or objective enquiry into a situation in which he or she is centrally involved. At the other extreme those associated with movements such as 'the professional as scientist' (Barlow et al, 1994) or 'the teacher as researcher' (Carr and Kemmis, 1986) maintain that outsider research is ineffective research' (Robson, 1993:7). The implications of the researcher's 'insider' role in this study will be returned to later.

Research design literature refers to both strategies and tactics. *Strategies* are described as falling into three broad categories:- experimental, survey, and case study, although the possibility of a hybrid strategy is also noted (Robson, 1993:40-41). The notion of a hybrid approach is relevant to this study since, despite a general leaning towards a qualitative case study approach, the incorporation of a survey at an early point in the data collection stage was an important device both for establishing useful data and for indicating (through a high response rate) the topicality and relevance of the issue to social work educators other than the writer.

Another facet of research design is a consideration of the purpose(s) of the enquiry, usually classified as exploratory, descriptive or explanatory. While the initial purpose of this research was exploratory and descriptive, it was also intended to advance explanations based on the evidence. As Yin (1981) noted, it is quite possible for a case study to fulfil all these purposes. Case studies 'are the preferred (research) strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real life context' (Yin, 1984:13).

The *tactics* of the research design relate to selection of methods, techniques or tools to be used for data collection. Questions can be raised about whether a research design is qualitative or quantitative, and, depending on the answer, whether it constitutes a case study. However, Robson (1993:43) suggests that there is 'not a tight or necessary linkage' between the overall strategy and data collection methods selected, and Yin (1989) has described the case-study approach as essentially multi-method with potential to include 'quantitative' methods such as surveys. This researcher chose to use a survey, and interviews with selected personnel, as well as records of a particular organisation representative of the respondents.

Finally, writing about case studies in particular (but in line with other research strategies, notably in the positivist tradition), Yin (1989:40) suggested that the research design should demonstrate construct validity (establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied); internal validity (establishing causal relationships in the case of explanatory studies); external validity (identifying an area to which the study's findings can be generalised); and reliability (demonstrating that the study could be repeated with the same results).

However, these concepts had earlier been questioned in the context of qualitative research, and reframed by Lincoln and Guba (1985:294-301) as credibility, dependability and confirmability. This researcher, in deciding the methodology and designing the questionnaire and interview guide

and in secondary data analysis, had to attempt to ensure that the resulting data and conclusions would be believable by peers, based on sound evidence (gathered by appropriate means), and have some potential for replication. Ways in which these concerns were addressed are mentioned later, and whether these goals have been met is in part a test of this thesis.

The Research Process

Twenty-five years ago Shipman proposed a six stage model of the research process consisting of:- (i) problem identification; (ii) designing the research programme; (iii) data collection; (iv) data analysis; (v) literature research; and (vi) drawing conclusions. He suggested that these stages are not necessarily consecutive in the order listed nor mutually exclusive, but that they require different skills and orientations which he summarised as creative (i and ii), technical (iii and iv) and theoretical (v and vi) (Shipman, 1972). Alternative formulations have since been offered (for example by Walker, 1985 - three stages; Majchchrzac, 1984 - five stages; Robson, 1993 - eight stages), but Shipman's model still has value in enabling the researcher to appreciate why some stages might be experienced as more or less interesting or stressful, and to 'justify' a progression through the research process which is not as orderly as any model suggests.

Indeed, by definition, the final stage seeks to make sense, retrospectively, of a complex process and to present it in the best possible light. Additionally, Yin (1989) and Miles and Huberman (1984) have suggested that within a case study approach, research design and methodology can be reviewed and even revised during the process. This allows a degree of flexibility more compatible with 'real world research' (Robson, 1993:148-50).

A number of writers refer to the need for the researcher to engage in an orientation process - gathering information about the selected area of study; developing a preliminary model or thesis; formulating specific research questions; and identifying an appropriate methodology and data sources. This stage is sometimes formulated in the presentation of a research proposal or in Yin's suggestion of a protocol (Yin, 1989:69). The initial stage was somewhat protracted for this researcher with 'reading around' and some early writing about specific aspects of the proposed area related to a possible retrospective analysis of the policy process in seeking an explanation for the current state of social work education.

However, wider reading, coupled with further changes in the field and a growing impatience to 'get on' with data collection, resulted in a change in the research focus and design, to a more

current analysis based on the perceptions of only one group of actors, that is those most intimately involved, and feeling most 'under threat', social work educators themselves. While it can be argued that selection of this group by definition results in 'facts' being presented in a partial way, Walker has suggested that 'what qualitative research can offer the policy maker is a theory of social action grounded on the experience - the world view - of those likely to be affected by a policy decision or thought to be part of the problem' (Walker, 1985:19).

It is appropriate here to comment on the researcher's role as also an 'actor' in the area under investigation. Tyson (1992) has suggested that the heuristic paradigm (inherent in qualitative research) refutes the suggestion that knowledge can be neutral, since it is always constructed through the perceptions of the researcher. Heinemann (1989) takes the view that familiarity with an area improves the quality of the research. However, there is a need for regulation of bias arising from involvement, achieved in part by the active recognition of the role boundaries and also through the supervisory process. Examples of where this dual role was thought to be advantageous, and ways of reducing bias are mentioned later.

As indicated, the chosen methods for data collection were a postal survey, interviews and secondary data analysis. It was considered that these would produce 'coverage', in terms of yielding data from social work subject areas in a wide variety of circumstances; depth, in the form of focused discussion about the subject by 'leaders in the field'; and additional insights through use of records not produced for research purposes.

The Postal Survey

It was decided to issue self-completion questionnaires to all heads of social work departments or subject areas. This method has the advantage of eliciting information and canvassing the views of a whole population economically within a relatively short time frame (Newell, 1993). The target population was identified as all departments (areas) in HEIs offering a professional course in social work education (at that time a CQSW or DipSW), as listed in the CCETSW publication 'How to Qualify for Social Work 1994-95' (CCETSW, 1993). Issues of access to a population and sampling thus did not arise.

However, identification of respondents was complicated by the fact that a minority of qualifying courses then were delivered outside HEIs (these were screened out at the mailing stage); and it was conceivable that social work education (research) could exist in institutions which did not

offer courses at qualifying level. This was a case where the researcher's knowledge of the field was useful, and some account was taken of the second factor at the interview stage. In the event, 77 department (subject areas) listed by CCETSW were circulated with a nine sided questionnaire and covering letter in February 1994, and non-respondents were sent reminder and a second copy in April 1994 (see Appendix 3).

The questionnaire contained a range of closed and open-ended questions aimed at eliciting information about the respondents' circumstances and views on structural and organisational aspects of the subject; the content and pedagogical approaches of the area; its research activities; the characteristics and loyalties of social work educators; and their experience of change. Respondents were also asked an open question about the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the subject and some of the factual questions would illustrate aspects of the resourcing of the area. Questions were not pre-coded since the number to be surveyed was relatively small, and the intention was to interrogate the data manually rather than statistically (see data analysis).

Newell (1993:96) has suggested that the 'main arguments against using postal questionnaires have generally been that the response rate is low (many postal surveys do not achieve more than 50% rate of return) and that answers may be incomplete, illegible or incomprehensible'. However, the researcher's knowledge of the target population and of the area under study enabled formulation of questions in a way which, it was considered, would maximise responses. Additionally, the questionnaire was piloted on a small number of helpful colleagues who would not serve as respondents, but who were able to suggest minor redrafting for clarity, and to indicate how long questionnaire completion might take. (Making sense of some of the answers at the data analysis stage was also assisted by the researcher's prior knowledge).

The writer was also aware that some of the information requested might be considered sensitive (indeed one respondent deleted the identifying number on the questionnaire), as well as the considerable pressure under which colleagues would be working, so the covering letter was carefully worded to explain the purpose of the study, encourage a response, and ensure confidentiality (non-attribution) of the ensuing data (Newell, 1993:113). By August 1994, 64 questionnaires had been received (83%) - an encouraging total, indicating as suggested earlier, that respondents saw the research as relevant to their own concerns and potentially useful. There followed a temporary interruption to the research process due to external factors, but initial analysis of questionnaires took place, which identified some gaps and areas which would require further exploration or discussion at the interview stage.

The Interviews

It is not unusual for a research design to include both a postal questionnaire and interviews, the latter either as an exploratory stage or as a second stage in data collection, adding a qualitative dimension to statistical data. Using both methods affords a form of triangulation which aims to achieve validity of the data. McDonald and Tipton (1993:199) cite Denzin as having proposed in 1970 four kinds of triangulation:- '*data triangulation* ... that is data should be collected at a variety of times, in different locations and from a range of persons and collectivities; ..*investigator triangulation*, that is using multiple rather than single observers of the same object. The third, *theory triangulation* ... using more than one kind of approach to generate the categories of analysis ... is the most difficult kind of triangulation to achieve ... Finally, the fourth *methodological triangulation* (consisting of) within-method ... and between-method triangulation ... which is probably the most important'.

The interviews carried out in the summer of 1996 satisfied the first and fourth forms of triangulation, since they were carried out two years later than the original data collection, with mainly different people from those who had completed postal questionnaires (though this was not a major factor in their selection), who were asked to address both some questions raised in the original questionnaire in more depth, and also other questions omitted from the first stage of data collection and now regarded as important. Becher (1989) was referred to (though not strictly adhered to) in framing the topics for a brief guide, since the focus of the interviews would be more clearly on the nature (epistemology and culture) of the area, than on 'factual details' about departments or specific changes. An initial telephone approach to potential interviewees was followed by a short letter confirming practical arrangements and a note about the research and areas to be addressed in the interview (approximating in a rather minimal way to Yin's suggestion of a protocol) (see Appendix 4).

The interviews were designed as unstructured, non-standardised or focused (Fielding, 1993:136) and were carried out using an interview guide. That is, although topics for exploration were suggested and raised (usually in the order originally notified), interviewees were free to digress and bring in new material or give more emphasis to some areas. Indeed, the selection of twelve respondents had aimed to take account of gender, experience in social work education (including in different types of institution), variations in job definition or emphasis and (known) areas of special interest.

The interviewees were all identified by the researcher as 'leaders in the field', that is people with wide ranging experience, who have contributed to the literature and debates about social work education in various forums. Only one person of twelve approached declined to be interviewed, on the grounds that he no longer held a social work educator post in his institution. Nine interviewees were professors of social work (or similar titles) although this was not an essential requirement (for a summary of the characteristics of this sample see Appendix 4). The interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes (generally one hour) and with the exception of the first one, were tape-recorded. However, the researcher also made notes with the interviewee's agreement.

The aim of an interview is to elicit unrehearsed and frank discussion (Fielding, 1993:138) and the issue of interviewer effect is one which should be addressed here. Apart from knowledge of and involvement in the same field of work, the extent to which the researcher knew respondents personally, or knew about them, or was known to them professionally, varied. It has been suggested that sharing a common background and professional language may facilitate the gathering of data via interviews, although the researcher had on occasion to guard against 'assuming meanings', through use of additional questions or probing which required the interviewee to elaborate on their statements. There was, no doubt, a sense in which all respondents 'sought to be helpful' to the researcher, but the range of answers given and ideas expressed did not reflect an agreed assumption about what the researcher wanted to know (other than at the broadest level); and opinions expressed were undoubtedly frank and personal. This included varying indications of whether particular statements could be attributed to named interviewees, although the researcher had stated that confidentiality would be observed.

Secondary Data

Secondary data is material derived from a wide range of sources which pre-existed the research and consists of material gathered or maintained for different purposes. This may be of a statistical or non-statistical nature, and, in the case of the latter, is frequently in written form and referred to as documentary evidence (Macdonald and Tipton, 1993). Material derived from such sources may form the sole data base of a research project or a relatively minor one. In this research, records of an organisation closely involved in developments in relation to social work education constituted a ready source of documentary evidence, from which to supplement other data.

The records used were from the Joint University Council, Social Work Education Committee (JUC SWEC, see Appendix 5). As a member organisation representing the views and experience of social work educators, it was considered that this would provide supplementary data about collective concerns and activities associated with the subject area. The material consisted of minutes, annual reports, and other papers (for instance, letters or commentaries expressing members views on particular CCETSW or governmental proposals). By definition, these may not address all the questions at issue, but in research concerned in part with policy change, such 'records and documents, albeit incomplete accounts, are part of the reality being studied' (Hakim, 1993:134).

Data Analysis And The Concluding Stage

'The result of collecting data ... is likely to be a mass of material, too great in quantity to be analysed unless one is prepared and able to be systematic' (Gilbert, 1993:xiii). The process of data analysis therefore comprises the task of ordering and relating ones data in ways which give insights into the problem under investigation. The data analysis stage is another point at which the 'dual role' of the researcher might be seen as advantageous in understanding the findings, or as introducing (further) bias in how the data are interpreted and communicated. Avoidance of bias has been assisted by efforts to place findings in the context of wider research and literature.

The use of a postal survey might suggest the collection of a large amount of data amenable to statistical analysis. However, the actual number of 'cases' is small in survey terms and for this and other reasons the use of precoding and computer packages to analyse the data was eschewed in favour of a more traditional manual approach. While absolute numbers or proportions are used in some cases in Part II to identify 'facts' about a situation, more often the data reveal trends, opinions or factors which interrelate to build a picture, together with information from other sources, about the characteristics of the subject area in question and the associated issues.

As Robson (1993:374) notes 'there is an emphasis on interpretation in dealing with much qualitative data which precludes reducing the task to a defined formula'; and he also refers to data analysis within a qualitative paradigm as an art (rather than a science). Particularly in the case of an ethnographic approach, it may be that some of the details gathered are less relevant than others. The data must in any case be 'compressed so they adhere around several manageable themes, or, formally, analytic schema (Ajar, 1986)' (Fielding, 1993:167). Thus, the formulation of themes to

be addressed is an important aspect of data analysis and such themes may even be identified before data collection has been completed.

This early identification of themes happened in this instance, since the researcher chose to relate the analysis to the main sections of the questionnaire (see above), 'allocating' material derived from the interviews and records to relevant themes. These themes then constituted the basis for presentation and discussion of the data (see Part II). Although the tape recorded interviews were not transcribed, the use of the researcher's notes in conjunction with replaying of tapes enabled the 'extraction' of quotations to illustrate and amplify the material from the survey data at the analysis and writing-up stage. Similarly, the analysis of documentary evidence after the survey and interview stages had been completed enabled easier identification of relevant material from an otherwise unwieldy body of potential data, and sometimes provided illuminating insights into events alluded to in more general terms in the literature.

Fielding notes that 'good qualitative analysis is able to document its claim to reflect some of the truth of a phenomenon by reference to systematically gathered data. Poor qualitative analysis is anecdotal, unreflective, descriptive without being focused on a coherent line of enquiry' (Fielding, 1993:169). He also notes that 'it is important not to misrepresent the generalisability of findings from one setting' (*op cit*). The extent to which the findings of research can be generalised has been seen as an important test of quantitative research but more open to question in relation to qualitative research, with findings derived from ethnographic methods (as used by anthropologists) providing the traditional and extreme example of particularity of results (Ward Schofield, 1993). However, an aim of this research was to identify whether social work shares any of the characteristics of other forms of professional education, in which case some of the findings might have a wider relevance.

Other sources of 'data' were utilised in the form of reports and items in the general and professional press, which are relevant to an analysis of a 'real life' situation in the process of change, and which provided useful pointers to developments both in the subject and in other forms of professional education not being directly researched. However, this fell short of a rigorous collection or analysis of secondary data; and is more closely related to the use of bibliographic sources to inform research design, execution and conclusions. In this respect, it can be noted that an initial literature search about social work education in 1992 revealed few British texts, and a relatively limited number of articles of the kind the writer was interested in, but that

the period 1995-96 was significant for the production of a number of important texts on the subject - a timely reminder that Shipman's stages are not discrete nor sequential.

It can also be noted that exploration of the literature has been a concurrent rather than a sequential aspect of the research process. As is apparent from the text, a wide range of literature - pertaining to social work, higher education policy, professional education and research - has been utilised to contextualise and guide the researcher. Meanwhile, material more closely related to the empirical findings - frequently derived from articles as well as other material produced by social work educators - has been linked to the data in Part II, to indicate where the researcher's material accords with other findings or concerns, or where a theme has been relatively little explored by other researchers.

One final stage in the research process, alluded to by some writers as 'dissemination' should also be noted here, since the researcher took the opportunity to present papers about particular aspects of the findings on two occasions to groups of social work educators (predominantly not departmental managers or academic leaders of the sort included in the data collection stages). Although a form of dissemination, these also provided useful checks on the *credibility* of the data being gathered (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and indeed were a source of some corroborative data, albeit not included in the initial research design.

Ethical Considerations

In so far as the research was carried out in an open manner, that is, potential respondents were advised of the nature and purpose of the research and could then chose whether or not to participate, this research did not raise ethical questions. None of the questions (in the questionnaire or interview guide) were intended to provoke stress, invade privacy, inappropriate self disclosure or to have any other adverse effects; and indeed many respondents indicated by additional notes on questionnaires or at the conclusion of interviews that they had found the research intervention stimulating or timely, or otherwise a positive experience.

While the researcher did not claim to be value-neutral in this context, (Rein, 1981) nevertheless, an attempt was made to adopt a systematic approach to the research process with the due exercise of objectivity, rationality and rigour throughout. This was assisted by opportunities to relinquish the role of social work educator periodically, and to physically and metaphorically distance oneself from the field, not least through reference to literature about social work education outside

the UK or about other forms of professional education. As mentioned, the normal conventions of confidentiality were stated and observed in relation to data gathering and the writing-up/dissemination stages.

Conclusions

This chapter has considered some of the theoretical aspects of research design and methodology as well as indicating the process of research undertaken in connection with this thesis. The initial summary of the main themes derived from the literature review illustrate the policy context within which the research originated and which has considerable relevance to an understanding of particular changes and concerns in the subject area. Decisions about the research design, including construction of the research tools, were based on the researcher's own knowledge and curiosity about the subject, as well as drawing on examples of other studies which have explored the nature of disciplines, and the wider relationship between knowledge, higher education and society.

The role of the researcher, as also a participant in the subject area, is acknowledged to have strengths and weaknesses, and the data collected clearly represents the particular perspectives of only one group with an interest in the fortunes of the area. Nevertheless, the educators constitute a significant group, in terms of their responsibility to implement policy, influence the research agenda and transmit knowledge, skills and values to a group of students preparing to enter a contested area of professional activity. Data derived from this group form the basis for Part II of this thesis.

PART TWO

Presenting the Findings:

Characteristics of Social Work as a Subject Area

CHAPTER 7:

SOCIAL WORK IN HIGHER EDUCATION: RATIONALE, LOCATION AND SCOPE

Introduction

This chapter opens the discussion about the nature of social work as a discipline by considering some of the structural characteristics of the subject area, including its organisational location and scope. The chapter includes some reference to the epistemological characteristics of the subject and its relation to other disciplines (but see also Chapter 8). Material is also presented about its relation to the professional field, in the form of collaborative arrangements with agencies. Evidence is drawn from the 1994 survey and the 1996 interviews, and from the analysis of JUC SWEC documents, and wider literature.

The chapter commences with a discussion of the rationale for social work's location in higher education. Based on the views of leading social work academics, it is not surprising that there is strong support for the subject's continued existence and development as a discipline in higher education. Social work educators form only one interest group in decisions which might be made about individual courses or the totality of social work education but have a part to play in the debates.

However, the survey data suggest that, within higher education, there is no consensus about the location, scope, boundaries and alliances of the area, and this lack of coherence results in a fluid and vulnerable position, particularly when combined with rapid internal and external changes (detailed in Chapter 12). As noted in Part 1, changes in relation to social work education are occurring in the context of change in the organisation and practice of social work as well as in higher education. Questions about the mission, resourcing and mode of operation of HEIs have impacted on social work, no less than other disciplines, and the subject area finds itself in an institutional context critical review.

Although social work originated in the 'old' universities, it more recently became predominantly (two thirds) located in HEIs outside the university sector. However, with university status for most polytechnics by the time of the survey, 43 out of 64 of the respondents were in universities and a diminishing number remained in institutes of higher education (increasingly becoming colleges of established universities) or similar colleges. Continuing differences between 'old' and 'new' universities (ex-polytechnics) in academic ethos and expectations of departments or subject

areas, as well as in resourcing, are referred to in this chapter and again in subsequent analysis. Unlike teacher education in the past, social work education has been consistently located in HEIs not exclusively concerned with one form of professional education, but in which professional education itself may be in a minority position (relative to discipline-based studies) and where the emphasis given to research activities, for instance, has varied considerably (see Chapter 10).

The Rationale For Social Work In Higher Education

Views on whether social work should be in or out of higher education, was not sought at the survey stage, but at the interview stage a direct question was asked of the interviewees. All respondents said that social work education *should* remain in higher education, although three respondents qualified their answers. These qualified responses included digressions about the level at which qualifying training should be offered, or suggestions about the need for clarity regarding the roles and tasks for which students are being prepared and the particular challenge which offering qualifying training in higher education poses. All respondents were asked their reasons for their views.

The knowledge base was identified by most respondents as requiring a close association between those who create knowledge and those who transmit it. Respondents saw a necessary connection between the social sciences and preparation for professional practice, as well as holding expectations that social work academics would themselves be involved in the creation of knowledge through research. Social work 'needs research and dissemination of new ideas through academic publications ... students should be exposed to new ideas'. 'The skills involved (need to be placed) within a much wider context, (students) need to have a good basic education in relation to the social science knowledge base, and to be able to use this professionally'.

The nature of the social work task was also thought by all respondents to require exposure to higher education, in preference to role-related training programmes. One respondent described social work as 'a very complex activity which requires (the exercise of) intellect, not just a bureaucratic or routine response'. Another saw it as 'emotionally, intellectually and theoretically demanding'. One cited sound academic training as enabling students to 'think, write and analyse' and to use these abilities to inform their judgements about interventions, while another referred to the 'high levels of conceptualisation, flexibility and articulation' needed for practice. Although only one respondent used the term 'reflective practice', it was clear that respondents recognised the need for an informed and thoughtful approach to actions undertaken in complex situations;

and one respondent suggested that the term 'education and training' should represent 'a properly sophisticated relationship between theory and practice'. Another respondent spoke of the 'essence' of social work being the exercise of 'discretion and judgement ... a professional activity which requires creativity and a developed intellect ... (this is) what (higher) education is about delivering'.

Comparability was suggested by two respondents as a rationale for social work's continued existence in higher education (not as the only or main reason). This relates partly to the perceived need for social work education in the UK to have a comparable status with educational programmes outside the UK: the British 'weakness' in this area has already been mentioned in Chapter 2. More importantly, in a domestic context, both respondents were concerned about the need for comparability (in terms of educational status) with occupational groups with whom social workers frequently interact, or may be compared in public and academic exercises. One respondent observed, 'Social work would have an anomalous position relative to other professions and occupations if it came out of higher education'.

Public accountability was another reason given. One respondent cited the expectations of the public and the risk to individual users, if social workers were not educated at an appropriate level. Responsibility for *continuing professional development* was mentioned: social workers were seen as having to take continuing responsibility for evaluating their work and for maintaining and developing their knowledge and skills.

In summary, respondents saw 'the essence (of social work) as being about people ... making decisions over matters which are not replicatable', and thought that preparation for such work is necessarily located in higher education with its goal of developing the intellect and analytical skills. In contemplating its possible removal from higher education, one respondent voiced concern about the 'potential erosion (of social work) as a professional and political activity', if it were not subject to 'critical debate' as part of the educational process.

Turning to another data source, the support of JUC SWEC for maintenance of the social work subject area in higher education might be assumed, consisting, as it does, of social work educators. Such support is often implicit but sometimes also explicit in its documents. In the 1991 Annual Report, the chairperson expressed the Committee's concern to work with related interest groups 'to avoid wasteful duplication and fragmentation of effort' in promoting social work. However, her comments also justified the Committee's separate identity, noting 'the broad

social science and policy perspective for which (JUC SWEC) stands, its concern with scholarly as well as practice standards, and its regard for the research base of social work' as a rationale. The 1995 Annual Report commented on the Committee's active role in preparation for the Research Assessment Exercise with the intention of 'helping to improve the performance of social work as an academic discipline'.

JUC SWEC's position is also clear in its concern about actual or potential loss of courses or areas of practice from social work education. For instance, after some course closures in the 1980s the chairperson noted in the 1989 Annual Report that there had been 'no further erosion of social work places' in higher education that year. In the 1995 Report the intended closure of the LSE course was remarked upon - 'it is to be hoped that the decision ... does not mark the beginning of a trend'. This statement was made in the context of considerable preoccupation with the proposed withdrawal of training for the Probation Service from higher education, which would affect nearly one third of the subject area.

The same Annual Report was pleased to note that a number of bodies, including the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals (CVCP) had 'clearly perceived ... the (DEWS Report) proposals as constituting a threat to higher education, as well as to social work and the quality of Probation practice and research, and that they have opposed them in the fiercest possible terms'. The fact that this opposition was over-ruled, perhaps says more about the level of political determination and intervention in the welfare sector (including higher education) than the motivation or effectiveness of particular interest groups, as represented here by JUC SWEC.

This study demonstrates reasoned support from social work educators for the maintenance of social work in higher education, but it is clearly not a secure position. The apparent inability of the educators to defend (let alone develop) the position of social work as a legitimate academic enterprise with a theoretical core (compared to the increased vocationalism and prescription in CCETSW requirements for courses leading to professional awards) has been noted in the literature (Timms, 1991; Jones, 1996a). The tensions inherent in any form of professional education include the 'dual mandate' or potentially conflicting expectations of the university and the field, and Hartman's Australian study (1989, *op cit*) of the consequences of an 'academic location', in terms of the tensions experienced by teaching staff, has relevance to the UK.

The location of professional educators (including for social work) 'at the intersection of two social institutions' was noted by Halpern (1985) in America and this undoubtedly contributes to feelings

of low status, marginalisation, and having to manage tensions at external as well as internal boundaries. Harris (1990) suggested that the fundamental task for British social work education in the nineties would be the management of its relationships with *three* distinct worlds - academic institutions, the agencies and CCETSW. The evidence confirms this view. Even in the eighties, JUC SWEC records suggest that a considerable amount of academic time and energy had been taken up responding to various drafts of CCETSW proposals, as well as in trying to 'manage' more local aspects of the academy-field relationship.

Formalisation of this relationship in the early nineties into DipSW (and Regional) Consortia may have diverted social work educators from their academic task (including theory development) and weakened their defence and development of a subject that was already marginal in higher education. Discussion around the nature of partnership arrangements will be returned to later, after an examination of the current position of the subject area in HEIs.

The Naming And Organisational Location Of Social Work

Assuming a continuing place for social work education in higher education, questions arise about organisational location, and visibility of it as a named subject area. The evidence from the survey suggests that while it is frequently a basic unit in terms of organisation and delivery of teaching, ideology and peer system (Boys and Kogan, 1984:45) it is rarely this in financial and managerial terms and usually fails to attain the status of *Department (or School)*. In only 16 HEIs (evenly spread between old and new universities) were respondents heading distinct basic units. More often, social work constituted a subject area or section within a Department, and in only five such cases was its existence directly signalled in a 'combination title', such as 'Department of Social Work and Nursing'.

In the remainder of cases (about two thirds) social work was subsumed within departments whose titles did not indicate its existence. A majority of these (16) included 'social science' or 'social studies', or 'community studies'(8) in titles; while eight other titles signalled the disciplinary basis of the department, for example, social policy(5) or sociology(2). A few titles suggested a possible interdisciplinary bias, but not necessarily the existence of social work, for example, 'Human Studies'; 'Education and Administration'; 'Management and Professional Education'. (These more venturesome titles were a feature of the new universities). The extent to which social work does *not* constitute a basic unit, and its relative *invisibility* in terms of Departmental titles further suggests that it is a weak subject area.

However, there is considerable variation in how academic institutes 'draw the map of knowledge' and how they accommodate newly emerging or interdisciplinary studies (Becher, 1989:19). Further, organisation of content into Departments has been noted as highly arbitrary and a product of historical accident (Campbell, 1969), so perhaps the above findings are not conclusive in suggesting an identity problem. Whether one example of changes in location of the subject from a Department of Applied Social Studies (1970s) to a Department of Sociology (1980s) to a Department of Human Relations (1990s) reflects the nature of the subject - or the internal politics of an HEI - is a moot point. That social work does not have a clear profile as a subject area in higher education under Departmental headings, is shown to be the common position by the present study. This is not an area explicitly addressed in JUC SWEC documents or in the wider literature.

Turning now to the *Faculty* base of departments of, or containing, social work (excluding a small number of institutions without this level of organisation), the majority of departments were within 'Social Science' faculties or in faculties bearing 'combination' or 'qualified' titles, for example 'Social and Political Science' or 'Applied Social Science' (16 in all). A further 14 Departments were in faculties featuring Health in the title, such as Health and Human Sciences; while a third group (12) were in more broadly based faculties, for instance, Cultural and Community Studies. While the majority of respondents were in *Arts, Human or Social Science* Faculties of some kind, eight respondents were located in *Science* Faculties. (There was little difference between old and new universities in this matter).

This question - 'is social work an art or a science?' - has been identified in the academic literature (England, 1986), although addressed to the internal context and style of the subject area rather than the subject's institutional framework. As in other areas of life, work and education, the science/art split may be an unreal or unhelpful dichotomy, but it can be seen as a further indication of the disagreement about the nature of the subject, and as another aspect of social work's identity problem and marginal position. It is also likely to have a bearing on the alliances of social work with other subjects.

Alliances

The relationship between social work and other disciplines further indicates its wide ranging or unclear nature. In the survey data, only seven respondents claimed to have *no* particular

associations with other subjects. The wording of the questions made it difficult to gauge the rationale and quality of those associations and relationships described by the remainder. Alliances fell into two broad categories, those with *academic* subjects (62 mentions); and those with other *professional* subjects (57 mentions) and these were not necessarily exclusive. Thus over a third of respondents, drawn fairly evenly from old and new universities, included subjects in both categories in their returns.

Proportionately, more respondents from the old university sector listed only alliances with academic subjects (12), whereas respondents from the new or non-university sector were more likely to list alliances only with other professional or occupational subjects (14). Of the academic subjects listed, social policy (including policy studies or social administration) was the most frequently cited (22) relative to sociology (16), psychology (11) and law* (10). Other subjects were listed by only two or three respondents (economics, anthropology, 'social science', criminology, European studies) or were single cases (geography, humanities, gender studies).

Regarding association with professional or occupational subjects, 'health' was noted by just over a quarter of respondents (17), followed by youth and community work (10) and education (6). Three respondents mentioned associations with other health-related professional subjects (psychiatry, medicine, dentistry) and two with occupational therapy. Other 'subjects' mentioned were counselling (4), professional studies (3), social care (2), housing (2), nutrition (1) and management (1). The relationship with 'subjects allied with medicine' reflects a category used by HEFC, and historical and current connections between social work and health, in practice and education.

The foregoing suggests some recognition that social work education has logical associations with both academic and other professional subjects, as evidenced by many respondents (24), and that there is some tendency to seek, or to maintain, 'academic' alliances in the old university sector, relative to the greater likelihood of the grouping of 'professional' subjects in the new and non-university sector. The continuing predominance of social policy as an associated subject is in contrast to a relative lack of recognition of this subject in other European countries (Jones, 1985), and the stronger alliances of social work education elsewhere with either sociology or psychology

* Although categorised as a 'social profession' by Becher (1989), law is included here as an academic subject, on the grounds that it is studied initially at undergraduate level and not all degree holders proceed to professional studies.

(Cannan et al, 1992). A more pronounced emphasis on a relationship with law might have been anticipated given concern expressed about the need for good preparation of students in this area (CCETSW, 1988), but it is likely that law teaching is carried out in-house by either social work educators or specialists from the field. (See Chapter 8).

Epistemological Characteristics

Consideration of the organisational location of the social work subject area, and its association with other subjects, leads to a wider question concerning the epistemological character of social work education, a question addressed to interviewees in the form, 'how would you describe the area of social work education?'. This sometimes gave rise to answers about the scope and level of social work qualification (the focus of the next section), but many respondents addressed the issues of location, boundaries and relationships with other fields of knowledge, as intended in the question.

There was a general tendency to favour the development of social work as a rigorous *academic subject* with a close association with the *social sciences*, 'otherwise it's in danger of losing its critical edge'. However, this summary statement over-simplifies the levels of analysis offered by some respondents, about the 'core' of social work and its relationship with particular disciplines. One respondent spoke of the difficulty of social work 'securing a place within the intellectual territory' of the social sciences and (of identifying) 'its core intellectual or academic terrain'. Another spoke of social work's tendency to 'raid other disciplines for ideas, translate and adapt them ... (it is) derivative and its intellectual content is five or ten years behind the mainstream'.

Similar ideas were expressed more positively by another respondent, '(it is) a multi-disciplinary subject ... putting together knowledge and practice experience from a range of (other) areas ... what makes it special is how disciplines are brought together for a purpose'. Yet another person also thought it appropriate for social work to draw from a wide range of other disciplines, 'including some areas we haven't thought about'. This would certainly support comparative literature about social work education since the range of subjects included in curricula abroad is often wider than, or different from, that of the British courses (see Chapter 8). Another respondent suggested that social work is 'no different from medicine which draws on a range of other subjects'. The *interdisciplinary nature* of the subject and the assumption that, while social work may be unique in some ways, it shares some characteristics with other forms of professional education, are further examined in the concluding part of this thesis.

Two other themes emerged from interviewees' responses to the question about subject area. One was a regular reference to *practice* ... 'it is about inquiry and writing, reflecting what is happening in practice', or 'the mix of intellectual learning and practice is particularly well developed in social work education', or 'the theory-practice debate is fascinating ... (it's) not just an 'application' relationship'. The last respondent also stressed the educator's role in 'managing the teaching-research-practice interplay'. The other theme concerned *values* and the likely value conflicts both within the subject area and between the subject and its various neighbours and associates (including practice). These themes are explored further in other chapters detailing findings, and in Part 3.

Only one respondent placed social work education as 'one of a number of related occupational groups - health, education, social care (with) no clear boundaries between them (and) competing for territory'. He further suggested that the boundaries (of each) are shifting 'according to societal expectations and requirements'. Another person explicitly rejected a close association with health studies (on the grounds that this subject was not based on the critical use of the social sciences). A number of respondents indicated that the area is contested and/or that it lacks clear, identifiable boundaries, but one interviewee at least thought this should be a strength not a weakness (see also Chapter 12). One interviewee also asserted that social work 'must develop a stronger identity as a distinct discipline with its own body of knowledge', suggesting that this is a challenging task for social work educators.

This raises two related questions concerning the epistemological nature of social work education on the one hand and its organisational form within the university on the other. Traditionally, social work education has been seen as drawing on disciplinary knowledge (specifically from the social sciences including social policy and law) rather than constituting a discipline in its own right. Referring briefly to some literature at this point, social work education, as a subject area, can be categorised as both 'immature' (lacking the existence of clearly defined paradigms) (Kuhn, 1962) and 'unrestricted' (following problems into other areas) (Pantin, 1968). Its lack of status as a discipline and marginality in the higher education enterprise, perhaps partly explain its omission, along with all the other social professions (except law), from Becher's discussion of epistemological and cultural characteristics of selected disciplines, though it undoubtedly falls within the 'soft applied' domain delineated by him (Becher, 1989). That is, its content is concerned with a broad range of problems, with lack of clarity or agreement about its theoretical paradigms and methodology (soft); and it is open to external influence (applied).

However, this lack of clarity about its nature, content, methodology and boundaries is not peculiar to social work, and has even been experienced within a subject area formally categorised as a discipline, that is anthropology (Geertz, 1995). Geertz quotes a dictionary definition of 'discipline' which lists seven possibilities of this term, including, 'a branch of knowledge or teaching', and 'training expected to produce a specified character or pattern of behaviour'. He further states that 'the idea of a discipline, in any of these senses ... fits anthropology none too well. At once broad and general, wildly aspiring ('The Study of Man') and particular and miscellaneous, strangely obsessive ... it has always had ... a blurry image. Neither method nor subject matter exactly defines it ...' (Geertz, 1995:96/97). The relevance of Geertz's comments to social work education is apparent, and indeed there is a possible relationship (in terms of relevance of knowledge, methods and values) between social work education and anthropology not normally acknowledged or explored, although social work educators and anthropologists co-existed in at least two departments at the time of the survey with two known cases of individual staff teaching in both areas.

Another term, 'domain', was used by Trist (1972) in his discussion of social research and typologies of research organisations. He suggested use of this term as an attempt to integrate, rather than fragment the disciplines (under a broadly systemic approach) in relation to problem resolution, and this also has relevance to the nature of social work education. Becher (1989) used the term, domain, to describe a cluster of disciplines or subjects with similar characteristics. This variation in use, and lack of accepted and current usage and meaning of the term, coupled with the traditional connotation of 'disciplines' as theoretical rather than applied branches of knowledge, suggest the use of the terms 'subject' or 'subject area' as relatively clear and neutral. These terms are mainly used, therefore, in this thesis in relation to social work, notwithstanding the assertion in some of the data and literature that it is a discipline.

It is relevant to note here some examples of similar concerns about location and epistemology in the social work education literature. For example, Sheppard (1995), in a discussion about social work, social sciences and practice wisdom, argued that good practice should be characterised by *critical awareness* and that this capacity, together with rigour and imagination, is best developed through an educational rather than a training process. Clark (1995:570), in a critique of competencies as the basis for professional training and drawing on a study of how practitioners use theory, states that 'good practice must be based on a deep appreciation of the foundation principles

and the fundamental logic and method of relevant fields of enquiry; ... in addition to drawing on relevant findings from diverse topics ... (and that it) takes on the character of a discipline'.

The Scope And Scale Of The Subject Area: Courses, Qualifications And Levels

The basis for identifying social work departments or subject areas in HEIs was the CCETSW list of social work qualifying courses (programmes). However, it was known that this did not include all institutions with an interest in social work education, for example, at post-qualifying or research degree level, and it was considered by the researcher that social work education as a whole is not solely concerned with the qualifying stage of training - at whatever academic level this may occur. The second section of the questionnaire therefore sought information about the range of activities carried out within the subject area, particularly as reflected in awards offered.

Some interviewees spontaneously addressed this topic, although it was not the focus of a specific question. Thus, one respondent said, in answer to the question about the area of social work, 'it's not just DipSW. One of the problems with social work education and training is that it is couched in these terms - it should be broader'. Other responses, mainly about level of qualifications are considered after a discussion of the findings from the survey.

The survey data demonstrate that, by the summer of 1994, provision of a qualifying *DipSW programme* as the sole award-bearing activity existed in only eleven out of 64 institutions: seven of these were in the new university/college sector (all at Dip HE level), and four were in the old university sector (at undergraduate (1) and masters (3) levels). Many institutions offered a DipSW (at whatever level) and either a *practice teacher training programme* (9, all in the new university sector) or *courses at post-qualifying level* (8, primarily in the old university sector). About one third of the respondents (21), fairly evenly divided between the old and new sectors, offered qualifying education, practice teacher training *and* other post qualifying courses.

A minority of institutions (13, mainly F/HEIs and sometimes franchised) offered the continuum of training including some awards at the pre-qualifying and post-qualifying stages (the latter usually being practice teacher awards); and a very small number (2) offered programmes leading to qualifying, post qualifying and advanced awards (as defined by CCETSW and described in Chapter 2). However a number of other respondents signalled their intention to promote developments in the area of post-qualifying and advanced awards, having established the DipSW at non graduate level. It should also be noted here that by the summer of 1994, 16 institutions

were (still) in the final stages of CQSW provision (at various academic levels) although by the Autumn of 1995 all institutions surveyed planned to be offering DipSW.

These findings suggest that many institutions conformed with CCETSW's original intention regarding implementation of DipSW programmes well within the five year transitional period, originally proposed in 1989. Initially, it seemed as if conversion to DipSW would be completed in a shorter timescale, as indicated in the JUC SWEC Annual Report of 1990. This noted that 'the remainder (of courses) are expected to award Dip SW by 1993'. However, an early flurry of activity on the part of some courses, subsequently slowed for various reasons. It was also the case that new programmes not approved for commencement in the Autumn of 1993 were then subject to 'planning blight' by the announcement of the review of DipSW in December 1993. (See Chapter 12).

With regard to the *academic level* of qualifying professional awards (DipSW and CQSW), the survey indicated fairly equal numbers at Dip HE and at post-graduate level. The minority position of undergraduate degrees continued, with only five programmes at this level in this sample. However, the low number of undergraduate courses had, in fact, risen from 5% of CQSW courses in 1980 to 8% of qualifying programmes in this survey. The 1994 data also showed that a small number of institutions (four) had developed a 'two-plus-one model', that is, they were offering a professional qualification at Dip HE level with the option to proceed or return to a third year for a 'top-up' degree. This can be seen as indicating a measure of dissatisfaction with only a two year professional programme and/or a broad support for academic awards which conformed to CCETSW's continuum of training.

The extent to which such degrees have been perceived and used by students as an immediate extension of their DipSW studies, or how far they have attracted previously qualified workers (back) into educational and/or approved post-qualifying programmes, was not explored by this study. With reference to the academic motivation for such a move, it was apparent from JUC SWEC minutes (1988/89) that there had been strong support in principle for three year training (the QDSW proposals, assuming appropriate levels of resourcing and not with standing some reservations) and in 1995 a JUC SWEC representative spoke at a conference (chaired by Baroness Faithfull) promoting three year training as the basis for a professional award.

There was some support for the view that qualifying training should be (minimally) at degree level in the responses of the interviewees in 1996, with most interviewees mentioning this explicitly,

for example, 'the ideal minimum academic level should be a degree. Three year training should be the norm'. In its comments on the CCETSW review of DipSW, the British Association of Social Workers also supported the idea of a qualifying award at degree level, although it carefully avoided suggesting that all awards should be in the form of three year undergraduate, college-based programmes (Colvin, 1995).

Further support is indicated in some of the social work literature. Sheppard (1995:289) concludes that social work 'should as a minimum be a degree level subject, not only because of the applied 'product' nature of its knowledge base, but because also of its 'process' nature' which he likens to the inductive social research paradigm. On a different note, Jones (1996b:16) sees the introduction of top-up degrees, 'outside of CCETSW's ambit of control', as evidence of the wishes of staff and students to extend and deepen their knowledge base including in relation to social science and policy. It seems evident that social work educators have developed their own strategies for circumventing the government policy to limit social work qualifying training to two years. This accords with, for example, views on the role of professionals at the implementation stage of the policy process (Rein, 1983), and is further discussed in Chapter 12 and Part 3.

This trend towards degrees, with CCETSW's requirements being met within two years of a three year programme or spread across the three years (observable initially in the 1994 data) raises questions both for the place of *qualifying training at post graduate level*, and for CCETSW's plans in relation to *post-qualifying and advanced awards*. With regard to the first, there was clear evidence that social work educators, in meeting CCETSW's requirements for a minimum period of two year training, took the opportunity to devise programmes carrying routinely (or optionally) a masters degree, rather than a post-graduate diploma. There were 20 such examples in the 1994 sample, and by 1997 this number had increased to 30, although the overall proportion of routes at this level (relative to undergraduate programmes) has declined.

Turning to CCETSW's 'continuum of training', there was not universal acceptance of the idea of a distinction between post-qualifying and advanced awards, and this has posed some problems for programme designers and approvers alike in deciding the appropriate level for specific awards. Thus, if increasing numbers of students obtain a basic qualification at degree level, the rationale for locating awards associated with induction and consolidation or, more particularly, practice teaching at this level is obscured, and the position of social workers obtaining their first qualification at masters level is even more anomalous. Subsequent problems - not least the resource implications of the structures required to implement the post-qualifying system and a low

level of programme approvals and awards - suggest the likelihood of further changes at this level. This is not an area which has received much attention yet in the academic literature, with the notable exception of Yelloly and Henkel (1995) (see also Jack, 1995; Youll, 1996) but it is discussed later in this thesis.

Finally, with regard to the *scale of the enterprise*, the data from the 1994 survey showed considerable variation in the size of DipSW programmes, this being the area of core provision, in terms of student numbers. A small majority (14, including five in the old university sector) were still relatively small (in current HE course size terms), with an intake of less than 40 students per annum; twelve programmes recruited 40-49 students; eleven recruited 50-59; twelve had intakes of 60-79; and eight had intakes of 80 or more students per annum. There was a marked difference between old and new universities in this respect with nineteen out of twenty-three old universities having an intake of less than 60 while twenty out of the new universities and remaining colleges (nearly half) had intakes of 60 or more.

The majority of institutions also had relatively small numbers of students on other courses, ranging from less than ten on postgraduate (research) programmes (at two old universities) to fifty or more part-time students, mostly on taught courses, in ten universities (9 new, 1 old). It has already been noted that CCETSW, in approving intake numbers for new qualifying courses and monitoring output, seeks to maintain a balance between supply and demand for qualified social workers and the total output averages about 4,000 per annum.

Collaborative Activities

The other aspect of the structural arrangements in place by 1994, which has significant implications for the nature and work of the subject area, concerns the establishment of 'programme provider groups' required by CCETSW to plan, deliver and monitor qualifying training programmes. These were to consist minimally of one institution and one agency and could be seen both as a formalising of collaborative arrangements which had often existed on an ad hoc basis between CQSW courses and representatives from practice, and as a restraint or steer on course content and the overall direction of social work education which academics might promote if left unchecked.

In the case of CSS courses, collaborative or partnership arrangements were already in place and this may explain the relative speed of change from CSS to DipSW in some institutions (see

chapter 12). However, in the case of former CQSW courses, the development of DipSW programmes required often intensive or protracted negotiations with local agencies to establish an acceptable size and form of partnership. It is interesting that CCETSW representatives, when pressed, for example at JUC SWEC meetings, for guidance as to how best responsibilities should be shared, declined to give a blue-print for 'programme provider groups', requiring institutions to work out their own arrangements. While this undoubtedly allowed a degree of flexibility in the system it was also a source of anxiety, conflict and mutual learning for many participants.

By the time of the 1994 survey, all institutions had partnership arrangements in place and only five respondents indicated the minimum collaboration required of one institution and one agency. (All these consisted of ex-CSS courses with one Social Service Department partner). Just over a third of institutions (25) favoured a partnership including one SSD, one Probation Service, and one voluntary agency. This was certainly the preferred position of fourteen institutions in the old university sector where such arrangements were also usually associated with a DipSW award at post-graduate level. Probation agency participation was of course a requirement for courses offering a probation option but highly unlikely otherwise, because of the funding arrangements. This arrangement, where probation formed an important element in a relatively small and usually quite stable partnership, was to have particular consequences following the government decision to phase probation training out of higher education (see Chapter 8).

Another one third of respondents had partnerships with social services and voluntary sector agencies (22, 19 of which were in the new university sector), while twelve institutions had partnerships solely with statutory agencies (SSDs and Probation). A further thirteen had partnerships including Education Social Work/Welfare Agencies, but private agencies were mentioned in only four of the returns. (Whether this has changed three years on is open to question). Only eleven of the respondents' 'providers groups' included more than one institution.

There is some possibility that some respondents misunderstood this question and included all agencies where students were placed as partners. This may have given rise to some apparently unwieldy partnerships, for example, one including ten SSDs; another including twenty voluntary agencies; and another having ten private agencies, and reaching a maximum of 31 partners. However, given CCETSW's loose requirements in this respect and the provision for 'secondary partners' (whose responsibilities and level of involvement, such as in programme planning or review meetings, would be less than those of primary partners) it is conceivable that these were

formally constituted agreements. (CCETSW required contracts to be signed by all participants and included in documentation for validation purposes, increasingly also a requirement of HEIs).

A number of respondents also mentioned one voluntary agency acting as a representative in the partnership for other smaller NGOs. Omitting the small number of non-respondents to this question and the few large examples, the average size of programme providers groups in 1994 seemed to be about six, and to include agencies from two different sectors in the social work field.

There was no attempt in this research to evaluate the impact or functioning of partnership arrangements on the academic endeavours of social work educators, but there is impressionistic evidence to suggest that developing and maintaining provider groups in relation to DipSW implementation, absorbed much staff time and energy, possibly at the expense, for example, of research activities (see Chapter 9). One example of this was suggested by a course handbook (of a medium sized, masters level course) which listed fourteen decision-making committees and advisory groups. Some of these would have been required or expected by the (old) university and the majority indicated some level of student involvement, but a number were a direct result of conformity with CCETSW requirements.

Certainly, the increased costs of staff time in establishing partnership arrangements were, to some extent, recognised by the allocation, via CCETSW, of development funds to individual programmes for up to a three year period around the implementation of DipSW programmes; and JUC SWEC lobbied for ongoing resourcing in this area (Annual Report 1992). However, it was the Association of Teachers in Social Work Education (ATSWE) which took 'partnership' as the theme for its annual conference in 1993, which resulted in an early note of scepticism entering the literature. Thus, Payne (1994:53) argued that an analysis of CCETSW documents suggested that promotion of partnership 'stems from a struggle by agencies to control the definition of ideas and methods of social work and by universities to control placement resources' and put forward the view that personal networks and development of a new culture of social work education are more likely to be effective than the 'required' structural relationships embodied in programme provider groups.

This is an area about which many social work educators feel ambivalent - for a variety of reasons - and which raises pertinent issues for professional education more widely. It was not an aspect specifically asked about in the 1996 interviews and it is interesting that none of the respondents raised the matter themselves, although a number mentioned 'practice' (in the context of

theory/practice debate or practice placements); and employers (for example, 'social work education reflects the tension between what the employers want and promoting a creative, critical approach'). It has however received more recent and critical attention in the social work education literature. For instance, Novak (1995:5) attributes the crisis in social work education partly to social work educators' adherence to CCETSW's requirements, including 'partnerships and bureaucratic procedures that are immensely time consuming and often of little benefit'.

Earlier Timms (1991:207) had identified joint programme provision as 'inherently unstable' and, more recently another critic described DipSW arrangements as 'pseudo-autonomous programme providers operating as quasi-businesses, founded on semi-contractual mutual partnerships' (Webb, 1996:181), a view which has assumed greater significance in the light of very recent changes in placement funding (see Chapter 12). Webb described the DipSW requirement for partnerships as being 'the linchpin in the strategy to bring colleges into line' notwithstanding 'all the evidence about the cost and cumbersomeness of managerial structures' (p180).

Collaborative arrangements were also to be the basis for developments in continuing professional education. Thus, in CCETSW's Paper 31 (1990) regarding post qualifying and advanced awards, the principle is extended through regional consortia. These are responsible for approving programmes, and administering registration of candidates for awards, including allocating bursaries. This devolution of responsibility from CCETSW to (initially) the largely voluntary efforts of academic and agency personnel represents another example of the bureaucratisation of the educational process and the diversion of academic (and agency) energies from the core task. It also set up a system, the rationale for which may have been knowledge about and responsiveness to local conditions, but which has entailed significant levels of 'reinventing the wheel' as each consortium struggled to establish its own criteria and mechanisms for course approval. It has also, arguably, diminished rather than enhanced the likelihood of promoting national standards of excellence. These concerns are discussed by Jack (1995:81), who, from a position of social work educator with recent agency responsibilities, notes 'effective collaboration is extremely expensive to maintain for all concerned'.

Summary And Concluding Comments

This chapter has presented information about the social work subject area from data gathered in 1994 and 1996, augmented by JUC SWEC records and some literature. While social work educators clearly support the maintenance of social work in higher education, for reasons related

to the knowledge base and nature of practice, some characteristics were identified which make its position vulnerable. These include the tensions inherent in a dual mandate, but also the epistemological nature of the subject. This can be described as 'interdisciplinary' and 'applied', both characteristics which have low status in the traditional hierarchy of knowledge.

The lack of clarity about the theoretical core, the competing disciplinary paradigms and the disputed nature of the professional territory are reflected in the wide range of departments within which the subject is located. A minority of these are situated within Science Faculties, and the remainder in Arts, Human or Social Sciences. The subject has a low profile within HEIs, having departmental status in only a quarter of the cases in the 1994 sample, and its existence is not normally signalled in the title of its host department. It has a wide range of alliances, reported by 1994 respondents particularly, although about one third claimed association with social policy and a further third with health related subjects.

With regard to the range of courses offered, the qualifying programme, DipSW, forms the core of most subject areas, at either non-graduate or post-graduate level. The continued existence of qualifying awards at postgraduate level and evidence of some growth in the number of undergraduate programmes suggest unresolved questions about social work educators' views on the continuum of education and training established by CCETSW. There were relatively few examples in the 1994 data of additional programmes offering post-qualifying or advanced professional awards, with the exception of a small number of courses, mainly leading to practice teacher awards. DipSW course sizes varied considerably (with intake and output targets approved by CCETSW) and overall the number of students in the subject area is small, relative to some other subjects, such as law or education.

Information was presented about structural arrangements regarding programme provider groups required by CCETSW for DipSW programmes: these usually consist of about six agencies and an HEI. These arrangements reflect the necessity for the subject to have field links but have also increased the bureaucratisation of social work education. Concerns about the costs and instability of such requirements were identified. Some of the data in this and ensuing chapters seem to bear out an earlier prediction that management of the relationship with CCETSW would constitute a third sphere of activity (additional to HEIs and agencies) for social work educators in the nineties (Harris, 1990).

Amongst other differences between the old and new university sectors there are (proportionately) more and smaller qualifying courses at postgraduate level in the old university sector and these have a closer association with academic disciplines rather than professional subjects: other differences are noted in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 8: CURRICULAR AND PEDAGOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Introduction

This chapter considers the content of the subject area as reflected in the qualifying stage of training, (the DipSW). Introduction of DipSW requirements, with other changes in higher education in the early 1990s, had implications for both the curriculum, and for teaching, learning and assessment, here referred to as pedagogical issues. While only a few respondents to the survey sent course handbooks or brochures with their completed questionnaires(6), others sent programme outlines or timetables or added notes to the questionnaire(39) which gave clues as to curricula content. Further information was derived from course documents available to the researcher in other capacities and from CCETSW information for applicants (CCETSW, 1996).

Thus, material relating to 56 DipSW programmes was analysed, although the level of detail available varied considerably. Additionally, there was some reference to curricular matters in the responses of some of the interviewees and in the social work education literature. For most respondents (with the exception of P/G diploma courses already mentioned) there was no change in the overall length of new programmes. However, the requirement (in the original Paper 30, 1989) to introduce an area of particular practice to previously generic courses; to assess application of knowledge through 'competences' (*sic*) demonstrated in practice; and to demonstrate values (for example, the 1989 requirements on anti-racism) all meant changes in curriculum.

In some cases, course changes in response to CCETSW requirements coincided with institutional moves to modularisation, although social work was sometimes exempt, from conformity with the structure and student choice integral to this approach (see Chapter 11). However, this change, itself often a response to the declining resource base, had implications for the teaching and learning process. A traditionally high staff-student ratio in the social work area (CCETSW's norm of 1:10 had been eroded in the eighties) and assumptions about the appropriate ways of transmitting knowledge, skills and values, were all increasingly challenged in the nineties and some Departments have made radical changes in their mode of delivery to reflect this.

The 1994 survey results only hinted at some of the changes which were to become more apparent later, and in the 1996 interviews a question was asked explicitly about the implications of what should be taught for how it should be taught.

Material from JUC SWEC has not yielded much information for this chapter. An Information Sheet issued by the Joint University Council states that ‘... the Council has provided an important national forum for the discussion of academic issues such as the content of curricula, matters relating to resources and standards in teaching and research ...’, and there is ample evidence over the last decade that the Social Work Education Committee has taken seriously its remit to ‘consult and co-operate with other (relevant) bodies’ in pursuance of its goal of subject development (see Appendix 6). Considerable efforts have been directed to responses to various CCETSW proposals and to commenting on other changes as signalled in central government documents or being experienced locally. Periodically, some working groups have had curricular concerns very much in mind, but recent debates have been more preoccupied with the overall structure and direction of the subject area and crucial questions about its resourcing.

Much of the work of the Committee proceeds on the basis of assumptions about the ‘content’ of the field and appropriate pedagogical approaches, presumed to be shared. These are occasionally made more explicit, for instance, in a regular concern about the place of research in social work education and practice (see Chapter 9); a similar consistent concern to maintain ‘work with offenders’ as an area of special interest; and efforts to find a place for comparative perspectives in an overcrowded curriculum.

Curriculum Content

CCETSW Paper 30 did not specify a core curriculum, although prescription in relation to outcomes virtually amounted to this: ‘... the regulatory framework and the specification of competences is doing no more than establishing a national curriculum in social work’ (Webb, 1996:180). With some notable exceptions, data from this research indicated considerable conformity in the components which make up the curricula of college-based teaching. Mention should be made here of different aspects of the curriculum. For instance, Paper 30 required programme providers to develop an explicit *practice* curriculum as the basis for practice teaching and assessment. However, this material is usually contained in separate placement handbooks which were not sought nor analysed in this research.

In addition to the college and practice curricula, Coulshead (1989) has suggested that there is a '*process curriculum*', which, while not very distinct within the material analysed, is in evidence (see later). Holland (1988) identified an *invisible* curriculum, that is concerned with the integration of learning from three sources - the academic disciplines, principles of professional practice, and practice placements - which poses pedagogical complexities for the teacher and learner in social work education.

Most handbooks or brochures contain a general statement about the philosophy or aims of the programme. Phrases such as 'preparation for a changing world'; for 'reflective practice'; 'challenging discrimination (or inequalities or oppression)'; 'taking account of the current social, economic and political context' or 'resource constraints, or 'demands for accountability'; and 'recognising the impact of social divisions' or 'the powerful links between the personal and the political' recur. Programme providers aim to equip students with 'strategies for intervention' and to work in 'a wide range of agencies', though there was some indication of a gap between courses of a fairly utilitarian nature, tied to SSDs as potential employers, and those which suggested more imaginative and academically ambitious programmes. (These were not related to the level at which an award would be offered or the type of host institution).

A minority of courses appeared to use client group or setting as the sole organising principle for curriculum construction, and two had moved exclusively to 'enquiry and action' or 'problem based learning' which eschews the normal divisions of the curriculum into units with separate syllabi. However, the great majority of course curricula consisted of a varying number of units (between 3 and 10 per year excluding placements), a minority of which suggested some degree of 'integration' or 'inter-disciplinarity', even if only in one unit. The following analysis categorised curriculum elements into professional knowledge (social work theory, values and skills); theoretical underpinning or disciplinary perspectives; areas of particular practice (APPs, subsequently renamed pathways); and a miscellaneous group of related studies, seen as core by some programmes but not universally so.

Professional Knowledge

Core social work teaching (identified in 46 programmes) about models, methods and approaches used in the practice of social work, goes under many headings; 'principles and practice of social work', 'theory and methods', 'practice theories', 'social work intervention'. These suggest a lack of agreement or confidence about the theoretical core of the subject area, further reflected in

a tension between largely 'process' informed syllabi (that is concerned with the stages in engagement with service users), and those based on elaboration of or approaches for analysis and action in particular situations. The latter is more common but sometimes includes reference to the former and suggests an eclectic approach to the subject whereby students are presented with a range of methods or models to utilise as appropriate.

The traditional psychodynamic paradigm, which previously played a dominant and even exclusive role in the curriculum, (Payne, 1991) may now be dealt with in one lecture, almost as an historical illustration, if at all. Timms (1991:207) has written about the 'avoidance of the work of establishing theoretical foundations' and, as previously noted, this contributes to the perceived weakness of the subject. There is a small body of literature about the nature of social work theory and its relation to practice (for example, Sheppard, 1995; Elliott, 1995), but this area requires further work and some rethinking (Clark, 1995; Jones and Jordan; 1996).

'Values teaching' (identified as a distinct element in 36 programmes) also went under many headings, suggesting different aims and emphases. A minority of units were described as 'philosophy and values' or 'values and ethics', while over half included reference to 'anti-discriminatory values' (or principles) in the title. This teaching would sometimes take place as 'block' workshops or be related to practice situations, for example through seminar discussions, suggesting that the amount and level of theoretical input varied considerably.

Jones (1996b:20) suggests that 'values are crucial in defining a general orientation but in the absence of supporting knowledge can tend to lead to highly inappropriate and simplistic forms of intervention'. Macey and Moxon (1996) have also argued that it is necessary to draw on the social sciences to inform the value base, and Webb saw this lack as contributing to CCETSW's inability to rebut the attack on social work education's commitment to anti-discriminatory practice in the 1995 revision of Paper 30 (Webb, 1996:185). There is relatively little literature about the teaching of values (Jordon et al, 1993 is a useful exception) but there is rather more material about education for anti discriminatory practice, a recent example of which includes a taxonomy of stages in curriculum change in this area (Harlow and Hearn, 1996).

The last aspect of professional knowledge included units aimed at developing skills. Of 64 such units, 19 were concerned with work with individuals (sometimes subsumed under communication skills or counselling headings); and 18 with work with groups; 9 with families; and 7 with communities. There was some indication that these units are used as preparatory to or concurrent

with placements, and they demonstrate an assumption that students should be able to work with groups of varying sizes and types, well as individuals. (There are discrete bodies of literature in relation to each of these fields). Such units sometimes provided an alternative basis for division of students, otherwise split on pathway lines, and a 'small group' forum where participation and peer learning could be maximised (see later).

Other units mentioned included management (5), information technology (4), and child observation (2). The inclusion of management as a skills-based course partly reflects a tradition on CSS courses to cater for staff who were already in management posts, for example as heads of homes or day care units, but might be expected to develop further in relation to the particular skills required of 'care managers' and other posts where budgetary skills, 'people management' (staff, volunteers), and quality assurance are a requirement.

The relative lack of information technology skills teaching (despite its inclusion in CCETSW Paper 30, 1991) is of concern though it may be offered in other units, for example 'research' (see later). Apart from Glastonbury's work on the use of computers in social work (1985, 1993) recent articles have appeared about the teaching of information technology skills (Bilson, 1993; Bates, 1995) and Schwieso and Pettit (1995) confirm the low priority given to this area.

The lack of (child) observation skills development is also surprising, given some encouragement by CCETSW to (re-)introduce this, following concerns raised in the Beckford Inquiry (Blom Cooper, 1985) although it may be an aspect addressed by some courses in the placement context, as suggested by Tanner and La Riche (1995). There is a small amount of literature relating to child observation (Wilson, 1992; Baldwin, 1994), but Tanner and La Riche suggest that observation skills should also be developed with other groups and across a range of work settings.

Disciplinary Perspectives

The relationship of social work to the 'parent disciplines' of psychology, sociology, social policy and law has been mentioned previously; and there is evidence of continuing, discrete teaching in these subjects. Thus, social policy could be identified in 33 curricula, psychology in 30 and sociology in 18, while a further 21 programmes have units with titles indicating an attempt to integrate teaching about the personal and the political or the individual and society or life cycle and structural perspectives.

Timms (1991:208) identified Paper 30's reference to 'the applied social sciences' but pointed out that their contribution would be weakened through a requirement that 'they be assessed in the mode of 'know how' (rather than) 'know that''. Jones suggested that 'Since 1975 CCETSW has made it clear that the contribution of the social sciences to the social work enterprise is both to be limited and controlled' (Jones, 1996a:206), and elsewhere, he referred to the 'stripping out' of social sciences from the curriculum, in the most recent Review (Jones, 1996c). While the above figures do not exactly support such a contention, it was not clear from the data how the units might have informed the understanding or values of students, and there is some evidence (including in the development and content of top-up or degree programmes) to suggest dissatisfaction by social work educators with the level or amount of social science teaching possible within a two year programme.

Finally, most programmes (42) demonstrate a discrete approach to the teaching of legal studies, or social work and the law, or the legal context, sometimes with explicit mention of a (sub-)unit on welfare rights, and this is discussed further later.

Pathways

It was clear from the data that programme designers have been substantially influenced by organisational arrangements for service delivery to particular client groups and by the needs and expectations of students in relation to prospective employment. This demonstrates a conjunction of the leanings (based on previous experience) of academic staff, the voice of the employer in curriculum design, and responsiveness to student demand. Thus, despite CCETSW's original view that APPs could be based on a method, approach, or setting (that is, did not have to relate to client groups) only a very small minority of programmes had such examples. These were community social work or work with community groups(3); residential care(12) (but nearly all specifically concerned with residential child care and related to the CCETSW initiative in this field); and the voluntary sector (1).

All programmes had at least two pathways, one of which was 'Work with Children and Families' (or variations of such a title). In the majority of cases (48) the second was 'Community Care', sometimes called 'Adult Services' (which does actually cover users with a range of problems or conditions in many cases). Over half the programmes offered a third pathway of which the most likely was 'Work with Offenders' (or Probation or Criminal Justice) (29), including one programme which offers forensic social work. As mentioned, a JUC SWEC working group has

actively worked with other groups and lobbied in an attempt to retain this pathway within social work education. It has also received attention in the social work literature, both from a policy perspective and from a curriculum or pedagogical one (Williams, 1996; Eadie and Ward, 1995).

This group of programmes, where up to one third of an intake would be pursuing a pathway aimed at work in a setting/agency which now may neither offer placements nor require recruits to be qualified social workers, illustrates the vulnerability of social work education, if it develops too close a 'fit' with current organisational arrangements/employer requirements. The possibility of 'erasure', although raised by Pietroni (1995) in relation to community care developments, is also applicable in the criminal justice field.

Other specific fields for which pathways prepare students are 'Mental Health' (13); 'Ageing' (sometimes linked with disability) (8); Palliative Care (2); work with people with learning disabilities (5), or addictions (1), or sensory loss (1). While there are distinct bodies of literature in relation to each of the above, it is in the field of Mental Health work that literature relating to user participation is particularly in evidence, including reference to the educational role of people with experience of the 'client status' (Ramon and Sayce, 1993).

The pressure to include ever more 'subjects' as discrete areas of teaching is apparent, for instance in a survey which suggested that most students were only minimally prepared for work in relation to drugs and alcohol. The author saw this as constituting an increasing problem which cuts across most client group-based teaching (Harrison, 1990) and there is no evidence from the researcher's data that this is any more in evidence on DipSW programmes than it was on CQSW courses.

Following the CCETSW revision of Paper 30, from 1995 it became possible to offer a generic instead of a particular pathway, and by 1996, 17 programmes had signalled their intention to do so alongside one or two other pathways. There are indications that this decision was related to problems about securing appropriate placements, rather than a CCETSW commitment to genericism as opposed to specialisation (a term studiously avoided in Paper 30). But there have been debates about the extent to which a two year programme can equip students for a particular area of practice; the expectations of developments in the induction, post-qualifying and advanced stages of training; the extent to which early concentration may limit subsequent career choices; and the changing contexts within which students may seek employment.

Additionally, the above list of pathways does not apparently prepare students for established but minority posts or for employment in 'new' settings or with 'new' areas of need. Thus, for instance, social work in health care is barely represented in the curriculum of most programmes although it has a long established, albeit tenuous, place in hospitals, and is gaining a foothold in fund-holding general practices (McLeod, 1995). The word 'refugees' barely figured in most of the material examined. Burgess and Reynolds (1995) addressed this and also demonstrated a way of including changing concerns within a different curricular and pedagogical framework, discussed later.

Other Elements

However, social work in health settings or with refugees was evident in a final group of units offered on about half the programmes, which can only be described as miscellaneous. The most frequently cited unit in this category was 'research' (31 mentions). It did not seem appropriate to categorise this as core social work knowledge or skills, or a contributory discipline, given the wide range of meanings attached to this term. In some cases it was offered as a first level unit and was concerned with establishing study skills and introducing students to methods of enquiry. At another level it was concerned with research appreciation, while only in the final year of a few degree programmes or on postgraduate courses did it aim to explore research design and methodology relevant to students carrying out a small research (see also Chapter 9).

Another unit evident in over one third of the programme documents was 'working in organisations' or the 'organisational context of social work'. It was often not clear how far such units emphasised a theoretical basis for analysis of agency contexts or the development of skills required for work in particular types of organisation.

Eight programmes included a unit entitled 'professional development' (or similar) which aimed to assist students in relating college based teaching to practice issues, or in integrating 'the personal' (including values) with professional and academic development. There was some indication that such units are concerned with process rather than prescribed content and that they may be substitutes for earlier models of tutorial work.

Only one programme in this sample offers a unit in *interprofessional studies*. There seemed to be a lack of attention in the curriculum to 'working with others' (who may share concerns but have different perspectives and remits), despite frequent critical reference to this deficiency in social

work practice, highlighted, for instance in reviews of child abuse and subsequently community care 'scandals'. Such concerns might be addressed in units about health, disability or addictions offered to all students on five programmes; or in units about deviance/criminology (3) or poverty (1). The apparent lack of discrete teaching about poverty in social work education is disturbing given its recent increase and centrality in the lives of many service users (JFR Inquiry Group, 1995).

Finally, there was very little evidence of comparative perspectives through discrete units on European or international social work, only mentioned by four programmes. However, 19 respondents claimed involvement in ERASMUS programmes in 1994, including the possibility of sending students abroad on placement, and four claimed other international links including the TEMPUS programme. It is clear that ERASMUS programmes were not an integral feature of most DipSW programmes, though as a later survey noted, the scheme may have influenced mainstream teaching in less obvious ways on the estimated 20% of courses which participated (Lyons, 1996).

Pedagogical Issues

An assumption predating this research is that one of the reasons for the vulnerability of social work within higher education derives from the relatively labour intensive teaching methods used. This has also been an issue in the 'Banding' of social work (see Chapter 10). Some impressionistic evidence and emerging literature (Coulthead, 1992) suggested that the area was under considerable pressure to take the opportunity of the change to DipSW to address this. Therefore, a direct question was asked in the survey about teaching methods, and followed up in the interviews.

Over two thirds of the survey respondents (43) said that they had introduced some pedagogical changes with the implementation of DipSW, aimed at more efficient use of staff time. The extent to which this was expedient, or consistent with traditional methods and assumptions, or with literature about how adults learn or the nature of professional education, for instance, was not explored at the survey stage. Respondents were additionally asked to estimate the proportions of time-tabled time which students would spend in lectures, seminars, projects (normally group activities), skills workshops or other types of activity.

Nearly a third (18) failed to provide a usable response, eight people expressing the time in 'blocks' which the researcher could not translate, and ten others saying that it was impossible, or very difficult to calculate, for example because a range of methods was used within each unit, or that it would take too much time to calculate or simply not answering. One of these responses came from a programme which had switched exclusively to 'Enquiry and Action Learning' (EAL, which eschews traditional divisions in the curriculum and timetable) with the agreement of their institution (Parsloe, 1996). Some of the other responses would have been a source of concern or irritation to HEI managers or perhaps would have confirmed suspicions of social work educators as innumerate or ignoring current realities. They would certainly not help educators win any arguments about the level of resourcing needed.

Of the remaining 46, nearly half (20) estimated that the curriculum was delivered through lectures for between 20 and 39% of the time, with the same amount of time being spent in seminars in a higher number of cases (29). Only 11 respondents estimated that less than 20% of the time was spent in lectures, while 13 estimated that it was 40% or more (with similar proportions but lower numbers in relation to seminars). The highest proportions of time spent in lectures occurred on MA programmes, in the old university sector, or on very large courses in the new university sector. About half (of the 46) estimated that less than 20% of the students' time would be spent in projects and skills workshops (24 and 22 respectively) while slightly fewer said that this would account for 20-39% of the time (20 and 18), with very few examples of more time being spent on these activities.

In response to other types of activity, 11 people mentioned tutorial work as accounting for up to 20% of the students' time (it is not clear whether this would have included placement visits or not), while five identified 'experiential groups' as a separate activity and four mentioned independent study. The last form of learning, as opposed to teaching, suggests a number of possibilities; optimistically, that educators have taken seriously the idea of the student as an adult learner who can take responsibility for her/his own learning; but more cynically that, in the drive to resource efficiency, some of the learning is explicitly allocated to the student, and course units must indicate not just 'contact time' but also the time which the average student would need to spend to complete associated work.

It also an expectation of CCETSW and post-qualifying consortia that proposals for validation of post-qualifying or advanced awards (which are often pursued part-time), should indicate the likely commitment in private study time as well as attendance. These suggest a mechanistic view of the

teaching-learning process, since such private study may also be described as guided learning and require the student to complete specified reading, exercises and tasks. It is clearly a response to the increasing pressures on academics and HEIs, and to a culture which requires students to achieve demonstrable goals and targets which can be described (for example in transcripts) and are readily marketable to employers.

A further question about the 'content' of the subject area, as demonstrated in its curricula and pedagogy, was whether respondents had participated in the Enterprise in Higher Education scheme. 43 respondents said no and four others failed to answer, but over a quarter (17) had done so, including four departments in the old university sector. The range of work carried out with this additional funding fell into two main types. The first was concerned with promoting 'agency involvement', or practice teacher development, or increasing the supply of placements (9 mentions); while the second was concerned with development of learning or assessment materials, including transcripts, records of achievement, portfolios, learning profiles, workbooks, use of 'competences' (*sic*) and means for approving prior learning (APL) (16 mentions). Most projects included more than one activity.

While EHE funding was undoubtedly timely and appreciated by a number of social work educators, it can also be seen as promoting developments of a particular kind; it 'emphasises operationalism and instrumental learning and increases employer involvement at the cost of professional control' (Taylor, 1996:158, see also Cannan, 1994/5). It can also be seen as further fragmenting the range of resources to be bid for and then managed by social work educators (see Chapter 11).

The Relationship Between Content And Form

A number of respondents to the 1996 interviews, when asked about the subject area, and about the pedagogical implications, prefaced their answers by consideration of the purpose of social work education. Some of these were reported in Chapter 7, but other are more directly relevant here. One respondent said that, since 'what is brought to (social workers) is pain, anxiety, uncertainty, despair ... the design of qualifying training should work from these (experiences) outwards to theoretical knowledge.' Another suggested that the kind of people who come into social work 'want to do something practical in relation to (their) ideals. Therefore, education must deal with ideals and values as well as practicalities (but it) can't do things without knowledge and understanding ... It's possible (to move from experience to understanding) by organising courses

with formal teaching but also a structure which allows personal and interpersonal groups, and a lot of 'lab work'. The university underestimates this.'

This was expressed slightly differently by a third interviewee, 'People coming into social work need to retain their excitement and enthusiasm to right wrongs and help people - and social work education must promote that through intellectual endeavour ... (but education) works best when people also have first hand knowledge and the opportunity to integrate theory and practice, so the two must go together'. This view was echoed by a fourth person who also spoke of social work education as 'trying to help people think on their feet, (and) use evidence based knowledge, not just intuition ... (which requires an approach which will) marry experiential with more academic ways of teaching and learning.'

The relationship between form and content was succinctly stated by another respondent as 'the medium and the message should be consistent', a view illustrated by the idea that, since the role of the social worker is concerned with developing (individual) potential - or empowering - 'students need to know what that means for them(selves, in the context of the educational programme)'. These views are echoed in some of the social work education literature already cited (see for instance, Gould and Taylor, 1996).

Returning briefly to data from programme material, there was frequent reference in these to expectations of high levels of student attendance and participation or to responsibility for their own learning or involvement in active methods. Underlying these statements and the views expressed by the interviewees are assumptions about students as adult learners with important experience (of both a personal and practical nature) to contribute to the learning process. This is of course, partly related to recruitment policies and practice (usually of non-standard entrants, often with prior experience) but also has its roots in literature, particularly in the education field a decade earlier (previously mentioned), sometimes referred to as andragogy as distinct from pedagogy.

Knowles (1972) identified the difference as the increase in experiential techniques used with adult learners, both to draw on their experience and to involve them in its analysis. A number of British academics have since discussed the implications of this approach for social work education (Harris et al, 1985; Gardiner, 1988; Henderson, 1994), and it has been explicitly related to the reflective practitioner concept (Gould and Taylor, 1996). Noting that social work education could not be about the 'didactic delivery of knowledge into empty vessels', one interviewee said that students

had to take responsibility for their own learning ‘within a defined framework ... (and with) assessment landmarks in relation to legal knowledge, the application of social science knowledge and methods of intervention’.

Another interviewee advocated educational methods based on students ‘finding out and understanding what they are doing and why, and (assisting them in) integrating the internal and external worlds’. However, a third respondent suggested that, while ‘self directed learning should be at the core of social work pedagogy ... (this had) been abused and reduced to ‘just sharing’ and not helping students get beyond what they bring’, another indication perhaps that social work educators themselves may have played a part in the current crisis.

Interviewees were not asked specifically for their ideas about curriculum content, but a number made reference to the contribution of particular subjects. One respondent said, ‘There has been some attempt to make greater coherence (*sic*) of three different traditions, sociology, psychology and social policy ... social work is beginning to think about interdisciplinary study ... the antipathy between different traditions gets played out in social work education but they could be brought into healthy tension’. He advocated a curriculum built around the notion of psycho-social studies, ‘because social workers are constantly crossing personal and political boundaries, so social work is caught (in) attempting to reconcile polarities’.

Another respondent suggested that ‘the intellectual area comprises a discourse between a reflexive, therapeutic view of the world (where the goal is personal fulfilment); a collectivist view of the world (where the goal is development of society); and a reformist view (in which the goal is delivery of effective services within a state system of welfare)’. Most respondents made some reference to the status or influence of particular disciplines within the curriculum. For instance, sociology was described as ‘critical, self confidently theoretical’, but there was some concern that its influence had declined with, for example, the loss from most curricula of community work as an approach. However, it has also been suggested that some of the thinking in the area of anti-discrimination and difference draws on sociological work and that a theoretically informed value base would demonstrate an appropriate ‘use’ of social science in social work education (Jones, 1996b).

Psychology was noted as being ‘rooted in positivist traditions’, and at variance with an increasing tendency in social work education to favour an interpretative paradigm (see Chapter 9). There have also been criticisms of the Eurocentric approach of much of the psychology research and

literature (for example, Robinson, 1993). However, there is evidence of a continuing value placed on psychology teaching, usually in the area of social psychology, but including also 'abnormal' psychology, even if this is then a site of tensions in social work courses.

Social policy was described by one respondent as 'empiricist ... (and) imbued with corporatist traditions'. This view perhaps fails to acknowledge recent developments in the subject and its role in enabling a critical appreciation of the origins and directions of welfare, and of the role of 'welfare professionals'. It certainly seems to hold a distinctive place in the majority of social work courses. Other subjects mentioned as having a possible contribution to make included philosophy, politics and economics, and, 'increasingly concepts from business and management'. With the exception of philosophy (very occasionally) and management (more often), these were not identified in the curricula examined.

The subject most in evidence, in both the survey data and responses from interviewees, was law, reflecting the emphasis given to this area in reaction to employer dissatisfaction and public criticism in the eighties (Blom Cooper, 1985). This resulted in the funding of a special working group (initially the Law and Social Work Research Group and then the Law Improvements Project) and production of literature, including by CCETSW (Ball et al, 1988; Ball et al, 1991; Preston Shoot, 1993) as well as, more recently, the establishment of a Social Work Law Association. This can also be seen as a response to the burgeoning of welfare legislation, not least directly related to or impacting on the work of the personal social services, and a reflection of the extent to which social work in the UK had become a statutory activity, predominantly concerned with services for people experiencing poverty (welfare rights teaching is usually included within law teaching).

One interviewee said that social workers should have 'an understanding of the role of law in society, and ... of legal rights and duties ...', but, as another commented, 'Social workers need to know how to use the law as a resource and a tool - it's an interpretative matter', drawing the conclusion that it should 'be taught in a more practice led manner'. Another said that 'thinking legally and being part of the system of law are different, ... (but social workers need to have) an understanding of the role of the law in society ... including its relation to social policy and ... of legal rights and duties and how these should be enforced'. However, Stevenson (1988) has warned that an uncritical acceptance of the pre-eminence of law teaching in the social work curriculum could lead to a more technocratic and potentially coercive form of practice, which some think is evident in the nineties (Jones, 1992).

Questions were not asked specifically about the practice element in social work education but four interviewees referred to it: 'social work education might be possible on an intellectual basis only, but most students need well supervised placements'; 'Ideas can inform practice and practice must enliven theory'; and 'It is really important that this activity is integral ... but it must be prepared for, taught and assessed to the same standards as college based modules, as it's a key to subsequent development.' This respondent attributed the increased importance attached to social work placements to the CNAAs' recognition of this area as the basis for accredited learning, predating more recent emphasis on the value of work-based learning in higher education policy.

However, one interviewee's (sole) comment in this respect 'placements are an appalling drain in terms of staff time and resources. The placement model has virtually broken down' illustrates starkly the tensions around this area of work. Quite apart from issues of quality; or agency control; or integration of theory and practice, there is a real challenge to social work (and other forms of professional) education to review the assumptions on which placements are based and the organisational arrangements and resourcing implications inherent in the current model.

It is known from discussions in JUC SWEC meetings that CCETSW is currently reluctant to reduce its requirements in relation to placements. There is also impressionistic evidence that courses have already cut to the minimum (2) the number of placements and days in each (50 and 80 respectively), and that some social work educators are reconsidering provision of qualifying training (or the size of programmes) in the light of placement problems. There are periodic news items in the professional press about placement crises, but there is little in the academic literature specifically addressing this concern, which is returned to in the chapter on changes and resourcing.

Returning to methods of teaching and learning, only two interviewees mentioned, spontaneously, the place of lectures: 'mass lectures are not too helpful although they have their place occasionally', while another said that in his department staff make relatively more use of lectures 'but with small (seminar) groups and use of case material'. There was rather more comment about the role of tutorial work, since this seems such a core 'method' in traditional patterns of course delivery and such a contentious issue in the institutional context of reduced resourcing. Views ranged widely from adherence to traditional models (which, however, had already undergone significant modification in the eighties in some places), to varying degrees of adaptation to current resource realities, sometimes also justified in pedagogical terms.

Thus, one respondent justified a commitment to a 'traditional model' of individual tutorials on the grounds that 'social work is situated on the boundary between the personal and the professional and the traditional tutorial addresses that ... if we can't find some way to allow that process then social work is not just impoverished but placed in jeopardy'. He noted the possibility of group or peer learning as affording a similar opportunity, and admitted that his answer was coloured by his own theoretical orientation and strengths as an educator. It might also be relevant that he was not responsible for provision of qualifying training in the usual higher education context. Another respondent (manager) spoke of having 'retained the traditional model of social work education including skills workshops ... and regular group tutorials and individual tutorials and placement visits by the tutor.'

At the other extreme, the most experienced academic and manager suggested that the traditional model promoted 'a 'mother hen' approach to social work education (and had) moved to the idea that people learn better in groups, with the 'support' that tutors used to give reduced to a minimum'. Other inputs, such as counselling or study skills, (which tutors may previously have provided) should be obtained elsewhere if necessary. This view had some support from another interviewee who remarked 'the demise of the traditional one to one tutorial may be no bad thing. It was very idiosyncratic and dependant on the quality of the teacher'.

Other responses suggested a range of compromises between these positions. One respondent acknowledged that the 'personal consequences of difficult social work may require tutorial work or (help) from other sources, (while the) serious business of question and debate with oneself about practice and integrating knowledge can be better done in pairs and groups, (facilitated) by tutorial support and a planned programme'. Others spoke of a reduced frequency of tutorial contact, 'but these need to be maintained as an opportunity to digest and integrate material (with) small group tutorials (being) probably OK for most'; and patterns of tutorial provision geared to different stages of the programme with more emphasis on group than individual tutorials. But as one interviewee noted, 'the actual hours allocated is probably half of what it was ten years ago'.

There was general agreement about the need for small group work, probably alongside more conventional pedagogic methods, and a recognition that 'these place real pressure on teaching and learning strategies'. This area has received little attention in the literature but, in a discussion about the relationship between resourcing and pedagogy, it was suggested that tutorials counteract

'adult learning philosophies by encouraging dependence' and detract from the educator's other duty 'towards research and knowledge building' (Coulshhead, 1992:12)

One exception to the general adherence to a 'conventional curriculum' and 'mixed modes of delivery' revealed by the data, was the move to the wholesale adoption of 'problem based' or 'enquiry and action learning' (EAL). This was first developed at Bristol University in the context of postgraduate level qualifying training and there are accounts of its introduction and operation in the literature (Burgess, 1992; Burgess and Jackson, 1994, Taylor, 1996). It has since been introduced at University of North London (Autumn, 1996) with a much bigger student group, pursuing qualifications at different levels, and this is also the subject of a monitoring and evaluation project.

Interviewees were asked specifically about this in 1996. Only one respondent was in fact committed to 'a group-based, self directed programme' which characterises this approach, stating that it is 'based on a properly researched study into how people learn, (and that) it engages people and prepares them for life long learning'. Other respondents showed varying levels of interest in the idea. One questioned whether it was actually as 'resource saving' as might have been expected (though advocates say it was not a response to resource pressures), but thought that it was effective and was using it 'in a watered down version'. Another was 'favourably disposed ... it emphasises the active role of the learner and his autonomy and capacity to link enquiry with processes of change'; but had not had experience of implementing it.

Other interviewees, except one, seemed to have introduced it in particular aspects of a programme; 'each module has student directed learning associated with it including some tasks, often in groups'; it is the principle used in project-based small work groups'. One respondent suggested that it had not been adopted 'wholesale' due to student anxieties and wanting 'more input', although again its exponents suggest it can be successfully used with students of a wide ability range. This may be an example of the level of nerve, commitment or desperation or whatever else motivates academic staff to introduce new methods, (including also the need to convince institutional managers and CCETSW), and the loss of security and satisfaction derived from using approaches which are both personally familiar and publicly accepted. Social work educators have shown the capacity to pioneer changes in various ways at institutional level, but it can be a high risk strategy for a subject area which is marginal, particularly if not supported by research evidence (possibly from other fields or countries) or wider changes in policy and perception (see also Chapter 11).

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the content of the area, as indicated in data about curricula and the teaching and learning methods used in course delivery. It has also considered the relationship between the social sciences and professional education and also that between purpose, content and pedagogical approaches. The findings do not suggest a wholesale rejection of social science as a legitimate and necessary part of social work education though questions remain about how knowledge from this area is mediated through course design and delivery and adapted by students to inform their practice.

Findings also suggest some conformity in the models, methods and skills-based core of social work teaching, with little indication of theoretical developments, although there is evidence of research in to the relationship between knowledge acquired in college and its use in practice. The research did not set out to inquire into the practice component of social work education, (despite the fact that this constitutes 50% of the students' learning experience and is often the part most appreciated by students themselves) and consequently discussion relating to this area is mainly about placements as a resource issue, in Chapter 10. The value base of social work has been mentioned in this chapter but is considered further in Chapter 12.

An analysis of responses about teaching methods suggests a move to more resource efficient methods, although there remains a strong commitment to the use of small groups, not least to address issues of process, important in the development of professional skills and practice. Traditional views of tutorial work have largely been supplanted by an educational rather than a therapeutic approach, and tutorials are now more likely to be in the form of group rather than individual work. The question of the role of the tutor in supporting placements was not explored and is an open question in terms of the models which currently operate or might be developed.

While some of the recent changes in curriculum or pedagogy might be attributed to external requirements or HEI resourcing pressures, some seem more rooted in the experience and values of educators themselves, including a widespread view of students as adult, and active, learners. There is some evidence that social work educators seek a research justification in relation to approaches to teaching and learning; also of innovation in this field; as well as increased congruence between social work learning goals and methods, relative to the wider academic

community. These may constitute strengths, or diminish the 'difference' sometimes attributed to the subject area, which can feed in to its marginal position in higher education.

CHAPTER 9: RESEARCH ISSUES IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

Introduction

The extent to which social work has a body of research based knowledge, and the role of social work educators in generating such knowledge, has been questioned. Social work educators might be assumed to have a responsibility in this area in three ways; firstly, in undertaking research; secondly, in how research informs their teaching and the wider enterprise of individual and collective professional development; and thirdly, in the assumptions and strategies on which teaching about research in qualifying and other programmes are based. To some extent the last of these has been addressed in the context of findings about curriculum and pedagogy. From the survey data it was apparent that there are either divergent views about the needs of students for research teaching or about the priority to be given to this area (in what ever form) relative to other subjects in the curriculum: this is further considered here in the context of comments by some of the interviewees.

This chapter explores the extent to which social work educators are themselves involved in research, the priority which they give to this area, and the issues raised in relation to its pursuance. There are also questions about how the participation or not of people who may identify with social work (see next chapter) might influence both the agenda and the conduct of research, with implications for the profession itself. Evidence is drawn from all three data sources, the 1994 survey, the 1996 interviews and the JUC SWEC documents, and this is related to some of the academic literature. While much of the literature in British social work journals is based on research, there is very little material *about* the place of research in the sense discussed here.

Undoubtedly, some of the topical concern about this area flows from the poor showing and marginally improved positions of social work as a subject area in the 1992 and 1996 Research Assessment Exercises, respectively, (hereafter RAE) with implications for both the funding and status of the area, as well as its viability in individual institutions. A report to a JUC SWEC meeting (1/97) by two members of the Social Policy and Social Work Panel, noted that there were encouraging differences between the submissions to the two exercises. In 1992, social work as a subject area found itself ranked 68th in a league table of 72 subjects. By 1996 this ranking had improved to 57th out of 69 subjects.

While some of the weaker institutions from the 1992 exercise did not submit again, there were some relatively stronger submissions from new entrants to the 1996 exercise, and panel members noted that some departments with established research activities showed considerable improvement in the standard of submissions between 1992 and 1996. Thus, in 1992, only 6% of social work submissions were given the maximum ratings of a 4 or a 5, while in 1996 this number had increased to 18% (graded 4) and 15% (graded 5). Further discussion of this development is contained in the final section of this chapter.

Findings From The Survey

Given the timing of the survey, questions related, in part, back to the 1992 RAE which undoubtedly provided a stimulus to the subject area, in terms of how it was then developing and its plans for the next exercise. Excluding 4 non-respondents, about one third of the departments or subject areas (21) had not participated in the 1992 RAE and slightly more (25) did not yet have a strategy regarding their participation in the next one.

Of respondents participating, numbers were fairly evenly divided between whether the subject area made an individual submission (18) or was part of a combined submission (20). In the case of the latter, respondents were subdivided between joint submissions with social policy (10) or with other subjects (sociology (4); health (2) and four respondents put 'social science'). Only 31 (of the 38) gave their research rating, with the majority (13) achieving a Three, 10 a Two and only five attaining the highest rating (Five).

The decision about whether or not a subject area participates, and if so whether independently, seems to be partly related to the size of the area (in staff terms) and the proportion of *active researchers* in a staff group. There were 14 non responses to a question about the number of active researchers on the staff, but other responses ranged between all (7) and none (9), with 22 respondents claiming two to five active researchers and 8 claiming six or more. This relates to a point in the report to JUC SWEC (1/97) concerning the 1996 RAE, when it was suggested that a department (subject area) would need a 'critical mass' of probably at least six active researchers on which to base a submission and that the overall number of people engaged in research (including assistants and researchers) would be an indicator of the likely existence of a research culture.

Predictably perhaps, both a higher number and proportion of staff who were research active were to be found in the old in relation to the new university sectors. This was also true of the existence of *research fellows, research assistants and research students* of which more than a third of respondents had none in the social work subject area (35, 28 and 25 respectively). However, nine institutions had one research fellow, while six had two or more; seven had one research assistant while fourteen had two or more; and twelve institutions had less than four research students while ten had four or more (including five with ten or more).

It seems likely that the more people involved in the research enterprise, in whatever capacity, the stronger the position of individual departments (or subject areas) in attracting funding; new staff committed to developing, or with established, research records; and research oriented students. However, research participation and quality are clearly not a function of size alone. Other factors include the value placed on research by the host institution, and other indications of a research culture operating at the departmental or faculty level to encourage, legitimate or require research activity. There may also be dangers in a field such as social work of a strong emphasis on research, not least of 'academisation' of the professional education programmes and of development of a research agenda determined solely by academic interests or the availability of funding.

A question about the *funding* of research indicated that 35 respondents derived at least some of their funding from external sources. Amounts and sources of such funding varied considerably, in the first instance from one respondent whose departmental research budget exceeded £5million to 3 each giving figures in the region of £500,000 and £100,000 respectively. Other respondents gave figures of substantially less than £100,000 or no figures.

Sources of funding included central government departments (Education, Health and Home Office) (9); local agencies (8); 'charities' (Nuffield, Rowntree, Mental Health Foundation) (5); CCETSW (4); ESRC (4); and the European Union or United Nations (3). There is some concern that the low number of ESRC awards reflects the fact that the ESRC does not categorise social work as a separate subject area. Thus, submissions are made under other subject headings and assessed accordingly, a point returned to later.

An alternative way of classifying the scale of the enterprise suggests that of the 35 respondents to this question (about external funding), 9 could be regarded as having only small scale research activity (defined as only one project or locally based, low budget projects) while in 17 institutions

it was clearly an activity with quite a high profile (having a budget of more than £100,000, and/or a range of research projects in progress). (In 10 cases the scale of the enterprise could not be deduced from the information available).

Finally, given the nature of the subject area, a question was asked about the level of collaborative research and another about the part which consultancy activities might play in the work of staff teams. Out of 59 respondents to the first question, between approximately one third and two thirds of respondents claimed to be involved in collaborative research with colleagues as follows; outside the UK (22); in social work education elsewhere in the UK (24); in other disciplines (27); and in agencies (41). The high number collaborating with agencies seems to confirm a leaning towards the professional field and a degree of community involvement evident in some of the other data resulting for this research.

Additionally, 58 of these respondents said that staff were involved in consultancy and training activities outside the Department/HEI, (although a sub- question suggested that eight respondents did not know how many staff might be so involved). Seven respondents thought that all or most staff would undertake this type of activity while the majority (21) thought that between three and five staff would be active in consultancy work. Questions remain about the scale and nature of this activity, and whether there has been any change over the last three years, relative for instance to more mainstream research.

A question was also asked about the possibility and use of sabbatical time. In 1994, 36 respondents said that it was possible for staff to get paid sabbatical leave and 21 thought that this would be primarily for the purposes of undertaking/ completing research, although 10 thought it might be used for this purpose or to enable time to be spent updating practice in the context of significant organisational and other changes.

The Place Of Research In Social Work Education: Interviewees' Perceptions

Interviews took place shortly after respondents had submitted returns in connection with the 1996 research assessment exercise, and although rarely referred to directly, this is likely to have had some bearing on responses. Given the non-specific wording of this interview question it was hardly surprising that it was variously answered, as relating both to the place of research in the curriculum and the place of research as an activity of social work educators, though most respondents drew the distinction and addressed both aspects.

In line with findings from the survey described in the previous chapter, opinions varied as to the appropriateness or possibility of including *research in the curriculum*. As one respondent said, 'it is very important for students to understand that knowledge comes from research as well as practice ... (and) to get them into the habit of going to books and articles for knowledge when they need it. (But in relation to research methods) there is not time for students to learn them in two years and even at postgraduate level research exercises should be realistic in scale...(although) they can do important pilot studies ... It is more important for qualifying students to understand research appreciation'. Another interviewee claimed, 'All students, at whatever level, should have an understanding of critical social enquiry but demands are different (at different levels, so at non graduate level, it is important) to read about, understand and value others' research (while) at post-graduate level they should have the capacity to carry out at least a single case design (project) and ability to critically analyse policies and their own work'.

This theme, that research appreciation is important for non-graduate students but that a research based component would be a requirement on a qualifying course at postgraduate level, was echoed by the majority of respondents, only two of whom did not comment on this aspect of the research issue. It is addressed in the literature slightly differently, as concerns about the content - paradigms and methods - appropriate to social work research, and this is discussed later.

Ironically, in redesigning a three year degree programme to include a DipSW rather than a CQSW, one respondent had found it necessary to substitute a practice study for a previous research-based dissertation 'to meet the requirements of a competency-based approach', thus changing the research element in the curriculum to one more concerned with appreciation; and another person commented that 'undertaking research as part of the placement would be problematic (since) practice skills take precedence'. In the former case, lack of research training at degree level would be compensated for by provision of a new masters degree (as an advanced award) with strong research methods and social work evaluation units, available to a minority of locally based workers.

Another respondent noted the improved opportunities for addressing research needs in the context of the top-up degree year, and the confidence derived from undertaking an individual project in which the issues confronting researchers are experienced first hand. This respondent further noted that 'social work authority should come in part from research, not just from the agency base and statutory role of the worker'. The role of courses leading to *advanced awards* in promoting

research skills and activities is usefully discussed by Youll and Walker (1995); and Bond and Jones (1995) describe a one year project aimed at enabling the dissemination of similarly derived research findings by practitioner researchers. However, both discussions note the costs of providing such training, and emerging evidence about opportunities for learning about research as part of post qualifying or advanced awards is contradictory (Chapter 11).

Three respondents saw a more integral relationship between research and professional development - 'good social work practice involves investigative and assessment skills, collecting data, weighing it up, drawing conclusions. It may not be academic research but research skills are an essential part of the social work repertoire'; or 'To practice social work is to engage in a form of research. They are so closely related we shouldn't think of them without each other'. This was echoed by someone involved with post-graduate level training, 'Good research skills are very relevant and very close to the practice of social work, including being critical of ones own methods. (We) can't control (students') research interests and their individual projects do not necessarily answer major research questions, but they constitute little pebbles on the beach'.

These views also have a basis in the literature, not least in Schon's view of the reflective practitioner as someone who 'becomes a researcher in the practice context' (Schon, 1983:164). This theme has been developed in relation to social work by Shepherd (1995), and Powell, 'Many of the skills involved in the collection of qualitative data can be developed through a reframing of many practice skills used by social workers on a day to day basis' (Powell, 1996:170).

With regard to the *research activities of staff*, there were again some variations in views, but with strong support for the notion that this is a responsibility of all educators and not something which should be split off from the teaching role. 'There is inestimable value in social work teachers being engaged in research and being able to bring that back into their teaching'; or 'you can't be a higher education lecturer unless you're testing yourself out against the profession and the knowledge base, so some form of enquiry and research is essential and it needs to be published'; or 'it's a contractual requirement that (academic staff) undertake research, though it is not necessarily funded'; or '(social work) education needs to be informed and stimulated by doing research. If social work teachers are to be effective they need to do research themselves'; or 'It goes with the reasons for thinking that social work education should stay in higher education. We expect all staff to be active researchers - it is far more exciting to be taught by people doing research, talking about their own work, sharing their findings...'

These views accord with those evident in the HEFCE subject area review (1994/5) where attention was paid in the evaluation of individual teaching to the citing of research and the use made of the teacher's own research experience, and there was some correlation between universities with strong research reputations also being graded 'excellent' in the subject review (though there were exceptions).

However, some respondents were less optimistic about the possibilities of all staff being active researchers... 'There are pressures to do it but it's difficult to release staff to do it. We have managed to get a research assistant for one year with money earned from income generation ... Staff undertake personal interest based research. It's very small scale with a limited amount of local authority funding (£5 to 10K)'; or 'There has to be a place for research in social work education, though we haven't been very good at it because of resourcing problems and the structuring of the academic year. You need clear time in which to carry out or write up research... There is a danger that only some people do research while others teach, that is a fragmentation of the role. There is an observable relationship between academic seniority and research, and a decrease in the teaching load'. Both these respondents were from the new university sector and indicate some common concerns about the level of resourcing, and the greater likelihood of tensions in this area when the university overall may have a less strong tradition of research and may even choose to see itself as primarily having a teaching mission.

However, comments also related to the particular expectations placed on social work educators through for instance, tutorial work and placement visiting, discussed in the last chapter. The effects of a poor research profile were also touched on in a further comment, which alluded directly to the research assessment exercise, 'Current rumours about the centres of excellence suggest that the situation could get worse. There are already practical problems about trying to carve out time for research and some departments are starting from a long way back. Is it worth keeping on trying? But the loss to staff and students would be enormous if (this University) became a teaching-only institution'. This view echoed a wider concern among social work educators, subsequently taken up by JUC SWEC (see next section).

The interviewees' responses also revealed other motivations and concerns in relation to research activity. One of the concerns of this researcher is the relative lack of social work educators holding doctorates (which could be taken to represent respect for research training and academic attainment in a subject area) and two respondents made unsolicited points which might further mitigate against this development. 'I am currently discouraging staff from doing PhDs because it

's really important to get ideas into the public domain.....and the PhD detracts from time available for other forms of research (though the new approach by publication may make this more feasible)'. Another respondent said, 'The RAE sets the context for current research initiatives. You can't submit a PhD thesis so it's more important to write for publication. A PhD may form the basis for a significant publication, but a lot of research *is not* significant, but (nevertheless) it should promote contributions to our understanding and reflect the passions of the staff'.

Both these academics were managing social work departments (one with a PhD and one without, but both active researchers and writers themselves), one in an old university and one in the new sector. One specifically stated that research is 'important for the credibility of the academy'. These responses suggest that a dominant concern is with the status of the subject or, more parochially, the performance and reputation of particular departments (as encouraged by the RAE). It is likely, however, that there are more individualistic motivations, as noted by Hardy (1941) who considered that the 'dominant incentives to research (are) intellectual curiosity, professional pride, and.....desire for reputation' (cited in Becher, 1989:53). It would be naive to suppose that these are not also motivating factors for social work educators, and there will be more discussion about the relationship between individual career development and credentials and external influences and image in the next chapter.

Another motivation was indicated in the view that social workers and educators need to be researching the field *themselves*. 'People who are not trained as social workers but who research it may not tune in to the heart of it..... so a research component is necessary to help social work understand itself better.' This was also related to ideas about the purpose and funding of research. Thus one respondent, in commenting on the amount and type of Department of Health funded research in the child protection field, suggested that 'it has been barking up the wrong tree.... there is a radical shift taking place now that will completely alter our ideas about the work commissioned over the last twenty years and will endorse a concept of localism in child protection... a standardised corporatist model doesn't fit'.

These suggest concerns about the extent to which social workers/educators might influence the research agenda and the interpretation of findings. As Ravn noted, the researcher has a role 'not just in unveiling the facts but in constructing them' (Ravn, 1991:112). However, Becher (1989) also identified the susceptibility of the research agenda (of soft applied fields) to dictation by non-academic interests and cited Kogan and Henkels' view (1983) that the government promotes investigation of 'useful' topics (Becher, 1989:147), a view supported in a brief commentary on

the previous research exercise by one of the panel members, who also noted significant gaps in the areas being researched and a lack of critical research (Jones, 1993).

Ideas about the research agenda for social work (as opposed to reference to 'own areas' of research) were only mentioned in passing by one of the interviewees, who described social work as a 'research-rich field because it's so fast changing . The problems of practice - relationships, poverty, inequality - need to be more research informed'. However, a possible agenda has been suggested elsewhere (Statham, 1996), and is of concern to a new sub-committee of JUC SWEC (see later).

Another of the issues identified by interviewees, was a concern that social work educators should utilise (and promote) methods and approaches compatible with the overall goals of social work, (if we take these to be concerns with social justice and empowerment). This includes a wish to work collaboratively with the usual subjects of research and/or the potential users. Thus, one respondent thought that it was important to 'involve practitioners and users in a collaborative form of research, not just have an academic, selfish concern to publish....users and agencies must state their own needs'; and another ascribed to the value of 'interactive forms of research, where people are participants in the research process, rather than objects'. Another described a particular model of 'partnership research', 'that is, a joint group sets the policy and the objectives and academic staff carry out the research, but through attachment to the agency.....it works well, bringing out the implications for the agency of the research'; while a fourth said, 'I am interested in broadly based research and in alliances with users'.

In relation to the last point, Powell (1996:169) notes that, while the model 'of the researcher as actively engaged in the participatory process' is well established in the education field, it is less well developed in social work. The issues of involving users in research is represented in the literature in the work of Beresford and associates (for example, Beresford and Croft, 1986; Beresford and Trevillion, 1995); and the role of social workers as practitioner- researchers has also been addressed to some extent, including an early publication sponsored by CCETSW (Whittaker et al, 1990).

A few respondents said more about a related point, the research paradigms which might be appropriate, including 'the use of the case study approach and feminist or social consultancy approaches'; or 'social work perspectives lend themselves to qualitative approaches'. These views were reflected more fully in the following statement, 'I don't want to get caught up in the

view that social work practice must be 'evidence based'. The dominant ideology is that research must be functional. The implicit concept of evidence and the relation between knowledge and evidence, and ideology and practice is complex and obscured.....A central problem is that social work has never clarified its core intellectual paradigm, so it doesn't have one for research, so different traditions are used. What it adds up to is a self-conscious pluralism...'. This was less problematically expressed by another respondent, 'approaches using consumer involvement have a value in social work research, but positivistic approaches also have a place'. The latter interviewee also suggested that, 'if we take the idea of stakeholders seriously, then there are methodological issues about how best to involve users'.

Certainly the social work literature shows evidence of the influence of positivist traditions, notably in the work of Sheldon (1986) and Sinclair (1992), and it has been suggested that this represents a growing body of empirical research which demonstrates the value of social work (Thyer, 1993), but this has also been criticised by Smith (1987) as inadequate on epistemological grounds and unlikely to prove generally feasible or helpful. It could be argued that the traditional adherence to the positivist paradigm has been one of the reasons for the apparent ambivalence about or lack of use of research by practitioners. Apart from the possible dissonance with their own values, it could also be seen as requiring special technical skills beyond the reach of ordinary practitioners, and is possibly presented in ways and places more accessible to other academics.

There may also be a gender dimension in this, and more recent literature makes explicit links between feminist thinking and research approaches (Wise, 1990; Orme, 1994). Powell (1996) clearly sees the appropriateness of research within the interpretive tradition, 'which gives prominence to the plurality of perspectives and understandings...(and is) conceived as an enterprise which involves all parties.....in the research process' (p.165), but does not discount the value of seeking quantitative material within this approach.

Finally, there were a few comments which amplified survey data about sabbaticals and consultancy work, although direct questions were not asked. On reflection this was regrettable as it might have given some indication of any changes between 1994 and 1996, even if only impressionistic, given the size of the interviewee sample. One respondent was clear that 'if staff have sabbatical leave this is expected to result in a publication'. On the other issue, a number of respondents mentioned the responsibility which educators have in 'interpreting research to the field'. One person specifically said, 'feedback to agencies, via workshops and training sessions is important'. This was an academic who had had a strong professional background in the locality,

and whose work is respected for both its theoretical quality and its rootedness in 'real world' situations which practitioners and managers (and students) recognise.

Another respondent, who had been pessimistic about the amount of research possible within his institution, was concerned to point out that 'We also undertake some consultancy and training workincluding some policy development work' some of which gave rise to written material though not necessarily published. This can be related to Becher's view that 'in the social professionsit is possible to become an eminent academic consultant without having to write a great deal'(Becher,1989:53), when presumably he actually meant 'publish in academic journals'; and this was also an issue of concern to social work educators in the context of the RAE, which is discussed further next.

However, it might lastly be noted that respondents did not raise the matter of ethics in relation to carrying out research in the field of social work, confirming a view by Gallagher et al (1995) that this is a neglected area. Perhaps this also reflects implicit assumptions about the similarity of ethical concerns between research and social work practice and the need for congruence in this, as in other aspects of the research undertaking.

The JUC SWEC Data And Outcomes Of The 1996 RAE

As previously mentioned, JUC SWEC minutes and annual reports suggest a fairly consistent concern with research, at least since the mid-eighties and the Research sub - committee was one of ten such working groups mentioned in annual reports through to 1990. The mounting of a joint conference with BASW in 1985 resulted from a concern about the dissemination of research findings to practitioners, and this established a pattern for annual events, with a resulting publication, through to 1991. The 1988 conference was noted as having attracted 'more than 100 practitioners' (Annual Report, 1988), and, following the establishment of a steering group (in which JUC SWEC members were well represented), the inaugural meeting of the Social Work Research Association was held at the 1991 Conference. This was to provide a new forum where those doing research and those interested in its use in practice could meet, and JUC SWEC has since maintained a place on its executive committee.

On the political front, a letter from the Chair to the Director of CCETSW about the QDSW (three year) proposals expressed JUC SWEC's concern that papers showed 'no appreciation of the urgent need for practice-related research, to which educationalists are contracted to contribute.....

(which indicated) an imbalance between commitment to teaching and practice, compared with research'. By this stage some members of JUC SWEC were involved in the UGC Research Selectivity Exercise, and the inclusion of a Social Work Professor on the Panel was welcomed (Annual Report, 1989). However, since this only concerned a minority of the Committee, from the old university sector, and given other preoccupations at this time, it did not merit a high priority in JUC SWEC proceedings. This may have been one factor leading to the formation in 1990 of the Association of Professors of Social Work, with membership restricted (at that time) to people holding Chairs in the (then) university sector.

In 1992, following the incorporation of the polytechnics into the university sector, this matter became a rather more pressing concern to many of the membership: the Committee was unhappy about the proposed criteria for the exercise and a working party was set up to draft a response to limited effect. The outcome of the exercise was disappointing if not wholly unexpected for the subject area. The subsequent Chair's Annual Report (1993) noted that 'members expressed their concern (that) the model employed.... seemed more relevant to subjects other than social work' and the Committee contributed to JUC's response to the Consultation Paper following the exercise.

A more pro-active approach to the 1996 RAE was evident in the 1995 Annual Report which noted that the committee had nominated assessors, suggested topic areas and offered views to the Social Policy and Social Work Panel about its criteria. In a long letter to two members of the Panel (9/95) the Chair had outlined various concerns and queries. She also expressed the view that, while the committee did not wish to 'engage in special pleading', the particular features of the social work educators' role - 'close tutorial support, long terms, the maintenance of field work and agency links, the demands of the national validating body.....mean that research and publishing compete for diminishing amounts of available time'. Additionally, one of the Panel's members had been invited to make a presentation at the October meeting of SWEC; and, notwithstanding some institutional rivalries, a shared concern was apparent in the debates (formal and informal) of termly meetings in the 1995/96 period.

Other references to research in the 1990s documents included a reference to the high workloads of social work educators, 'undertaking research and teaching a vocational subject', evidenced by an AUT survey in 1995, apparently supporting the points made in the Chair's letter (but note also that AUT membership is traditionally limited to the old university sector); and a suggestion by the SWEC acting chair in 1992, that the JUC should hold a combined annual conference. This

should meet 'around an inclusive theme' and would address the 'need for a regular and larger scale conference structure in the applied social sciences, highlighted by the RAE'. The acting Chair saw this as an important means of generating theoretical discussion and published papers, and meeting 'a serious gap in the opportunities open to social work educators' to enhance their academic status.

It can be noted that this need has been met, in part, in the annual conferences arranged by the Association of Teachers in Social Work Education (ATSWE), which have recently addressed a number of issues important to social work educators. However, while the content is often of a high standard, these are modest and somewhat 'domestic' events which aim to enable participants to engage across the college/practice boundary, rather than across disciplinary ones and which do not normally lead to the range of publications which a more ambitious or academic format would entail. Some social work educators attend (and present papers at) non-social work conferences (for example, the Social Policy Association, the British Sociological Association, the Society for Research in Higher Education); and/or international social work conferences (more heavily influenced by academic norms in the refereeing of proposals and the publication of proceedings), and the 1994 meeting of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) resulted directly in the publication of one of the current edited texts about British social work education (Ford and Hayes, 1996). The reasons for the lack of movement by the JUC on the 1992 suggestion is open to speculation and it was a theme returned to by the ex-chair from the floor at the 1996 AGM.

Turning now to some further discussion of the outcome of the 1996 RAE, as described in the panel members' report to JUC SWEC (1/97), the criteria used in the grading of submissions were i) evidence of new theory or a publication which carries forward a particular debate and ii) evidence of 'user input' to the research process. Although the reading of material suggested that there was more research on policy than on detailed practice, there were particular strengths in research relating to probation and some good quality work in the child care field, (including some which was critical of policy in this area despite being funded by government). Research in relation to social work education was described as being quite descriptive and not of a high standard, and 'a lot of the material on anti-discriminatory practice was lacking a theoretical base' (echoing a point made in the previous chapter). There was also a small amount of research related to international or comparative social work, with an emphasis on collaborative research.

The panel members reported that they had found it 'useful to have a single panel for social policy and social work because there is an overlap at the margins' and, should there be a further exercise, they would recommend the same arrangement. While this is indeed a logical alliance (both in this researcher's view and on the basis of data about alliances in HEIs) there is the drawback that not all social work subject areas are so aligned, and some social work research in both 1992 and 1996 was included in the submissions to other subject panels (for example, sociology). This may be a reasonable institutional strategy in relation to small subject areas with only a few active researchers located in non social policy departments, (also in the sense that sociology overall receives a better rating than social policy or psychology), but it has the effect of rendering invisible the social work research efforts of some institutions, and fails to 'add' to the collective body of social work research identified by the RAE.

Finally, it can be noted that one outcome of this relatively positive development in the subject area, has been the establishment of a working group at the January 1997, meeting of JUC SWEC 'to identify and promote the particular nature of the research contribution which social work can make'. It is likely that one concern to be addressed will be the lack of recognition for the subject area in the ESRC literature and procedures (Minutes, 1/97) as well as attention to the research agenda of the discipline.

Conclusions

It is clear that considerable tensions persist in relation to the place of research in social work education. However, there seem to be some indications that it is being given a higher priority, both in relation to curriculum content and as a responsibility of social work educators, despite a continuing apparent lack of support from CCETSW (evident in previous documents and the current Paper 30). Concern has been expressed about the very limited opportunity to equip students with research skills in the context of a two year course, although there is evidence of strong support among senior academics for attention at least to research appreciation and utilisation in qualifying programmes. In addition, the expansion of degree level awards in the social work area, already referred to, suggests a desire to increase the opportunities for some research input, also apparent in postgraduate courses.

The question of the type of research paradigms and methods which could most appropriately be taught has not been resolved but there is an increasing confidence in the use of the interpretive paradigm and qualitative methods and there is also some evidence of the inclusion of users

(whether practitioners, students or clients) in research design and execution. This may be related, in part, to the growth of 'feminist research' which might sit comfortably both because of the predominance of women in the area and the nature of the subject matter. The similarity in skills used in relation to social work practice and the research process has been noted and the notion of research -informed, if not evidence -based, practice is now widely accepted.

This is partly related to the apparent growth (as suggested by the 1996 RAE) in the quantity and quality of research-active social work educators. The 1992 RAE provided a timely warning to the social work academy that, if it is located in HEIs, it is subject to higher education policies and evaluations; and, as noted, some social work educators themselves had identified the threat to scholarly activity, (and thus to the profession's knowledge base), inherent in the changes required in the early nineties. However, the real pressures posed in both new and old universities to maintain (or develop) a coherent approach to professional education and to progress the research enterprise, (including lobbying for more recognition in funding circles) remains a significant challenge for social work educators, individually and collectively.

Apart from dilemmas about the focus of the research (and a possible tension between academically interesting or professionally relevant projects) there are methodological and ethical problems associated with researching social work practice and effectiveness; and a continuing need to communicate findings appropriately to students, the professional field and policy makers. Additionally, there is the challenge to critically observe and comment on a fast changing scene in which educators themselves are also actors, but this is not exclusive to social work educators relative to academics in other professional fields and disciplines, as will be discussed in Part 3.

CHAPTER 10: IDENTITY AND CAREERS OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATORS

Introduction

One of the research questions was about the people who are social work educators, and their part in the culture and state of the subject area. To what extent have they roots in professional practice or do they (now) see themselves as 'academics'? How far do their qualifications, titles and job descriptions facilitate assumption of the academic role; and does this then militate against retaining credibility with the practice field? What might membership of professional organisations or academic bodies suggest about their priorities and identity? It has been assumed that for most people, social work education is a 'second career' or even a third, relative to social work practice and perhaps a management role. In this case, the career pattern is different from that of other academics with implications for the systems of qualifications; and recognition and rewards, as described for instance by Becher (1989).

If entrants to the academic field are older and have prior experience, this has a bearing on the costs of such personnel, discussed further in the context of resource issues. It might also be questioned whether the competing demands of two professions induce a sense of role confusion, or 'role strain' (Richards, 1985:26), or 'dual and conflicting role demands'(Collins, 1995:18) which inhibits role performance and confidence in one or both arenas. Differences in career patterns, and perhaps qualification levels, may contribute further to feelings of marginalisation relative to 'mainstream' academic colleagues, and irrelevance, relative to the field of social work.

With these questions in mind, data were sought of both respondents to the survey in 1994 and interviewees in 1996. This constituted a fairly homogenous group, who were nearly all senior academics responsible for Departments or subject areas. However, as well as differences in size of department or subject area and status of host institutions, there were individual variations in age and length of time in higher education and particular post, and some of the interviewees were professors of social work, but without managerial responsibilities (see later). Additionally, initial findings on this topic were shared with a more heterogeneous workshop group at an ATSWE conference (in 1996), giving rise to a small amount of supplementary data. This confirmed findings from the original samples and has not been used here, with one exception.

The role, identity and careers of social work educators have not been specifically discussed by JUC SWEC (as recorded in minutes and other papers), other than as reflected in concerns about workloads and threats to the area. Ideas about professional roots and academic identity can be seen, perhaps, as another aspect of the shared assumptions about the culture of the area, without explicit reference or questioning. However, differences in levels of loyalty to professional expectations or to academic norms are sometimes apparent in discussions and more focused debate would doubtless reveal diverging views. Some reference will be made to this, illustrating points about the make-up and culture of the subject area's work force.

There is little in the social work literature on this topic, although the issue of academic identities has received some attention in the wider literature, particularly in the light of recent higher education reforms (Halsey, 1992; Cuthbert, 1996; Henkel, 1997), and this will be alluded to.

Given the high proportion of women entering social work education as students and then the profession itself; and the significant role of women in the development of the occupation and of its education and training fields, questions arise about how women fare as senior academics in this subject area, and more generally about the relevance of this gender imbalance in perceptions and status of the area. Unfortunately, while a question was asked in the survey about the gender and race of respondents and the size of staff groups, additional questions were not asked about the gender or racial composition of the latter.

There is considerable impressionistic evidence to suggest that women outnumber men as social work educators, but some suspicion that, as in other fields, including social work organisation, proportionately more senior posts would be held by men. The evidence or otherwise for this and its implications, both for the careers and ambitions of individual women, and for the status of the subject area in particular institutions and in higher education generally, are considered. First biographical data pertaining to the survey respondents is described and related to 'identity'. Some additional biographical data about the interviewees is presented in Appendix 6.

Characteristics Of Social Work Education Managers

Fifty seven (of the 64 respondents) completed Section F of the questionnaire, giving some biographical data about themselves as heads of departments or having responsibility for the subject area within a larger department. Women slightly outnumbered men (32:25), although this is not representative of the presumed gender imbalance which may be as high as 6:1 (guestimate based

on staff lists from 8 institutions). This can be compared with the gender composition of social work generally. For example, women constituted 70% of respondents to separate surveys of social workers (Lyons et al, 1995:177) and nearly 80% of students entering the work force from qualifying courses in 1995 (Wallis-Jones and Lyons, 1996). All the respondents were white and predominantly British: this is significant in a subject area where up to 15% of students may be recruited from ethnic minority groups (Wallis Jones and Lyons, 1996) and where the proportion of black students may average between a third and a half on specific courses (Lyons, 1996).

The majority of respondents (34) were in the age group, 40-49 years, the remainder being over 50, but only one person was over 60. From information about age and length of time in post it appears that the majority of respondents (28) entered social work education in their thirties, while a substantial number (25) were recruited in their late twenties, and the remainder in their early forties. There is some impressionistic evidence that early retirement (including on health grounds) may have reduced the figures for the older age group. There is very little evidence, with a few known exceptions, that older people had been promoted to more senior posts within the university (that is away from the subject area), or had moved from academic work (back) to the field (including management posts), although some 'leavers' have moved into freelance work (Collins, 1995).

All but two of the respondents had had previous experience in social work before entering higher education as lecturers, and thus might be said to have experienced a career change from direct practice or management to the educational role. There have been very few studies of the role of social work educators, but one carried out in the early eighties noted the potential 'culture shock' of people moving from practice to academe (Richards, 1985:26). More recently, Fawcett and Featherstone (1994) have reflected particularly on the transition from social work management posts to social work education roles and drawn some useful comparisons between organisational cultures and their implications for workers. Among these, they cite the more individualistic values and behaviour of academics relative to the collaborative and supportive values espoused by social work and often experienced in teams. However, this is not entirely clear cut as some academics (notably in the sciences) have to work closely in Project groups (for example to maximise use of expensive equipment) though inter-team rivalry may be intense; and competition, rather than co-operation, is an increasingly common feature of the academic environment in general as resources have diminished (Henkel, 1997).

Discussing stress in social work educators, Collins (1995) noted the need for recognition of this career change to be reflected in the induction and staff development needs of social work educators (and presumably other late entrants to higher education posts). This research did not establish whether this is acknowledged in practice.

Most respondents had built up considerable experience in the higher education sector, exceeding 20 years in fifteen cases and with between 11 and 19 years for the majority (28). A further ten respondents had 6-10 years experience and only seven had less. While this suggests substantial academic experience among social work education managers, it also confirms a considerable 'distance' from the field (in time terms) for many, which may be relevant to leadership of educational developments and research in a professional area. It certainly could be a contributory factor to recurring criticisms of social work education as 'out of touch' (Richards, 1985; Collins, 1995) if not counter-balanced by participation of educators in practice related activities, including research.

The majority of respondents (27) had only been managers for between 2 and 5 years, though a substantial number (16) had been in post for more than 10 years. Nearly one in five (11) respondents had been in post less than 2 years, which suggests some instability in leadership in the area, during a time of considerable change. A proportion of managers of social work education would have acquired previous experience of management prior to entering lecturing, but it is likely that career paths of social work educators follow a 'practice - (management) - teaching - (management)' pattern with research slotting in alongside, before or after the (HE) management role (if at all) relative to the 'research- teaching-(management)' pattern identified by Henkel in relation to bio-chemists (Henkel, 1997:8) and probably more common in other areas of academic life.

The majority of survey respondents (53) held a professional qualification in social work, suggesting a teaching force which has clear roots in the professional field. Of those not holding a social work qualification all four held first and masters level degrees and two held additional qualifications (DMS, Cert Ed). However, in line with the high proportion of non-graduate training in this area, only 36 respondents held a first degree (usually in the social sciences, but not necessarily) although 38 held a degree at masters level, in 13 cases instead of a first degree. The majority (39) held at least three qualifications, usually one professional and two academic awards, and while one of the academic ones might have been taken part time, the implication is

that most people teaching social work will have spent a minimum of four or five years as full time students themselves.

A relatively large number of respondents (32) held other qualifications, notably in teaching (11), the law (3), management (4) and psychotherapy (3). While some of these suggest qualifications gained later to enhance professional or career development, some are indicative of career change at an earlier stage. Without fuller details of when qualifications were gained it is not possible to say which applies more often. The range of awards listed by some of the respondents suggests individuals, if not a group, keen to enhance their qualifications and academic standing and /or committed to the values of life-long learning. While the former motive might indicate academic insecurities, the latter explanation would be consistent with notions of personal responsibility for professional development explicit in social work.

Finally, less than one in five (11) respondents in 1994 held doctorates, confirming the relatively low level of research-based academic qualifications among this group. Of these, women holders outnumbered men (8:3) but numbers were more evenly divided between the old and new university sector (6:5). This represents a higher proportion in the old university sector (from which only 20 responses were received on this section). Unfortunately, questions were not asked about higher (research) degrees in progress, nor about qualifications of the staff group as a whole, nor about whether respondents themselves held Professorships, so it is difficult to draw further conclusions from this data.

However, in relation to the last point, 17 respondents said that their department/subject area was represented at the Association of Professors in Social Work meetings. Given recent changes in the basis for award of professorships, this does not necessarily signify research excellence and the number of Doctorates and Professorships still totals barely half the number of departments represented. This doubtless contributes to perceptions of an academically weak subject area and points up a further difference in terms of entry to, and career patterns in, higher education. Henkel's paper is useful since it confirms the 'apprenticeship model of the PhD' (Henkel, 1997:5) as the basis for individual academic identity and careers in higher education in a range of disciplines, as previously identified (Toulmin, 1972; Becher, 1989).

Various points confirm the priority given to practice, relative to research, as a prerequisite for entry to an academic post in social work education, with implications for the subsequent

development of academic identity and career development, a point further explored at the interview stage of the study.

Of the interviewees (7 men and 4 women, all white), all had previous experience in social work and held professional qualifications. Seven had managerial responsibility for a social work section or a department including social work; and all except two principal lecturers in the new university sector were Professors of Social Work (or similar, see also Appendix 6). Nine had been in their current post for less than 3 years, though all had a minimum of eight years experience in higher education and seven had 16 or more years. Four of the interviewees were based in the old university sector and seven in the new (with some evidence of movement between the two sectors), and all had been identified as providing academic leadership in the subject area through research and writing and /or activities in professional bodies.

They all clearly identified themselves as having made a career change from social work practice or management to academic posts, and sometimes also spoke about changes within the academic role at different stages in their careers. This usually related to a shift in emphasis from teaching to management or to research, although as noted in the previous chapter, all stressed the need to maintain or develop the research role in addition to teaching. For most respondents, careers in higher education did not start from a research base and it is likely that the 'late flowering' of academics in terms of research and publications which Becher (1989) noted in the social sciences is also a characteristic of the social professions.

The management role was not seen as a way out of teaching or research, but as an additional area of responsibility, and some were choosing not to seek management roles or had moved into positions where the management element had shifted from direct responsibility for social work education to a wider brief including research and development work with related professionals (2).

Membership, Representation, Roles And Identity

It was suggested earlier that role confusion might be a factor inhibiting the development of strong academic identities and careers of social work educators. This relates to educators feeling constrained by one set of requirements and loyalties (to the field of social work) relative to another (academe); and how far, individually and collectively, social work educators can resolve or accommodate the practice/theory tension in the development not only of educational programmes but also of their own academic roles and identities. This has also been described as

the emotion/knowledge dichotomy by Fawcett and Featherstone (1994) who additionally identify process versus task (as well as team versus individual) dichotomies evident in moving from the field to academe. It also runs through the debate about educational roles and methods in social work, relative to other subjects.

Identity was explored by seeking information about the bodies which people choose to join, or on which they have a representative role (asked of the survey respondents), and interviewees were asked for self-definitions and information about where they gain professional support and stimulus. It was thus hoped to tease out the extent to which social work educators have taken on an 'academic' persona relative to a 'professional' one. In the case of survey respondents the questions were about membership and activities of all staff in the subject area or department, while interviewees were asked more specifically about themselves.

There was clearly still some allegiance to activity in the professional field alongside academic roles, as all but eight respondents to the survey said that one or more staff were involved in direct social work practice or management outside the institution. (The exact nature of the commitment, or proportion of time or staff involved and whether the latter were full- or part- time academics was not ascertained). Of the interviewees, three also described themselves as having (some limited) current involvement with the professional field, one through direct practice, and two through membership of management committees and policy work, and two others indicated engagement through feedback of research, training or consultancy activities.

Responses to questions about membership and representation suggested a continuing strong link with professional social work bodies. The majority of survey respondents (54) said that members of staff belonged to BASW, and five of the interviewees were BASW members, although two others had recently resigned. Membership of NAPO by staff was claimed by 28 survey respondents, and 18 listed other professional organisations to which staff belonged (for example SCA, ABPO, BAC). 51 respondents indicated an involvement in regional post-qualifying consortia, confirming the high level of 'partnership' activity outside HEI's suggested in Chapter 8.

In answer to an open question about 'any other forms of professional activity or representation' the majority of responses (20 relative to 9) suggested participation in 'social work' rather than 'scholarly activities'. These included membership of CCETSW and BASW committees, of the Mental Health Commission, of Adoption Committees, and of the managing bodies of local and

national agencies. It is not suggested that any of the foregoing are inappropriate activities for social work educators or that they might not give rise to research or writing, and indeed some of the experience gained would undoubtedly inform teaching; but they all suggest an orientation, time commitment and perhaps search for recognition (see later) outside the university which is substantially different from that of other academics.

In relation to membership of or representation on more overtly 'academic' bodies, 33 respondents thought that staff were associated with research organisations, particularly the Social Work Research Association (17) and Social Services Research Group (13) although there were also a few mentions of the Society for Research in Higher Education(3) and the ESRC (1). Membership in this field was only mentioned by one of the interviewees, but they were not prompted by a list of possible organisations as the survey respondents had been. About half of the departments/areas (33) were represented at the JUC SWEC and over one third (24) on the Standing Conference of DipSW Courses, while, as mentioned, 17 were represented at the Association of Professors of Social Work.

Of the interviewees, six represented their institutions at JUC SWEC, and, while nine were nominally members of APSW ('they send me the papers'), only four normally attended meetings. An impression was formed of people as 'joiners/activists'; 'researchers/writers'; 'strategic activists and writers'; and 'would-be joiners or researchers but too busy'.

Nearly half the survey respondents claimed staff membership of ATSWE (also mentioned by two of the interviewees) although this organisation has a low membership relative to the total potential constituency. Twenty four of the survey respondents said that they or other staff members had been members of the HEFC panels for the subject area review. Other activities identified by survey respondents included membership of editorial boards(3), of external examination boards (3), and of the Open Learning Foundation (2), none of which were mentioned by the interviewees, although most have current or recent experience of the first two.

Respondents were not active in any committees or Boards outside their own department or subject area in 33 HEIs. The remainder mentioned participation in Senate, Faculty Board, Academic Board, Faculty Research Committee or Equal Opportunities Committees. This would seem to support the view of one of the interviewees who suggested that social work educators fail to utilise their professional skills within their own institutions, doubtless also contributing to marginality if not invisibility of the area (see Chapter 11). There was some indication of the

defensive isolationism sometimes adopted by social work educators, who can feel 'beleaguered' (including in their own institutions), according to JUC papers and some of the literature reviewed in Part 1.

In response to the question, 'how do you think of or describe yourself', interviewees used a range of terms which indicated both varying strengths in identification with 'social work', and different perceptions of the academic role. Thus, eight people used the term *social worker* but in four cases this was no longer part of their identity 'I can't really call myself a social worker, I've been out of practice for too long', or 'it's twenty years since I've done proper social work' or 'the rhetoric of practice can deflect us from the real task'. However, even among this group there was some recognition that social work education could be considered as 'a branch' of social work. Two others said their roots in social work were taken for granted and influenced their current activities, while the other two saw themselves as social workers with additional or different roles, 'more of a commentator'.

Three people described themselves as a *manager*, 'Now, in academic life, I might be seen more as a manager', while two related this role to their social work experience 'you can ensure that there are resources to enable people to learn' or 'good management can make use of therapeutic principles'. Two people used their title, *university professor*, to describe themselves, while a third more recent appointment confessed a lack of ease with the title as yet. A fourth interviewee used the term '*academic leader*' and four others also used this term, one elaborating on the term 'social work academic', '... the notion of practice is played off against academic, but the university should speak to and across different spheres - practice, theory, research and policy'.

However, one respondent saw the word as 'a term of abuse' and another rejected it on the grounds that it 'has spurious connotations and is status seeking', echoing concerns about the extent to which anti-intellectualism and egalitarianism, including of social work educators themselves, may operate against the interests of the subject area in higher education (Jones, 1996a). Two people described themselves as (university) *lecturers*, one adding that (social work) lecturers 'have to demonstrate leadership capacity plus a level of research achievement and teaching abilities'. Three people described themselves as *social work educators*, though one qualified this as still having a 'substantial practice element, though now more in committees and an advisory role', and three people mentioned disciplinary identities (psychology (2) and social scientist).

Two people mentioned *writer* and *researcher* as being part of their identity, and three people mentioned the notion of *all-rounder* or the *holistic* nature of their role ‘my professional identity involves all these elements (academic leadership, teaching, managing and research)’. The range of terms used to describe themselves could be seen as an indication of role confusion or of role overload as suggested by Collins in his discussion of stress (1995). However, as some respondents pointed out, the emphasis given to different roles may vary over time, and it is likely that, if post-holders have a strong sense of identity and some control over the balance of work (as seemed likely in these cases), as well as public recognition (professorial appointment) they are less susceptible to stress.

None of the respondents described themselves as *tutors*, despite discussion of this role in earlier stages of the interviews. This suggests that, even where individual respondents may have advocated the maintenance of such a role in social work education generally, it is not a primary aspect of their own identity. Supplementary data from discussion with a workshop group of a dozen social work educators at different levels of seniority and points in their careers suggested that continuing use of the term *tutor* by some lecturers reveals ‘a lack of academic confidence’; ‘ambivalence about the academic role’ and that it ‘colludes with anti-intellectualism’; and none of them so described themselves in completing a short questionnaire. The significance of terminology was noted by Youll in the mid-eighties ‘we needed to identify ourselves firstly as educators and secondly as ...tutors.....This shift in emphasis in role identification was...experienced as a significant turning point in the way people thought about their work’ (Youll,1985:70).

Perhaps in the context of mass higher education, use of the term, *tutor*, is now anachronistic, and further shifts in terminology may even be appropriate. However, this raises questions about aspects of the social work ‘tutor’ role, particularly concerned with individual placement visits, which need to be further explored in considering resource issues (Chapter 11).

Finally, interviewees were asked about their own sources of support or stimulus in their professional lives, as a supplementary question to the one about professional identity (notified in advance). Perhaps it was the lack of forewarning or perhaps the question transgressed the personal /professional boundary but it was not one that respondents seemed comfortable with and responses were brief. Four people clearly signalled academic colleagues as their reference point, including ‘other heads of departments in the university’ and ‘friends and colleagues in the university sector, world-wide’; while three leaned more to the field ‘support networks in social

work' or 'people involved in the field. They are a key reference point in terms of values and objectives'.

Four people might be identified as relating to both the field and academe, for example, 'other social workers and researchers' or as one person said, enigmatically, 'other people in the same boat'. Overall, there was an indication that the most senior respondents were the most likely to look to the academy for satisfaction of their professional needs; and, with two exceptions, there was no direct reference (in this context) to colleagues in other disciplines or fields of professional education, suggesting a strong identity within the particular occupational or role-related boundaries. This concurs with literature which suggests a close relationship between personal and professional identities (Henkel, 1997).

Gender Issues And Reward Systems

The survey data demonstrated that women appear to be proportionately under-represented as managers of social work departments or subject areas. This is further illustrated in relation to professorial appointments, although there is also some indication from the survey data that they are (proportionately) as well qualified as men. Interviewees were not asked a direct question about their perceptions the influence of gender on appointments, but one (male) interviewee in answer to the question about 'reward' said, 'Who do we think we value? Who in fact gets valued? Men get valued and rewarded more than women. Look at senior management in departments..... there's still a glass ceiling. We do reward people who are academically productive, we don't rewardcommitted teachers...(but) we don't reward intellectuality in social work'.

Data were not collected about the gender of active researchers or of successful research grant applicants, but scrutiny of the November 1994 membership list of the SWRA shows that there were 43 men and 57 women in membership, suggesting that men are relatively more active in this field (although not all the members are social work educators). There are also indications from the literature and editorial appointments that men are over-represented in the area of publications. Under-representation of women at senior levels and lack of recognition might be expected in the wider field of higher education, and Fisher (1994) quotes research from the USA and Australia to confirm this, but it is more apparent and anomalous in an area where women are in the majority and are as well qualified as men. While there may sometimes be personal reasons for not seeking higher qualifications or more senior posts, it is also likely that lack of attainment (however defined) is in part attributable to an experience of 'organisations as gendered and as reflecting

malestream discourse' (Fawcett and Featherstone, 1994:51; Carter et al, 1992). If differences also relate to racial identity, experiences of discrimination are compounded (Francis Spence, 1995; Mogissi, 1994).

Turning to the gender composition of JUC SWEC and the distribution of roles and responsibilities within this organisation, men are in the minority but are relatively more likely to represent their institutions on the Committee than women. The distribution of post holders has varied. In 1990 the retiring chairman announced the establishment of the Association of Professors of Social Work. It was suggested earlier that this arose from concerns about research and the place of social work education in the university sector, relative to CCETSW proposals/requirements about the direction of qualifying training. There is also a suggestion that some professors were not happy with the representative role of JUC SWEC itself (personal communication) and this may or may not have been related to the increasing role which people (particularly women) from the then polytechnic and colleges sector were playing in JUC SWEC, (personal conjecture).

Women have continued to chair the organisation through the 1990s with men in the role of secretaries, and most of the sub-committees are now convened by women, with the exception of Probation. (This has always been an area where men predominated, conforming to its more overt 'control' role (Walton, 1975)

It is suggested that there are various implications of the gender imbalance within the subject area and of the relative predominance of men in higher profile (and higher status) activities. As noted in Part 1, Witz (1991) suggested that the ascribing of professional status to an occupation is heavily influenced by 'patriarchal' assumptions and definitions from the traditional professions. This impacts on the field of social work, and by association, on the area of social work education. This has included the perception that men lend intellectual weight or credibility to an area, and are more capable of developing theory, while women are better at practice, including a nurturing role in relation to students (Holland, 1988; Fawcett and Featherstone, 1994).

Additionally, there is a strong tradition of a male majority among social science lecturers and in the management of higher education institutions. If an area, which is perceived as different and perhaps problematic, is staffed largely by women and often also led by them, it is conceivable that some of the usual mechanisms for resolving difference or promoting sectional interests will not operate, or the observed differences will not be valued, unless they become part of mainstream higher education policy and practice. There may also be differences in women's'

priorities and managerial style (possibly related to the values of the area) which may be particularly discordant with the new managerialism found in many higher education institutions currently (Pollitt 1990).

While the leadership of JUC SWEC by women may promote meetings where there is evidence of respect for others views and collaborative initiatives, there may also be a lack of access to or influence in important policy making arenas. This is speculative, and it is clear that, individually, particular women have achieved positions of respect within the wider field of academe and outside the academy or in the international arena; and that having a man in the senior position does not necessarily win friends or influence people. (The previous director and immediate past chairs of CCETSW were men). However, a question remains as to how far the fortunes of the area are bound up with its 'female' nature and whether the apparent increase of men in senior positions will improve either its intellectual capacity (real or imagined) or its ability to defend or promote its position in higher education.

Some of the interviewees responses to a question about 'what is valued or rewarded in social work education?' also related to gender concerns, since they made reference to the values of the profession and indicated a commitment to ideals of social justice and equal opportunities. This was another question which, despite prior warning, seemed initially obscure to respondents and answers varied in the extent to which people thought in terms of professional as well as academic acknowledgement.

One (male) interviewee said, 'In one way we reward things that the academic system is prepared to reward' and told how he had been advised early on, by his (female) head of a department in an old university to write for academic journals rather than the professional ones. However, he found it hard to identify rewards or recognition from the field, 'the social work profession is very ambivalent about its academy. It's quite disconfirming really, you feel irrelevant. Colleagues in the field.... don't know or care what the academic world is like. (But) there is quite a lot of confirmation from students and I sometimes feel acknowledged in conferences or consultancies for being 'in touch' ... but if you're not valued in the profession it's even tougher in the university'.

This was echoed by other respondents, 'Practitioners have doubts about the value of academic activity.....but they appreciate people who can make sense of things and develop....frameworks for practice. In academe, papers in refereed journals and bringing in research money are valued'.

He was not sure that other academics value social work education but thought that they should 'because of its mix of theory, practice and reflection'; or 'Social service agencies reward us if we help with their problems through research and consultancy - we can be the respected outsider. In the university we're appreciated if we look good to the outside world through big research grants or gaining an excellent in teaching.....we're seen as useful people..... (and also valued in having) a high status woman (on the staff)'.

One analysis of the lack of value attributed to social work educators by the profession suggested that this is related to an identification with theory and therefore difficulty, and the respondent also thought that there was 'a legacy of problems around elitism' but hoped this was changing.

Another respondent contrasted the position in two different institutions. 'In (x -an old university) social work education was seen as suspect and marginal because it doesn't deliver in terms which the university expects. The only reason it wasn't closed down was because of a social conscience and fear of a bad press because social work had links with the local community. The lack of valuation was reflected in the lack of resources and in effect the programme was staffed by teachers who were only tolerated rather than valued so this resulted in low morale'. (Social work education at this institution was headed by a woman professor, well respected in the professional field, at the time). 'In (y -a new university) social work is seen as part of the university's mission. It pulls in students and money and its contact with the field is seen as positive'.

Good relations with local agencies and the ability to 'pull in' funding for consultancy activities were apparently valued by other institutions as well, but social work educators might still be 'struggling to be seen as part of a proper academic group' in one of the new universities, while a colleague in another new university thought that his department 'could end up with both an excellent in teaching and a good research rating which would be unique within the university'. (It did). Another respondent saw this as an area of change in a different way, 'being a good colleague, helping students, creative teaching (used to be valued, but now there is) pressure on people to... get funding, to publish. There is no hope of promotion unless you have a long string of publications. In this climate it's easy for students to be seen as a nuisance, we're loosing care for the students which was one of the distinguishing features of social work education.....(and constituted) an element of modelling'.

The implications of social work educators 'modelling' some of the skills and values of social work in their relationship with students, and the likely impact of some of the material on students

(with concomitant demands on staff) are recurring themes in some of the assumptions held within the group but not necessarily shared with or understood by other academics or managers (Collins, 1995).

Finally, there were three responses, apart from elements quoted above, which alluded directly to a lack of value by social work educators for each other. One respondent simply said, 'We've allowed ourselves to be so browbeaten, we've not had recognition and we haven't given it to others'. Another said, 'I don't see social work education valuing or rewarding very much' and contrasted it with dental education where 'certain individuals are clearly respected and seen as authorities ... on the whole social work educators are rather iconoclastic and sceptical. To some extent this is healthy but it doesn't help us to achieve security' and another said, '(We're) not very good at rewarding each other - we're very good at being critical and tend to pass this on to others. This affects our morale, our self-perceptions and our self-esteem. We're our own worst enemies'. (But having said that, he thought that 'colleagues here are extremely supportive and unenvious').

It could be argued that some of these responses suggest an acceptance of increasingly academic but also increasingly managerialist reward systems which might be regarded as reflecting 'masculine' rather than 'feminine values', but the emphasis given to acknowledgement from the profession (or desire for it) also suggests an alternative reward system which could be experienced as affirming, and which distinguishes this (and probably other forms of professional education) from other disciplines. It reiterates the extent to which social work educators must address two audiences, with different and sometimes conflicting criteria for success or achievement.

Conclusions

Data discussed in this chapter confirms that social work educators enter academic life later than their colleagues in other disciplines, and that their career patterns are significantly different. Initial social work practice has traditionally been reflected in the weight given to professional experience and qualifications rather than academic awards or publications in recruitment to the educational role. This orientation persists in terms of continuing professional activities outside the university by educators and some hope of recognition from the field, though whether this is cause or effect in the face of a lack of recognition from within some universities is debatable.

Although the majority of social work educators represented here have achieved academic qualifications to masters level, in addition to professional awards, relatively few have attained doctoral or professorial status. There are indications that this reflects an ambivalence about the relevance of research-based academic awards to the professional field, and/or a lack of academic confidence or role models; as well as the very real demands on staff time in terms of 'outside' representation and responding to change, as illustrated by this research.

There is a view of the subject as lacking in academic credibility, and this may be compounded by the relatively high proportion of women in the social work education workforce, including in senior positions. Engagement with the field may detract both from research activities and from active involvement in the internal affairs of institutions. Participation in the former would enhance academic credibility, while participation in the latter might be beneficial to perceptions of the subject area including through increasing its visibility, disseminating ideas about innovative educational practices, and building alliances with other subjects and professional areas.

There are some indications of change in the identities and priorities of social work educators, suggested in the responses of interviewees, the concerns of JUC SWEC, and a perusal of advertisements for appointments to social work lecturer posts. Adherence to academic values, with concomitant expectations about academic qualifications and rewards, may be strengthening. This is partly a response to increasingly competitive institutional conditions where adaptation to and conformity with institutional norms and mission statements are essential to survival.

The active pursuit of stronger academic identities may also be of value to the professional field, where social work educators may provide a necessary and legitimate 'independent voice' in relation to practice and policy developments, on the basis of increased theoretical and research activity. This may be seen as at variance with social work's 'anti-elitist values', or as promoting an 'academic' education for students at the expense of more practically orientated courses, but such views may have contributed to the downgrading and destabilisation of the subject area.

Issues of 'dual responsibility' or 'conflicting loyalties' are likely to persist for social work (and other professional) educators. The subject will always be on the boundaries between education and practice. Explication of the tensions inherent in the role and in the subject area are important aspects of the task of social work academics. Further examination of the part which gender plays in influencing perceptions and fortunes of the area also seems necessary. Some of these issues are returned to in the discussion in Part 3.

CHAPTER 11: RESOURCE ISSUES AND CHANGE

Introduction

It was suggested earlier that one of the key factors in the sense of crisis in relation to social work education has been the pace and nature of change during the nineties, and the growing sense of unease with its direction. Some, but not all, of these changes have been at the behest of CCETSW, operating as a conduit for government policy. While CCETSW has made attempts to consult affected parties and relevant interest groups, there have also been instances where the lead-in time between policy decisions and clarification, and required implementation have been short. This has been exacerbated by the different schedules of the academic year and the (central and local) government financial year.

Inextricably linked to the effective implementation of new policies, structural arrangements and practices is the resourcing of the subject area. This has both qualitative and quantitative dimensions. The first aspect was considered in the previous chapter, in relation to the qualifications, experience, and likely identities of people responsible for managing the change process. The second relates to the funding available to the area; the size and composition of the workforce, relative to student numbers, and the roles and tasks to be undertaken.

Funding of social work education has been a periodic source of concern to social work educators as demonstrated in JUC SWEC discussions and representations to CCETSW. The low proportion of budget holders has been evidenced in this study, but, additionally, the often arcane, arbitrary or simply unclear basis for allocation of funding within institutions has sometimes obscured the relationship between costs and budgets, not necessarily to social work's disadvantage.

The subject area and institutions also lack of control over an essential element in social work education - placements - and the funding of these has itself been contentious. Thus, resource issues can be examined in relation to both the level of resourcing to Departments or subject areas; and also the resources available from agencies in the form of placements, practice teachers, mentors, and (usually senior)agency personnel who participate in partnership responsibilities.

Agency contribution to resourcing was addressed by implication, rather than directly in the survey, and was sometimes responded to in an open question about the area's strengths and

weaknesses. There is also evidence about social work educators concerns and CCETSW's role in this area in JUC SWEC papers. Interviewees were not invited to comment on resourcing in the same way, but made some relevant comments in response to a question about strategies for development.

Substantial changes are taking place in the nature of work and of career and employment opportunities within and beyond the public sector, as commented on in the media and in the general literature (Crompton et al, 1996). These are evident in the areas of both social work and higher education. For example, newly qualified social workers taking up temporary or locum posts nearly doubled from 1993 (14%) to 1995 (25%) (Wallis Jones and Lyons,1996). Specific questions were included in the 1994 survey to explore whether such changes are occurring in social work education and the possible implications of this are briefly considered.

Questions were asked in the survey about particular aspects of change in social work education relative to its institutional context and this is linked to relevant material from JUC SWEC papers, and literature. Interviewees were not asked a direct question about 'change' but, again, some respondents made relevant points. Overall, the chapter reviews both resource issues and changes, as perceived by social work educators.

Relating changes in social work to policy change in higher education, questions arise about how far the changes in social work education can be seen as efficient adaptation to changing environments, or as a fundamental redefining of the tasks of the subject area (March and Olsen,1989). Additionally, while to a large extent, changes in the area are the result of 'reform caused by the exogenous environment', the question also arises about the part played by the actors in the system in instituting these or other changes (March and Olsen,1994:33). The extent to which change has been imposed and out of the control of the actors has been the basis of individual and collective stress(Collins, 1995), but there are indications in some of the more recent data that social work educators are seeking to reclaim a role in defining the goals of the area and the most appropriate means of achieving them.

Resource Issues

Funding for the college element of social work education had been 'brought within the normal funding structures of higher education' (Pierce, 1991) following extensive consultations, but in somewhat piecemeal fashion, during the 1970s. By the mid eighties there were concerns that

undertakings to safeguard the level of special funding for social work education, transferred from the Home Office and DHSS to the UGC in 1978/79, were being eroded and JUC SWEC undertook a survey to compare the unit costs of social work education relative to students in social science, education, accountancy and psychology. The results of this were inconclusive since responses from 34 institutions revealed wide variations and that 'each institution seemed to have its own costing formula' (Chair's letter to membership, 14/5/86).

Perhaps this survey, representations about other resource issues (for example, the payment of placement travel costs) and the need for data to underpin the Council's proposals for QDSW, prompted CCETSW to commission a more substantial research study into the costs of social work education (Rustin and Edwards, 1989). This included both University and polytechnic course at all academic levels, and drew some important conclusions not widely disseminated at the time but still relevant. Social work education managers had problems assigning financial costs to their activities; most courses 'required and received additional expenditures' of around 25% (relative to social science programmes); the subject was wrongly categorised in both PCFC and UFC systems; the placement system was a source of difficulty and 'wasteful'; and costs per qualified social worker were highly variable, in part related to different patterns and levels of training. A unified system consistent with the four year B Ed degree was suggested.

Findings (submitted to CCETSW in November 1989) were overtaken by events and the hasty plans to establish the DipSW (rather than three year training) took precedence over immediate concerns about funding arrangements or more ambitious structural proposals. Meanwhile, a letter from the Director of CCETSW (30/6/89) to the DES requesting reclassification of social work from Band A (Social Sciences) to Band C (which included Education) or at least B, met with no immediate universal success, but laid the basis for individual institutional claims for what subsequently became Band Two funding (rather than Band One). By 1994 (while this question was not relevant to about one third of the respondents), 27 institutions were in receipt of Band Two funding relative to 17 receiving Band One, and there are indications that this situation may have improved slightly, and that nationally the subject may now be formally reclassified.

But how fee income is allocated within institutions varies and achievement of Band Two funding was not necessarily reflected in resourcing at subject area level. Thus, the answer of one respondent in 1994 to the question about fee band status may still resonate, 'You may well ask! There is a good deal of confusion around this plus dispute within the institution. We are *supposed* to be Band Two'. This suggestion, that enhanced fees are not actually passed on to the subject

area, for higher costs of particular teaching methods and administrative work, is compounded by recent contradictory advice as to how it should be used.

A letter from CCETSW to Vice Chancellors, in the midst of the 1996 placement funding crisis, clearly indicated an expectation that institutions would be in receipt of this additional money and that it could be used to remedy a shortfall of finances for placements (of which many programmes were complaining). The potential 'switching' of money, from meeting additional costs within the institution, to part-fund placements (which were originally provided free of charge to institutions) provoked further concern on the part of social work educators, reflected in recent JUC SWEC minutes; an expanded Practice Learning Sub-committee; and a survey of members about the impact of the change in placement funding (Jan/Feb. '97, minutes and correspondence).

Attempts to identify the costs of social work education, and to ensure a rational and equitable distribution of resources both within the subject area and relative to other subject areas, is far from resolved. One of the continuing questions is whether the profession or higher education (or in the current policy climate, the consumers) should bear the costs of professional training within higher education, or what might be the appropriate divisions and mechanisms for cost-sharing. In 1991, CCETSW had produced an important consultation paper summarising the 'complex arrangements' pertaining to the funding of UK social work education (see Appendix 7). It also specified the objectives which funding should achieve, and made a number of recommendations about how these might be met (Pierce 1991).

Placements

Placements constitute an area in which the profession (as represented by employing agencies) plays a part in resource provision. Placements are an increasing source of concern within social work education, virtually outside the control of those responsible for course delivery (although Dip SW partnership arrangements were, in part, intended to address this). Social work programmes at qualifying level must provide all students with two supervised field placements (of fifty days and eighty days, respectively) which provide the basis for assessment of the student's professional competence.

This area has undergone its own form of 'professionalisation' with new requirements since 1989 regarding the training of practice teachers and accreditation of agencies. One effect has been an increased demand on both HEIs and agencies to contribute to training programmes, in which

practice teachers themselves require supervision and assessment by mentors. This pattern, of supervision and assessment in practice, is also a requirement of any courses proposed for post-qualifying or advanced awards.

In practice teaching, the basis of resourcing and rewards has long been contentious. Practice teachers have not normally received any direct payment for the work entailed in supervising a student, nor workload relief. The Probation Service (with placements funded by the Home Office) has often been an exception to this; and payments, in the form of a daily supervision fee, have also been made to agencies providing placements in the voluntary sector (though not usually to individual practice teachers).

Meanwhile, the expectation was that Social Services Departments, the largest potential provider of placements (because of size and likely future labour needs) would meet the costs of placement provision internally through the Training Support Grant. However, there have been considerable claims on this (diminishing) resource in a period of rapid legislative and organisational change, including the need to (re)train people providing front-line services and the development of courses leading to in-service awards at the pre-qualifying stage (NVQs). The provision of placements, long made on a 'goodwill' basis, sometimes with some passing recognition of the 'staff development' potential of the role for some practice teachers, and a concern to invest in future staff, was already under strain in the eighties and completely out of step with market-led provision of all services by the nineties.

Concurrently, the reduction of places in the statutory sector, related to both internal pressures in SSDs and increased CCETSW requirements, had resulted in a large expansion of placements in the voluntary sector and concomitant rise in the placement budget (channelled from the Department of Health via CCETSW to agencies). This resulted in a radical revision of the funding provisions, such that, from April 1997, budgets available from CCETSW to programmes to support placements would be 'capped' and related to student intake; and would require institutions to negotiate contracts about the number of placements to be provided for an agreed sum, including in the statutory sector. These changes led to the closure of some Practice Learning Centres (previously called student units), often located in the voluntary sector and providing a focal point for a network of placements in community organisations which might not otherwise be available, as well as a reduction in the infrastructure for placement organisation and support in statutory departments.

However, as the Chairman of CCETSW wrote to the Chair of JUC SWEC (18/12/96 in response to a letter expressing concern about the new arrangements), additional funds, allocated (by government) since the early nineties, had not resolved 'problems of quantity and quality', and the previous resource distribution, including a demand-led approach to the (voluntary sector) daily placement fee, 'was not sustainable'. How programmes have adapted to the reduced opportunities (compounded for some programmes by the probation changes), and to the 'new' market approach has varied. Setting up contracts to purchase placements from agencies has required investment of time and money, and deployment of negotiating skills in unfamiliar ways.

Placement changes have also had a direct impact in some cases, on existing (weak) partnership arrangements, a further area in which small, unstable or poorly supported programmes are vulnerable. Educators are required to employ different skills from those normally expected of academics; and social work education generally is seen to have different concerns or make unusual claims on HEIs. In the words of one head of course in relation to the placements contract process, 'I feel like a used car salesman', (JUC SWEC Meeting, 6.1.97): while his efforts paid off for one course, it further destabilised existing partnership arrangements of a neighbouring course, already hit by the loss of a Placement Learning Centre.

This more overt competitive mode, relative to previous examples of collaborative efforts of social work educators and agency training officers (as in the London cluster system, and other regional networks) demonstrates the extent to which political values have made inroads into the workings of this professional subject area. However, it should help clarify the real costs of this element, and challenges academics, agencies and CCETSW to re-examine the assumptions underlying placements component.

Staffing

Questions arise about the availability and use of resources within the institution, in the form of academic staff, to develop and deliver new programmes, and to engage in other areas of professional and academic activity already identified. The issue of resourcing, as it relates to staffing, is a sensitive one, as reflected in a reduced repines rate, or imprecise answers, to three questions focusing on this issue. Additionally, it is common-place and long-standing for people in both social work and higher education to feel under-resourced, relative to the goals to be achieved, the tasks to be done and the standards to be attained.

Notwithstanding this caveat, and the nature of some of the data, some calculation of staff student ratios (SSRs) in 1994, was possible. Such an indicator risks over-simplifying the picture, since it does not take into account the extent to which academic staff were supplemented by support staff of various kinds, or undertaking a range of work other than DipSW programmes. Nevertheless, it provides some indication of favourable or unfavourable resourcing levels, and might suggest trends in this area.

Thus, in 1994, nearly one third of the institutions seemed to have managed to maintain an SSR on the DipSW programme of between 1:10 and 1:12. It was notable that nearly half (9 out of 20) of these were in the old university sector and some of the remainder were courses at MA level which are differently funded. A further 22 institutions had SSRs in the 1:15 to 1:18 range, including most of the remainder of the old universities(7). Just under a third had SSRs of 1:20 or more (including 4 old universities). From this and other data gathered it can be deduced that institutions with lower SSRs were more likely to be doing most of their own teaching (that is without servicing arrangements from discipline specialists), and /or that they were engaged in a wider range of activities than DipSW delivery. This included provision of other courses, and research and consultancy activities.

Such units were not necessarily the largest, but were likely to have more varied activity and staffing profiles. In fact, departmental (or unit) size varied (in terms of academic staff), from a minimum of two full time with one part-time colleague and inputs from two subject specialists to run one relatively small DipSW programme, to a maximum of seventeen full time and four part-time social work lecturers (with inputs from four sessional and six non-social work staff) offering the qualifying award to about 300 students at different academic levels, as well as other courses and research. Overall, there seemed to be no obvious relationship between fee band and staffing levels.

Regarding the make-up of the work-force, in only three institutions did the staff group consist of a nuclear group of *full-time, permanent* staff engaged exclusively in delivery of a qualifying course, though the impression is that this would have been a more common pattern in the 1980s. Two thirds of the respondents included at least one *part-time* lecturer in their work force (and many more in a few cases); and one third included people on full or part-time *temporary* contracts. A further 24 departments / units made use of *essional* staff, and half included teaching by *subject specialists*. Although no question was asked about the nature of inputs by the latter, a few respondents volunteered that this was in the law field.

Only two respondents mentioned part-time *secondments* or specialist inputs from their partner agencies, or *joint appointments* (3), or additional staffing made possible by funding in relation to the placement provision or residential child care initiatives (PPI and RCCI, respectively (see later). There is very little literature by social work educators relating to resourcing or workforce patterns within the subject area, but Culkin and Thompson (1994) reported on joint appointments in relation to Probation pathways, and Sleeman (1996) has recently written about aspects of partnership arrangements including staff exchange.

A question about whether there had been changes in level or deployment of staffing resources between 1990 and 1994 resulted in 55 responses. Some people said 'yes' but gave no details; fifteen claimed an improvement in resources (but in two cases stated that this had been achieved through a reduction in student intake) and a further fifteen said 'no change'. One respondent said that a (new) professorship had been instituted; two mentioned the introduction of a joint appointment; and three said that new administrative or placement finding posts had been developed.

The findings suggest that the *pattern* of staffing is changing but it was not possible to say whether resourcing within institutions in relation to this subject area was improving or deteriorating; and, if the former, whether this was the result of permanent appointments or specially resourced and time limited ones. There were some indications of a move to a more flexible workforce, in line with wider trends, but as one respondent noted from an institutional perspective, 'the situation is too fluid to respond'.

The wide variations in the size and composition of departments or units (as reflected in staffing) obviously have implications for the nature and quality of the student experience as well as opportunities and constraints on social work educators and managers; and potentially for viability or development of the subject, in particular institutions. This has already become increasingly apparent in the changes to probation training, given that Probation Services had demonstrated more support for programmes in a number of practical ways, including joint appointments, relative to other agencies.

There is some impressionistic evidence of more efficient use of staff resources since the early nineties, through increased role specialisation and the delegation of some responsibilities to non-teaching staff, including placement administrators, and it seems likely that development grants,

PPI funds (awarded on the basis of proposals, and time limited) and/or Band Two fee income have been used in this particular way. As previously discussed, social work educators recognised the tensions between teaching, research, practice and management and the unlikelihood of individual staff being able to combine all these roles at the same time, but as one interviewee said in 1996, 'within a team a combination is possible', and the value of part-time, temporary or sessional staff may be apparent in this context.

Finally, mention should be made of the range of different sources from which *supplementary funding* has been available to social work educators during the nineties, and the skills and values related to their procurement. Of course social work educators, in theory, have access to the same range of research funding as other social scientists and require similar skills to secure them (but see caveats in Chapter 9). This also applies to funding from the European Union, particularly in relation to the previous ERASMUS programme, and now in relation to the SOCRATES scheme.

There are also similar inducements, or pressures, within HEIs to engage in income generation which accrues to both the institution and the area, or helps offset some of the latter's costs (for example, placements). However, the market for the goods available, including the voluntary sector and consumer groups, is itself limited and unlikely to be able to meet high charges. This, combined with the not-for-profit ethic with which many social work educators are imbued, results in 'at-cost' projects - on altruistic grounds or in the hope of *quid pro quo*s and/or future contracts.

The possibility of accessing funds within institutions, for example through the Enterprise in Higher Education scheme has been noted; as has a range of funding opportunities from CCETSW itself. The latter have included funds which partly acknowledge the costs of new requirements, for example Development Funding, or which aim to promote particular developments in line with government policies, of which the Residential Child Care Initiative and funding for Open Learning projects would be examples. However, very few of these are available on a non-competitive basis; the sums available are often relatively small scale (less than £10,000) and all require reports on how funds have been spent.

Funding procurement, budget management, project activity and evaluation process can constitute a further administrative drain on staff, with relatively little increase in subject area resources or autonomy. The fact that it mirrors the developments in the role of many social workers, and that it may be in step with government policy for higher education and academics more generally,

hardly mitigates the sense of strain or difference experienced by social work educators in this sphere as in others.

The Changes

In 1992, the JUC SWEC Annual Report noted a busy year, but also expressed concern about falling attendance at its meetings, attributed to the heavy pressure on its members due to new social work programmes and other external factors. In the same year, Coulshead wrote that DipSW arrangements were proving to be 'administratively laborious in the extreme' (Coulshead,1972:2) necessitating teaching economies. Frequent reference has been made throughout this thesis to change as a constant dynamic during the period of the research, and to the cumulative effect of particular, consecutive or concurrent changes on the sense of demoralisation of social work educators and vulnerability of the area.

Data is here presented and discussed about examples of specific changes revealed by the survey and about the impact and direction of change indicated in some of the responses of those surveyed and interviewed.

In relation to changes in higher education, major structural change occurred with the erasure of the binary divide (in 1992) and the incorporation of smaller colleges into the expanded university sector. This had already had a direct impact on about one third of the respondents surveyed in 1994, and has subsequently affected nearly another third. This had implications for the balance of work within social work departments and areas, not least in increased expectations or opportunities to participate in research, which may be significant in relation to the longer term staffing and development of the area.

Other policy changes within institutions were sometimes justified on educational grounds but could also be seen as a response to external policy change, for example, in relation to student numbers. Thus, modularisation and semesterisation had been experienced by about half the respondents (37 and 28, respectively) by 1994, and had been of sufficient concern to JUC SWEC for one of its members to produce a paper as a basis for discussion (4/6/94) on the possible implications for DipSW. Main concerns centred on the ability of programmes to 'fit' learning, including in placements, into discreet modules or units, assessed within semesters, and to retain a holistic approach to professional education, including assessing how college based learning, perhaps taking place the previous semester, might inform practice.

As has been noted, modularisation is 'predominantly an aggregative model of learning' (Henkel,1995:78) and whether this is best suited to the 'process' element and integrative intent of social work education has been questioned. Data from this research did not reveal how many respondents had been able to tie in restructuring of courses to meet institutional demands with redevelopment of programmes to meet CCETSW requirements, it is known that, for some, the timing of respective changes required consecutive rather than concurrent development and administrative work. However, it was also a change apparently used as an opportunity by some educators, although the hoped for benefits in terms of increased research time did not necessarily materialise (Wilson and Bradley, 1994).

Nearly half the survey respondents (28) had experienced organisational change in relation to departmental boundaries since 1989, and in two cases this had happened twice in three years. A further 13 respondents expected imminent change of this kind and seven others thought it was a possibility. One respondent referred to 'constant restructuring' and there is evidence that the experiences of many social work educators paralleled those of their colleagues in the professional field during this period (La Valle and Lyons,1996a). It is also apparent that these changes were being experienced predominantly by respondents in the new university or college sector (30 indications of departmental change, relative to only four in the old university sector) and may have been associated with institutional changes in status.

It is unclear from the data whether social work was more or less likely than other subjects to be affected by institutional changes, but it seems likely that a subject lacking clear boundaries and associations (see Chapter 7) may be more vulnerable to such change than one more clearly bounded and established. It is also suggested that, since change in higher education is at least as much a response to economic considerations as to epistemological or pedagogical ones, the relative expense of social work education also makes it more vulnerable to changes aimed at reaping economies of scale; but that, for instance, the mixing of social work and social science students (as may happen following modularisation) may have other costs.

Proceeding to the actual nature and pace of change *within* the subject area, the major change was the introduction of the Diploma in Social Work in place of existing CQSW and CSS courses, which entailed 'running out' previous qualifications at the same time as bringing on stream new ones. There were no known cases of breaks between student intakes, and there were some cases where three different cohorts of students were operating under separate regulations for at least one

year, with predictable 'teething troubles' for those on new programmes and demoralisation for those on old ones.

CSS courses were well represented in the first wave of approvals, with nine DipSW programmes being introduced in either 1989 or 1990 (only two of these were in the old university sector). The majority followed in 1991 (24 programmes) and 1992 (21). The final ten new programmes were implemented in 1993: eight of these were in the old university sector, and the majority were changes from one year post-graduate CQSW courses to two year masters level programmes. (The number totals 65 as one HEI introduced DipSW at non-graduate level in 1991, and at masters level in 1993).

The revision of CCETSW requirements, not finally approved by Council until 23/2/95 but for implementation by Autumn 1995, was an example further change, and also of the difficult timescales imposed on social work educators. Another letter from the JUC Chair to CCETSW (11/1/95) urged phased implementation over the 1995 and 1996 intakes, and this request, as well as representations from the CVCP, was heeded. Accounts of the change to DipSW and new requirements are contained in a number of recent texts (Jackson and Preston-Shoot, 1996; Vass, 1996; Webb, 1996) and, as previously cited, Jones (1996c) has critically reviewed the review.

Apart from the change to bring post-graduate diplomas into a two year framework, mentioned above, there is subsequent evidence which illustrates a trend away from masters level programmes in favour of degree level ones which now represent about 22% of DipSW programmes overall (CCETSW, 1996). This reflects the previously noted level of support among educators for a degree level award, and increased attempts to conform to institutional structures and norms, including by some programmes which had implemented two year non-graduate programmes after 1989, but taken the opportunity of the 1995 revisions to rethink their own provision.

In the previous (post 1989) changes, there was some evidence that CQSW courses in close proximity were likely to change at the same time (needing to maintain their position relative to both partnership arrangements and student recruitment); and that courses in the London region changed later than elsewhere. The latter partly reflects the greater diversity of agencies and complexity of pre-existing placement networks, but also less stability and more strain within agencies themselves, making the establishment of new partnership arrangements more protracted. This has also been a feature of the establishment of regional post-qualifying consortia, but less so

of smaller consortia to deliver practice teacher training programmes, both also examples of new developments in which social work educators were involved during this period.

A question in the 1994 survey about further planned changes indicated that some respondents felt that change was being imposed and was outside their control, for instance, 'not our plans but government's'. But many responses also indicated an acceptance that this was an inevitable and necessary process and there were very few indications of 'no change'. A minority of respondents expected to reduce their social work education provision, including reducing numbers of students on qualifying programmes(16), and there are indications subsequently that this is a continuing trend.

This might be at variance with CCETSW's intention to maintain output at a level to meet demand, apparently still supported by the Department of Health (Riches,1997) However, three quarters of the respondents (49) expected to extend or diversify social work education in some way, particularly through the introduction of a top-up degree year (26, mostly in the new university sector). In 1994, only four institutions had implemented a two-plus-one model (Dip HE/DipSW plus optional degree year), but by autumn 1997 twenty three institutions will have developed this structure, virtually half of those awarding the Dip SW at non-graduate level (which continues to comprise half the provision of professional qualifying awards, overall (CCETSW,1996).

As in the case of three year programmes offering combined professional and academic awards, this may reflect a desire by social work educators to develop courses more consistent with institutional structures, but perhaps also less subject to CCETSW direction. There is no general evidence yet of the extent to which students choose to proceed direct to a degree year, although the 1995 CCETSW Employment Survey showed that 45% (28) of those respondents not in a social work post six months after qualifying had proceeded to further training or research (Wallis Jones and Lyons,1996). Similarly, it is not known how far degree years (or modules on them) have been developed to carry post-qualifying awards, and are used on a part-time basis by practising social workers, but in 1994, twenty one respondents had signalled their intent to introduce post-qualifying (and in a few cases, advanced) awards. Ten other respondents (8 in the new university sector) planned to introduce taught masters courses and four to introduce or expand PhD programmes.

Plans to introduce part-time or distance learning modes at the qualifying level were intimated by eight respondents and there now seems to have been some patchy development in this area. It is

a development favoured by some employers and for which there is a possible market among unqualified (or differently qualified) staff in the personal social services, and support from CCETSW (Cornwall,1995), but there seems to have been some resistance to large scale development of this kind, partly related to ideas about the (group) socialisation process which some educators see as being part of the professional education programme. The only interviewee to mention this area noted in 1996, 'I am not convinced there is a huge demand..... If the government sorts out student funding, most people want to go on a real course with human involvement', and that 'having the universities run things is actually cheaper for employers'.

There is also some impressionistic evidence of increasing use of 'approval of prior (experiential) learning' to give exemptions from some elements in DipSW programmes, and of links with agencies around 'in-house work placements', as a direct response to placement shortages and costs. CSS courses had already pioneered the idea of 'employment routes', and although few of these formally remain in DipSW programmes, it seems as if new patterns of provision are emerging in close collaboration with employers. Whether this is properly called 'part-time' or 'employment-based' is unclear. There is, as yet, only limited information about a new initiative by the Open University to offer a professional qualification by distance learning in conjunction with at least one large national voluntary agency, or about how far materials developed by the Open Learning Foundation, specifically developed for DipSW use, have been adopted(Adams,1996).

With regard to other forms of diversification, mentioned by nearly half of the survey respondents, five expected to increase the research element; nine to develop part-time post-qualifying or advanced awards; and six to be involved in teaching on non social work courses, or on joint or multi-disciplinary modules. One specifically noted 'change to social science if DipSW removed from higher education', reflecting either the mood of the moment or a wider concern about the direction of policy developments.

This theme of diversification was taken up by most of the interviewees asked about strategies for survival or development in 1996. Only one respondent specifically spoke against such a move 'Higher education is rapidly changing and frantically opening up more opportunities.... it's not necessarily going to produce better education. Why should we abandon traditional social work education? It's succeeded reasonably well in being adaptive'. However, this was very much a minority view and six people mentioned diversification as a strategy which they themselves were actively promoting. One interviewee said, 'the key task is diversification', although another made it clear that this included *away* from social work education programmes, if necessary.

Specific areas of development mentioned by interviewees included post-graduate degrees of a specialist or interdisciplinary nature (for example, MSc in Community Care, MBA in Health and Social Care); submission of existing masters level units for award of professional credits; developing the research area, including through part-time opportunities for senior staff from local agencies, (Fellowships); and integration of Dip SW pathways into 'mainstream' degrees.

Additionally, by this stage some of the respondents were facing the impact of withdrawal of Probation training and were mostly choosing to convert existing Probation streams to criminal justice pathways, including juvenile justice, although one despondently noted that he was trying to 'salvage' the overall programme. Two respondents also spoke of participation in planning for new NVQ awards in the criminal justice field, one specifically saying he 'wouldn't have chosen to go this way.....(but was) trying to keep all the options open'. (See also Ward, 1996). However, potential developments in this area are again in question with the notification to JUC SWEC members (18/2/97) that the project to develop occupational standards and NVQ awards in the probation field, for implementation from 8/97, has been suspended.

One interviewee specifically referred to the advantages of size in giving flexibility 'you can switch things around, and rebalance numbers (on different courses).....social work can never compete otherwise'. It seems increasingly apparent that *size combined with diversity* may be an important characteristic in the sustainability or development of social work as a subject area in higher education, coupled with the ability to carry out some of its work within the mainstream structures of higher education and to cross-subsidise its own activities within budgetary arrangements at basic unit level.

Summary And Conclusions

This chapter has reviewed the quantitative dimension of resources available to social work educators to respond to, initiate and manage policy change entailing structural developmental and administrative consequences. It was not possible to demonstrate that shortage of resources, in the form of academic staffing, was a widespread problem in itself, there was evidence of variation in the resources available to this subject in different institutions, with a clear indication of an increase from traditional SSR norms of 1:10 or 12, for about two thirds of the respondents.

There was also considerable variation in the number of staff available; and some evidence of changing patterns of staffing in ways which might suggest more flexibility and responsiveness to the changing conditions, but which might also imply less continuity and stability in staff groups. This latter might impact on both development work and course delivery, with possible consequences for sharing of the administrative load and for staff-student relationships. (Temporary, part-time and sessional lecturers do not necessarily have administrative or developmental roles, and may not be available for staff or student meetings). However, they may be part of a wider move towards specialisation of roles within staff teams(including in relation to research) and the issue is probably one of 'balance' rather than the appropriateness - or not - of a particular type of appointment.

Data suggested that a proportion of posts would be funded by time-limited budgets, the availability of which represented both a resource and a further demand on the time and skills of budget holders (often only one person, in fairly small teams). However, such resources might give some staff groups a limited measure of autonomy, given the small number of units identified earlier as being responsible for departmental budgets.

The other major area of resourcing discussed was in relation to placements and other aspects of resources under the control of agencies, rather than HEIs. This was an area in which exogenous policy change has had a particular impact on social work educators and where, although there is some evidence of the embracing of market values and approaches, it seemed more likely that most social work educators were engaged in damage limitation exercises. These include cutting the numbers of students requiring supervised placements; and developing other courses which fit more easily with institutional structures, or which meet demands for other types or levels of education.

The current crisis in placements had been precipitated by changes in the (CCETSW) funding arrangements, but also compounded by the withdrawal of probation training from HEIs, another policy change outside the control of educators, to which most are making a pragmatic response, including possible involvement in developing NVQ level awards. While changes in the area have often been experienced as imposed, driven by political or economic agendas at variance with those of social work educators, there is also evidence of pragmatic and efficient adaptation to the changing environment, with some new initiatives.

A theme emerging in the management of change has been increasing diversity of course provisions and other activities within the subject area. This can be seen as both a reactive strategy,

including the need to conform to changed structures within HEIs (modularisation and semesterisation), and an attempt to take a more proactive stance and reclaim some control over parts of the social work education enterprise (top-up degrees and new post-graduate courses are examples). The limited development of new modes of course delivery (part-time and distance learning) can be seen as attempts to maintain some of the values of educational opportunity, peer group learning and professional socialisation through full-time social work education and resistance to the 'commodification' of education.

It was concluded that area size, diversity and some degree of control over resources might all be important factors determining the viability or not of the subject area in particular institutions, although the strength and effects of policy changes outside the area may yet overwhelm the area as a whole. However, there did seem to be a qualitative difference between the responses received in 1994, when arguably social work educators were in the midst of, or exhausted by, changes, and those received from interviewees and evidenced in new texts emerging in 1996.

The view of one senior academic is apt here, 'I am more optimistic than for some time. More universities are considering the contribution which social work educators can make to courses other than CCETSW-approved ones.....I am not happy about professional education but the area is developing and less reliant on CCETSW'. The extent to which CCETSW itself is seen as one of the problems in relation to social work education is further considered in the context of 'strengths and weaknesses' of the subject area, discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 12: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS

Introduction

The main aim of this research was to identify and clarify the characteristics which make social work education a viable or vulnerable subject area in the current context of higher education. A related aim was to explore the impact of recent changes, and the threats or opportunities for development, as perceived by educators themselves.

The last section of the 1994 questionnaire invited social work educators to give their own views about 'problematic or concerning issues' and about possible strengths of the subject area. This was an open ended, two part question, answered by 61 out of 64 of the respondents in varying detail. Additionally, in 1996, interviewees were asked a slightly different question, about opportunities and strategies for development of the subject, and this produced further data.

In 1995, initial findings from the survey were shared with workshop participants at the annual ATSWE conference, after an exercise to investigate participants' views. Although participants constituted a more broadly based group (by role) than those originally surveyed, this exercise mainly confirmed previous findings, suggesting that there had been little change in perceptions in the intervening year. There were, however, a couple of variations in these responses and these are presented in conjunction with the original survey data.

Finally, JUC SWEC records indicate a strong motivation among social work educators to promote the development of social work education in higher education, and there are discussions in the literature of some of the themes perceived as problems or strengths of the subject area.

The 1994 survey data demonstrated that problems or weaknesses were more readily identified than strengths, suggesting a very demoralised group of respondents at that time. Ten respondents answered only the question about problematic or concerning issues, either leaving the other part blank or, in one case writing 'pass'. Another respondent said 'not sure what this is about' suggesting that the wording of the second part of the question was too ambiguous or global, referring as it did to 'strengths or values which could influence developments in social work or higher education'.

It is possible that the wording of this question produced a particular emphasis on 'values' as a positive attribute in the responses (see later). One respondent suggested that more space was needed at this point in the questionnaire, although others overcame this deficiency by appending notes. Nineteen of the respondents, while answering both parts of the question, listed more concerns or problems, than positives, and it was noticeable that these were predominantly from the old university sector. Only two respondents saw more strengths than weaknesses in the subject area, both from new universities. The remainder (majority) noted an equal number of concerns and strengths, although it often seemed the case that these were of a different order, and that weaknesses might be perceived as more problematic. The majority of respondents cited more than one concern and strength.

Answers to both parts of the question were classified as follows. Problematic characteristics were grouped under five main headings - resourcing; change; value conflicts; survival; and research and relevance. Strengths were identified as relating to values; knowledge and theory development; teaching methods; and topical or pragmatic responses. These categories have also been used as the basis for presenting interviewees responses, if relevant, and selected material from the ATSWE workshop.

In some respects, this chapter forms a reprise to some of the foregoing presentations. A degree of congruence between the researcher's own perceptions of the salient features in the subject area is observable, although there were also some 'gaps'. For example, issues relating to structural arrangements and career patterns of social work educators themselves were not identified as either strengths or problems by the 1994 survey respondents (except occasionally by implication), although they were touched on by ATSWE workshop participants.

This chapter does not summarise Part 2 as such, but it highlights some of the main themes. In addition, particular attention is given to two characteristics of the subject area deemed peculiar to social work; firstly, views on the role of CCETSW and its relationship with social work educators; and secondly, the nature and place of values in social work education. There is a further section on interviewees' responses about strategies for survival or development. First though, the problems and strengths of the area, as perceived by educators, are presented.

Problems and concerns

Given previous discussion and data, it is not surprising that two thirds of the respondents (42) cited *resourcing* as problematic. A number of people elaborated on this or gave more than one example. Thirty responses were evenly divided between concerns about a lack of resources within the institution, and the shortage of placements without. Respondents commented on 'inadequate resources to do the job' or 'funding'; or noted the 'lack of stability in provision of placements' or simply, 'the placement crisis'. Eight people mentioned the administrative demands of the subject, including five specific comments about partnership arrangements, for example, 'the politics and costs of collaboration'.

A few people mentioned the conflicting expectations of individual or group performance in the three or four areas previously identified, (research, management, teaching and practice); and the lack of resources available to address these sufficiently.

Development work was not usually identified explicitly as a separate aspect of an individual or team role, but in view of the amount required in a limited time period might well have been.

The next largest category concerned the nature and pace of *change*, and was identified by half the respondents (32). This could be subdivided into change within the professional field (14); change in higher education(2); and change in social work education itself (16). In the first category respondents were concerned about the nature of the changes, 'education for what?', and about the changes in local authority structures and agency roles, 'how many social workers will be needed?'. The limited responses about change in higher education related specifically to introduction of new monitoring systems, and of modularisation and semesterisation.

Comments about change in the area of social work education were more common, and ranged from the general, 'constant change with no time for reflection or consolidation' to the more specific, 'the Dip SW review', and included other statements which indicated frustration about the direction of change by the validating body; 'the unrealistic demands of CCETSW' or 'the unworkable regulations for qualifying training'. These also indicated concerns about the (bureaucratic) arrangements for the continuum of training, and the (inadequate) length of qualifying training including lack of preparation for work in particular areas, such as the residential field.

The length of social work qualifying training was a point given relatively more weight by the ATSWE workshop participants, who identified a lack of specialisation and concerns about standards of practice ('just about safe to go and practice') as a direct result of the limited training period (3 out of 22 workshop responses). This accords with some of the data previously discussed, which suggests an increasing concern and frustration about this issue by social work educators, resulting in new developments in the period between 1994 and 1996 to address this.

One third of the respondents (22) identified *value conflicts* as a problem for the subject area, including the sense that both social work and social work education were operating in a hostile political climate (6), for example 'a political climate which emphasises technical and instrumental values and excludes critical analysis'. This was also expressed by others(9) as the difficulty of maintaining professional values relative to deprofessionalising tendencies in both social work and higher education, including the move to competency based assessment. A further third of this group noted the problem of maintaining anti-oppressive values in the current political climate or identified the teaching and assessment of anti-oppressive practice itself as problematic (at a pedagogic level).

An almost equal number of respondents (20) identified the threat to the *survival* of the subject area as the main problem. Not least among the reasons for this was concern about the survival of social work itself (7), 'will there still be a profession in 10 years time?'. A similar number wondered about the feasibility of social work education continuing in higher education, or made related points about who would decide the future of social work education, including two comments about the possible threat to CCETSW as the validating body. Three respondents mentioned specifically the threat to probation training as an aspect of social work education, and one person queried whether the small size of some staff teams made it non-viable in some institutions.

Finally, a small number of respondents saw its *poor research profile* as a weakness or identified concerns about the relevance of the social work education enterprise to the professional field. Comments about research ranged from the pressures to produce it, to having no time to undertake it, and to the poor research record, quantitatively and qualitatively, of the subject area. This could be contrasted with respondents who were more concerned about the lack of relevance, expressed in ways which suggested either that a closer association with the field (rather than academe) was necessary, or that research could usefully identify / support education in its attempt to prepare people for social work practice in a changing environment; 'Are social work changes

being reflected in social work education?'; 'Is social work education too dissociated from the providers?'

Some of the ATSWE workshop participants linked a concern about research with more explicit reference to 'inadequate theory'; 'lack of academic rigour'; and 'no agreed body of knowledge'. It was in this forum too, that reference was made to 'tensions and competition with other academic disciplines'; to the marginal position of social work vis a vis academe and the profession; and to the lack of academic credibility accorded to the subject. One person also specifically identified the self-critical role of social work educators and their deference to academics in other fields as a source of weakness in the subject area.

Some of the above points constitute criticisms from within about the nature of the enterprise (perhaps confirming the response just noted), rather than a more analytical perspective on why social work might be viewed as a weak subject area and under threat. It is also clear that not all the respondents share the same assumptions about what the weaknesses are and how they might be addressed, and this in itself constitutes a weakness; that is, some respondents explicitly or implicitly are in favour of strengthening the research base and academic credibility of the subject area, while others might be categorised as wanting an even closer association with the field, and mechanisms to ensure 'relevance'.

Strengths

The possibility that responses to this part of the question were skewed by the wording is given some weight by the fact that, while nearly half the respondents to the 1994 survey(29) cited *values* as one of the strengths of the area, this was only one of 22 responses about strengths of the area suggested by ATSWE workshop participants in 1995. The wording used to describe these values by 1994 respondents varied from use of the terminology found in CCETSW documents (anti-racism, anti discriminatory practice) (16 respondents), to more general references to 'social justice', 'equity', 'humanistic values' or 'upholding the rights and responsibilities of vulnerable groups' (or expressed as 'valuing diversity' by the ATSWE participant).

A further third of the respondents (21) thought that the contribution of social work educators *to the knowledge base* was a strength of the area. Some mentioned the carrying out of research relevant to practice, or the development of theory; and ten people specifically referred to the use of social science or multi-disciplinary perspectives to promote critical analysis of social work. This

suggests a view of social work education which places it in a professional framework, rather than an academic one, although again the wording of the question might have encouraged a response about the contribution of the subject to development of the field. Only two respondents suggested that the strengths of the subject (in the area of values) could benefit the institution.

Nearly a third of the respondents saw the *teaching and learning approaches* of the area as a positive attribute, noting an emphasis on student centred and participative learning; attention to the personal, to process and to 'empowering' approaches; and 'innovative' teaching methods. Given the problematic nature of resourcing, this may suggest a principled adherence to some approaches which are currently in question or imaginative attempts to circumvent them. However, some of the approaches common to social work (and other forms of professional education) are now being adapted and adopted more widely in the pursuit of 'relevance' of graduate skills to the world of work. In this sense, social work might be in the vanguard of educational developments within institutions, or at least less out of step than usual.

Finally a 'catch-all' group of responses (8) identified *pragmatic or topical strengths*. These included 'an ability to change'; familiarity with vocational education; managing and educating for diversity; a high level of recruitment and 'expertise with non-standard entrants'; and, not least, 'our students get jobs!'. One of the participants in the ATSWE workshop also noted the pragmatism of social work education as both a strength and a weakness. What might be seen as functional behaviour or a positive attribute in some circumstances, could also be dysfunctional or a weakness in others. This reflects again the janus-like character of the discipline and the need to engage appropriately with two systems.

While it was not commented on in the survey data, it was clear from the HEFC Teaching Quality Assessment Exercise (1993/94) that in many HEIs the subject area 'performed well' in relation to institutional criteria and mission statements. As commented by an interviewee reported earlier, if good performance occurs in both teaching and research assessment exercises, institutions may see the subject area as having real value. Fifteen (out of 75 English) institutions gained an excellent rating in the 1994 TQA, of which eleven were in the old university sector (HEFCE, 1995). Of the fourteen (English) institutions awarded a rating of 3a or higher in the 1996 RAE, seven had previously gained an 'excellent' in teaching. It is difficult to make precise comparisons since some of the institutions rated as excellent in the TQA may not have made a research submission or it may have been included in another subject area's submission.

If above average standards are achieved in both teaching and research, and combined with positive relationships with local communities, good recruitment, low wastage rates and good employment statistics, institutions may well view the area favourably, notwithstanding possibly higher unit costs and the potential for value conflicts. However, the likelihood of the subject area meeting all these criteria in all institutions is not great, and in some places there is evidence of the predominance of weaknesses or problems over strengths.

CCETSW

Views about CCETSW were not explicitly sought, nor necessarily addressed, in the 1994 survey. However, it became evident from developments in 1995, (when an ad hoc Conference of social work educators was convened at Liverpool University) and from some of the subsequent literature, that an increasing number of social work educators, saw adherence to CCETSW's requirements (and the values and assumptions reflected in these) as itself a weakness of the subject area.

It is clear from some of the interviewees' responses, JUC SWEC records and some of the literature, that social work educators have somewhat ambivalent or even negative views about the organisation and the part it has played in the recent developments in social work education. The role of CCETSW in, for instance, pushing for too much uniformity, or of not withstanding pressure to dilute particular values, has received critical attention; as has insistence on formal partnership arrangements and apparent 'favouring' of the employer interests in content and assessment. CCETSW and its role in developments in social work education around the turn of the decade were also the subject of critical appraisal by a former social work education adviser (Brewster, 1992).

In 1996, over half (7) of the people interviewed spoke about the organisation in varying tones of frustration or resignation, usually in the context of the question about strategies for development. The opening statements on this topic of five interviewees were unambiguously negative. 'I am very unhappy about CCETSW's role and the structure of the Dip SW'. 'CCETSW is not good news. It has attempted to deskill, compartmentalise and devalue training'. 'CCETSW is irrelevant: it's a paper tiger'. 'One way forward would be getting out of CCETSW. It's a terrible nuisance, and has held standards down rather than putting them up'. 'CCETSW has no powers to deal with placement issues'. At the extremes, one of the interviewees continued, 'It's a nonsense and should be got rid of', while another said, 'I don't see how the organisation can be sustained. There is no need for a validating body as such'.

The focus of people's criticism of CCETSW varied and related both to the requirements which CCETSW places on social work education and its use of power, or even lack of power. One person commented particularly on the difficulty of developing and sustaining partnership arrangements; 'There has been no consistent effort in relation to education and training (locally). Agencies can't commit resources, and some Directors have been experienced as quite hostile'. (He contrasted this with Probation, 'Probation has been a wonderful support, and with the experience of colleagues in the Health Service). This can be linked to CCETSW's lack of power in relation to placements, 'Placement opportunities are diminishing rapidly, despite more money and work being poured into the voluntary sector. CCETSW is under so much pressure itself it can't see local problems so it can't help us'.

This respondent also resented the increased expectations of CCETSW in relation to participation in other areas of work, 'I am active in local PQ developments,.....but why can't CCETSW do this centrally?'. Another also saw the post-qualifying area as symptomatic of CCETSW's failings, 'I am not impressed by their P/Q developments. They're very unclear and bureaucratised, with the educational component minimised'.

Other interviewees were more concerned about the lack of an intellectual basis and holistic perspectives in CCETSW's requirements, 'The notion of competencies suggests that social work can be broken down into discrete areas. It denies the complexity and creativity of the work': other comments, illustrative of the concern about the knowledge base and assessment methods, as implied or prescribed in CCETSW requirements, have been cited in previous chapters, and some of the literature (Webb,1996, Jones 1996b, Jackson and Preston Shoot,1996).

However, two of the respondents were more measured in their response, and four of the critics tempered their views with some appreciation of either CCETSW's position or speculation about what the alternatives might be. One interviewee saw 'CCETSW as being in a very difficult position between government, the employers and the universities, and as having given in to one party rather than achieving a consensus'; while another thought that 'CCETSW has been under enormous strain from the government to come up with things'. One interviewee, pursuing the theme of CCETSW's lack of power said, 'Social work education is going to go its own way and what is CCETSW going to do about it? It has a statutory responsibility to turn out social workers; they need us more than we need them', but conceded 'we can go too far unless there is a responsible head of programme'.

Another respondent explicitly saw the need for a validating body, 'and it's good that there's only one body, but it should have more representation from social work educators as well as students and clients, and it should be more detached from government'. A critic said 'I am publicly not a knocker of CCETSW because it is necessary for the credibility of the profession that there is a central validating body', and contrasted the UK situation with the 'anarchy' of the American social work education scene. But this was also mentioned in more positive vein by another respondent who had 'some sympathy for the USA Council on Social Work Education, but running our own validation system is hard to imagine'

Four respondents speculated about the possibility of a radically different role for CCETSW or a General Social Services (or Social Work) Council. In relation to the first, one interviewee said, '(CCETSW) could administer a national test which students could take, but the universities should be trusted to set their own course standards', though his preferred option was for a General Council of social work or social services, responsible for registration and professional qualifications, 'we've waited too long for this'. However, another interviewee had 'fears about a General *Social Services* Council. It would attempt to incorporate everyone and would be a force for deprofessionalisation', but two people explicitly favoured a General *Social Work* Council, similar to the General Medical Council. From the foregoing it can be seen that, while criticisms of CCETSW may be considerable, there is no consensus about the possible alternatives, and some social work educators would be satisfied with greater representation on the existing body, or a wider sphere of autonomy relative to its operation.

Turning to data from the JUC SWEC, it is clear that this organisation has had a long-standing relationship with CCETSW, and is one of the stakeholders whom CCETSW regularly consults. A CCETSW representative is normally present at the termly committee meetings, and the organisation is proactive in raising matters with CCETSW as well as reacting to new proposals and developments. Additionally, JUC SWEC has always put forward nominations to CCETSW Council and, while the representation of social work educators has declined dramatically over the last decade, someone from JUC SWEC has been on the Council or National Committees since 1990. In addition, a number of members have been involved, on an ad hoc basis (and not necessarily formally as JUC SWEC representatives), on a range of steering and development groups.

Annual Reports of JUC SWEC and other documents testify to the organisation's efforts to represent the views of educators on a range of issues, either through written responses or through

'consultative meetings' (sometimes including representatives of other groups such as ATSWE). An analysis of Annual Reports showed that the following concerns have all been the subject of consultation or lobbying over the past decade:- proposals for or revisions to qualifying training, including probation (every year); placements(annually); post-qualifying training (1987, '89,'90,'91); the costs of collaboration (1989,'91,'93); competencies (1989,'94); funding arrangements (general,1991); clearing house arrangements (1991); the increasing burden of monitoring and evaluation (1993); and transcripts (1995). Additionally, there have been some examples of collaborative ventures with CCETSW including two Conferences about 'Euro-developments' (1989,'90) and one about the HEFC's Teaching Quality Assessment Exercise (1993).

While some respondents acknowledged that, in operating as an agent of the Department of Health (primarily), CCETSW's powers to promote social work education interests are limited, others felt that its role has been more pernicious, or at least more concerned with its own organisational survival than the good of the subject area. The fact that its role in relation to qualifying education is primarily concerned with professional *training* without any responsibility for research; and that its remit has extended from qualifying to pre-qualifying and post-qualifying levels in the wider social care field means that its influence has extended in ways which are of more concern to employers and less central to the *education* of a professional group generically called 'social workers'.

The role of giving advice and undertaking development work has sometimes conflicted with its statutory duty to approve programmes and, in so doing, to regulate the numbers of people embarking on social work training and the standards of those subsequently entering the profession. Overall, the data suggests some agreement about the need for a body which is independent of HEIs; which represents the interests of the profession as a whole; and which has some responsibility for maintaining professional standards. It is an open question whether CCETSW is an appropriate body which can carry out its remit effectively, and as in other fields, there are questions about the degree of prescriptiveness and amount of power, including its distribution between different interest groups.

Values In Social Work Education

Turning to the area of values, CCETSW Paper 30 (1989)codified a development which had been taking place during the 1980s in piecemeal fashion in social work education. It required that

attention should be paid by *all* Dip SW programmes to the combating of racism and other forms of personal discriminatory behaviour and structural exclusion or oppression of minority groups (including women, who, of course, only comprise a minority in the 'political' sense of having less power than the dominant male group).

Since the early eighties, a number of courses had given attention to the personal aspects of prejudice which give rise to discriminatory behaviour and sought to enable students to examine their own attitudes and see where change might be necessary in their dealings with other students, and more importantly, clients and future colleagues. This development was a response to commitment among staff to develop feminist and anti-racist perspectives in a radical critique of social work (Langan and Day 1992), but was also prompted by demands of increasingly diverse groups of students, exposed to the messages of wider social movements.

This stage of 'consciousness raising', particularly in relation to race and gender, gave way to more insistent concerns that students should learn how to identify situations in which other people's behaviour or the operation of institutions and policies discriminated against individuals and groups seen as 'different', and the development of strategies to address the causes and consequences. This approach required an analysis of power differentials at individual, group and societal level to inform understanding of the dynamics of and possible 'solutions' to particular situations.

Courses and student learning were informed by theoretical material and empirical studies from psychology and sociology; and policy developments and legal frameworks could be analysed to demonstrate how they perpetuated or sought to address particular forms of discrimination, exclusion or oppression. At best, the onus on social work students to examine critically themselves, the organisations within which they operated, and the policies they were required to implement, would be placed in a wider philosophical and ethical framework and be integrated at a personal level to form a secure professional value base.

Some social work educators, often women, have been readily identified by their writings as promoting anti-discriminatory values; and have sought to apply feminist or anti-racist perspectives to social work theory, education, policy and/or practice (for example, Humphries, 1988; Dominelli, 1989; McNay, 1992; Carter et al, 1992). However, not only was one of the interviewees concerned about the way in which particular values were being adopted, but some of the literature also questions the basis for equal opportunities and related values espoused

by social workers, and the role of social work academics in the 'construction and legitimation of such discourses'(Sibeon 1991/2:194/5). Sibeon suggested that teaching and learning about values within social work education was 'susceptible to an authoritarianism that is simultaneously silly and sinister'(p189), and cited the concerns of Rojek et al(1988) that liberatory social work dogma is 'repressive because it won't tolerate diversity or aberration' (Rojek et al,1988:144).

A similarly critical article by Webb(1990) had sparked an unusually heated debate in the social work literature (Webb,1990; Dominelli,1991; Webb,1991; Smith,1992) and that was followed by a public denouncement of CCETSW's requirements in relation to values in the wider educational press(Pinker,1993).

While teaching in anti-racism and feminism, in the eighties and early nineties, had its roots in civil and democratic rights and personal 'liberation' movements, its operationalisation in British social work policy and practice occurred when political and societal values were shifting in favour of individual responsibilities and against the recognition of collective needs or redistributive policies. Social work educators were perceived by some as being increasingly 'out of step' in promoting these values, or as naive or inept in their attempts to do so. Hence, criticisms from within the academy in the early nineties were mirrored by criticisms of social work practice externally and by 1994 the government was requiring CCETSW to review Paper 30, including reference to this area of work (Jones,1996c).

Nevertheless, about a third of the respondents to the survey saw the values concerned with anti-discrimination and social justice as a strength of the area, notwithstanding the conceptual and emotional difficulties facing those teaching and learning (where sensitive attention by staff to group processes and intra- and inter-personal dynamics are essential). The extent to which social work sees itself as an occupational group which should address inequalities and injustices may set social work education apart from other disciplines, including related fields of professional education. There is impressionistic evidence to suggest that both social work students and staff can be perceived within HEIs as raising awkward questions, pointing out home truths or simply being assertive about their own and others 'rights'; but at least two of the survey respondents who identified this area as a strength saw the value base as an opportunity to contribute positively to the policy and ethos of higher education (as well as to social work practice).

The contradictory position of 'values', as both a strength and a weakness, was identified by at least one of the survey respondents and one of the interviewees. Those seeing it as a weakness

were sometimes more concerned about 'how to do it effectively' than the political consequences of doing so. Some respondents seemed to be thinking about how social work presents itself to others as suggested in the identification of 'Managing and educating for diversity' as a strength. Given use of this term in current organisation literature, this may be a more acceptable way of framing a traditional concern with inequalities, than some of the 'anti' language, although it may also reflect a stronger concern with tolerance of and valuing 'difference', than with action aimed at redressing social injustices.

Only two of the interviewees in 1996 made specific reference to anti-discriminatory values, both in ways which indicated support for their inclusion in social work education. One person, generally critical of CCETSW, qualified his remarks, 'I disagree with the political attack on CCETSW. I don't think that work in the ADP area was over the top'. Another interviewee said, 'I think it is a remarkable achievement that social work is the only profession which has a written clear political commitment at the core of its curriculum, that is anti-racism and anti-discrimination'. However, this was qualified, 'I don't endorse everything that has gone on under this - but at least a dialogue has been started. Normally, the hallmark of a profession is its basis in scientific knowledge, but social work is based on an ideological commitment'. Two other interviewees made reference to attempts to demonstrate the values of social justice through action research aimed at empowering users and saw this a definite strength of the subject area.

Turning back to the literature, Jones (1996b:19,20) has identified 'a cluster of so-called social work values' as having replaced the social science knowledge base in social work education, and a means by which CCETSW pays lip-service to the needs of clients relative to the interests of agencies. However, he also suggests that (anti-discriminatory) values 'now remain one of the few tangible sites where it is still possible to glimpse the wider purpose of the activity', and it can clearly be seen as a site of resistance to the dominant ideology of the day. Webb (1996) sees anti-discriminatory values, at least as expressed in a list of oppressions, as a substitute for the social sciences, and points to the superficiality of rhetoric in this area. He suggests that an approach to anti-discrimination framed around competence to the exclusion of analysis and knowledge is epistemologically unstable (Webb,1996:184/5).

The weak theoretical base of some of the literature, noted by Macey and Moxon (1996), and research in relation to anti-discriminatory values has already been mentioned, including feedback from the 1996 research assessment exercise. As Langan (1992:7) wrote, 'The question of whether the principles of anti-discriminatory social work will prevail over the vocationalism

currently in vogue remains to be resolved', and arguably, this may be determined in part by the extent to which research and teaching can be informed by more sophisticated understanding and communication of the complexities of the area.

Opportunities And Strategies For Development

The more concrete plans which 1994 survey respondents and the 1996 interviewees had for developments in the area have already been recounted in Chapter 11. However, many of the responses of the 1996 interviewees were of a more general nature and can usefully be presented here with some supplementary material. Some people were concerned primarily with relations with the profession, 'We should play to our advantages. We should value successful work within the university as long as it doesn't degrade our other activities. We must maintain successful public activities with local agencies as a basis for research and publications'. This outwardly directed view was echoed in 'We have important servicing and consultative roles as teachers and researchers, and the agencies continue to want this'.

There were also responses influenced by more academic considerations. The development of a more flourishing research culture was a common aspiration, as in responses about post-graduate developments(5) and more particular references to research: 'There's a growing sense of the social work academy with an interest in research and teaching and learning.....our research base is expanding but we must find time to create and plan and involve as many colleagues as possible'; or 'Research and writing are important in terms of how we are perceived as a department.....We need to organise ourselves better....people need space and time to do things'.

Other responses emphasised the particular contributions which social work can make to higher education. One interviewee stated that 'the overall strategy is to work from our strengthsso for instance we should make use of work-based learning, our relationships with outside agencies.....portfolios and mentoring. We should go out and 'sell' them!'. This view was shared by others, 'There are very few areas of academic activity where some of the aspects we emphasise are not taken into account. Given current trends, social work education should begin to feel more comfortable in higher education'.

This was related to whether respondents saw the area as under attack or relatively secure, and in fact at this time these respondents were mainly positive in their responses: 'In some ways social work education is well placed. It is recognised that education needs to equip people to work in the

real world, but it's important not to allow this to turn education into a purely instrumental activity'. 'There is no particular hostility to social work education in higher education - it is highly regarded here. It is effective in a difficult area'. However, as the same speaker acknowledged, 'One of the things happening locally is that some first year degree work and basic training is being shifted to Further Education, so we must ensure that all of social work isn't shifted.Social work must be a strong academic activity which the universities are happy to have in their portfolios'.

This threat was apparent in another interviewee's response, 'The university has other professional schools and is quite well disposed to them. But if social work is being redefined at NVQ level we have no part to play in it'. Anticipating this scenario, the area at this institution was rapidly extending its range of activities and courses and 'Social work teaching might become a second string rather than a first string to ones bow'. Another interviewee suggested that 'There is a danger of social work being marginalised in ordinary academic institutions, but if there is no institutional commitment to an applied discipline then social work should be elsewhere. (For example in professional schools)'. Another person spoke of the need to 'be part of the ordinary degree and post-graduate system, rather than different and special'. However, he also floated the idea of creating 'departments more like teaching hospitals, including alliances with local agencies where research is done and we make a real contribution to the community'.

Three of the interviewees spoke of existing or potential alliances with other professional areas. One person said, 'The university is still relatively positive to social work education but it's partly because of our alliance with health'; or 'Currently we're seen as odd animals, half in and half out of the institution, but there are also other examples of professional training (which we need to relate to)'. A third spoke more speculatively about a possible move to the development of professional schools, 'We need to establish broad multi-disciplinary alliances. Nursing can gain from social work and social work from research in education'. A possible alliance with social policy was not viewed so favourably by the same person, 'It's an applied discipline, yet it's seen as more academic and allied with the managerialists. In America, social work and social policy co-exist rather than social policy taking over'.

A need to promote the area more positively was also expressed by a number of the respondents; 'We need to develop a more political role within the institution, to be more astute and anticipate things more, to be pro-active rather than reactive. We need to build alliances and give the area a higher profile. Social work will thus be a more valued activity, andmorale would be improved'; or 'We need to have pride in what we're doing and push the message that communication and

demands are not just one way. Higher education may not be very responsive but we have things to say about how the outside world operates, and we should be more assertive about this'. This was linked by another interviewee to the need to strengthen social work education networks and representations, 'to engage in strategic thinking and not just be reactive'.

Other possible developments mentioned were the strengthening of links with European social work education, not least because 'they still have a community work component'; and the possibility of forming a special interest group for social work educators in BASW. However, despite a relatively positive response overall, the likely contraction of social work education, in the form of its demise in some institutions, was also mentioned by a couple of respondents and in the light of other data this has to remain a possibility if not a likelihood in the near future. One respondent saw this in institutional terms, 'Undoubtedly there will be university mergers. Some of the present divisions and duplications are untenable', but another was more concerned about the viability of individual courses, 'some will go under - this one?'.

Particular strategies for survival or development were identified as maintaining the qualifying stage of social work education as a manageable part of a larger enterprise, and increasing control over the volume and nature of workloads. However, a reduction in the number of institutions offering social work education and its concentration into bigger units, as happened with Probation streams in the early eighties and again in the early nineties seems inevitable, at least in the short term. Whether, subsequently, a similar downgrading of education and training provision occurs is still an open question.

Finally, possible future threats and opportunities, as perceived by social work educators, can also be identified from the priorities for the activities of JUC SWEC in 1997. Thus, a long standing Practice Development sub-committee is currently being reinvigorated and urgent representations are being made to CCETSW; the Probation sub-committee continues to monitor, lobby and encourage on-going involvement in the criminal justice field; the International sub-committee operates as an active information network and has effective representation at European and international level; and a newly established Research sub-committee has an ambitious agenda for an inaugural meeting (Spring, 1997).

Three of these are predictable areas of national concern, but the interest in European and international links during a period of intense local change and pressure can be variously interpreted. Some may see it as 'flight' from a difficult area, or a distraction from local concerns.

But another possibility, identified in an evaluation of the ERASMUS programmes (Lyons, 1996), is that such activities have provided some educators with an important source of stimulus and perspective, enabling British concerns to be placed in a wider comparative framework and contributions to be made to international debates.

Conclusions

This chapter has presented the findings on social work educators' perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the area, and possibilities for its development, and has recapitulated several themes identified at earlier points in this thesis.

A number of factors, related to teaching and learning, the knowledge and value bases, and student characteristics, were identified as strengths; while questions of resourcing, speed and direction of change, values, threats to survival, and research were all perceived as problematic by respondents to the main survey. The overall tone of responses in 1994 was judged to be demoralised.

By 1996, a selected group of interviewees gave some impression of a more confident mood, although evidence of criticisms and concerns remained. It is not possible to say how representative of the wider field this latter small, selected group might be in this respect. However, their range of backgrounds and differences in perception on specific issues, coupled with material from JUC SWEC and the literature, suggest that some reliance can be attached to their views.

The evidence relating to social work educators' views on two particular topics, CCETSW and values, was examined in some detail, not because these had been identified as core areas of inquiry in the research design, but because it became increasingly clear that the workings of these two 'institutions' have a major bearing on recent stresses within the area, and how it might be perceived externally. In relation to CCETSW, there seemed to be some agreement that an external professional body is necessary but less consensus that CCETSW is the most appropriate or effective mechanism, the main criticism relating to the extent to which it has been influenced by government and employer interests, to the near exclusion of the educators' voice. With regard to values, this remains a contentious area, but there are indications of a shift in language and a more critical approach (internally) to an area which must remain central to the conduct of social work as a professional activity.

Among the conclusions which can be drawn from the data are the diversity of situations vis a vis the field and institutional contexts experienced by respondents; and the range of perceptions of the causes and solutions to problems of the subject area. There was evidence of a continuing, strong orientation to the field and concerns to maintain professional qualifying training in ways which are relevant and appropriate. However, there is also an indication of an increasing commitment to academic values and a wish to be more 'integrated' into main stream structures. There was further evidence of role strain among social work educators and a perceived need to develop the subject area in ways which reduce workloads and enable more strategic and proactive developments. This includes the development of alliances and seeing the social work education enterprise in the wider context of professional education and international perspectives.

The possibility of the 'downgrading' of qualifying social work training (and its wholesale removal from higher education) remains a risk identified by some respondents, and a few responses referred specifically to the likelihood of the reduction in the number of social work departments or subject areas (on the basis of size and cost). However, other respondents were more optimistic about the adaptability of social work and its viability within HEIs. Some saw this specifically in relation to wider changes in higher education, and increased congruence between the goals and approaches of social work and host institutions.

Part 3 of this thesis relates the characteristics of British social work education, as identified in the foregoing data, to the framework initially elaborated. Chapter 13 explores how far the characteristics of the subject area mirror some of the issues evident in the external field of social work. Chapter 14 includes a brief examination of models of professional education, and considers the extent to which characteristics of the subject area may be similar to - or significantly different from - other professional subjects. Finally, Chapter 15 relocates social work education in its higher education context and draws conclusions about the implications of recent changes, at basic unit and institutional levels, for future prospects of the subject.

PART THREE

Drawing Conclusions:

Relating Social Work to the Wider Frame

CHAPTER 13:

SOCIAL WORK, EDUCATION AND IDENTITY

Introduction

Chapter 3 presented an overview of the post war development of British social work with particular reference to recent changes in policy, practice and organisation. The over-arching issues were socio-economic and cultural changes in the wider society which have impacted upon the practice of social work; and political and ideological changes which have impacted on the organisation and values of social work. An example of the first was the 'growth' of different forms of violence and abuse. Increasingly, social workers have been held responsible for the failure to prevent or 'cure' this social problem, and more recently they have been implicated either as victims or perpetrators.

In relation to the second issue, conflict was perhaps inevitable between an occupational group committed to values of respect for individual and group difference and social justice (redistribution) and promoting anti-discriminatory policies and practice, and a government intent on re-establishing more traditional, individualistic and market principles in public life. The statutory and organisational changes of the early nineties have reflected both these contextual issues, and an earlier preoccupation with professional status has been overtaken by concern about threats to social work's continued existence as a distinct occupational group.

Some of the developments in social work education and characteristics identified in Part II have a direct relationship with the concerns of the field. For instance, reasons for the changes to structure and assessment of qualifying training, required by CCETSW in 1989 and directed by government in 1994, included the need to ensure relevance to the field, and the production of people who were appropriately trained (qualified). Similar arguments for change have been advanced in relation to post-qualifying and advanced awards.

These changes have combined to impose pressures on both educators and organisations to establish and maintain programmes of a prescribed kind in a time of continuing need for (well) qualified social workers but also decreased resources and significant changes. Too close a 'fit' between education and current employment patterns, in any case, may not be in the interests of students or the wider profession and the existing or potential users of social work services. There has been evidence of government intent to discredit the values central to professional formation at

the education and training stage; and to 'shift' the values of social work educators themselves in the management and delivery of social work education, for instance in the marketisation of placement arrangements.

It is suggested that there are inherent tensions in the nature of social work and its relationship with the state, and it is perhaps inevitable that these will be reflected in social work education. This may even be a test of its relevance. Further, social work educators themselves clearly have strong roots in the professional field and many retain a close association with it, arguably, to the detriment of developing academic identities and the subject area as a whole.

This chapter discusses some of the changes and characteristics of social work education identified in Part 2 in relation to British social work, and makes particular reference to the identity and biography of social work educators. Not all areas researched are discussed in this chapter, some constituting themes which are more fully explored relative to other professional fields or the higher education context.

Sites, Purpose And Relevance

The lack of agreement or consistency in the departmental location or status of social work education mirrors a long-standing confusion or struggle about the siting of social work as a professional activity in the UK. Social work's 19th century origins as an ancillary activity in relation to the prime task of institutions concerned with punishment (and possibly rehabilitation), health care, and schooling, are still evident in the low status or insecure positions of probation officers, hospital social workers (and other 'outposted' roles, for example in primary health care teams) and education social workers / welfare officers. Roles of these social workers (who are quite specialised, by client group and setting, if not by level of work), are always open to redefinition by others and need to be constantly negotiated and credibility earned.

Similarly, subject areas in non social work departments may be rendered invisible (for instance in the research assessment exercise) or may be perceived as so different and /or resource inefficient as to be problematic. Thus, social work educators need to engage energetically with others in HEIs who are in a position to influence objectives, content, structures and resourcing. But this research suggests that the energies of social work educators are more likely to be focused on external activities and reference groups than on engagement within institutions. While dual

accountability is recognised, educators may continue to see themselves as a specialism within the area of social work rather than as 'academics'.

Social work also had its roots in 19th century Poor Law provision, where the central concern was the relief of poverty and encouragement of personal morality as the basis of social order. The post-war establishment of local authority welfare and children's departments, and their successors, social service departments, continued a tradition of care for people 'in need' in the community, or for whom special provision of care or containment should be made. While it seemed, in the post-Seebohm years, that social workers had now secured their own base, where they could control their own resources and determine their own agenda, this proved to be illusory, for reasons which have been indicated in Chapter 3.

It has become apparent that the social work element within social service departments became smaller and also less significant in terms of the overall work and values of departments. (This may be less true of Social Work Departments in Scotland, where the very name signifies the core activity of the organisation). Additionally, the public identification of social work with social services; the role of social workers in relation to people perceived by society as the most deviant, damaged, and disreputable elements in communities; and social workers' apparent failure to cure, contain or remove them, (indeed their attempts to understand and 'accept' them), have done nothing to enhance the credibility or status of the occupation.

From the data presented, social work educators are not generally substantially employed in large, 'autonomous' departments within HEIs. It may be that current trends towards diversification and reduction in qualifying training as the core activity, might also imply the development of situations where social work education, at least at the qualifying stage, itself becomes a minority and lower status activity, relative to involvement in more overtly academic pursuits. It is also conceivable that, just as it is likely that social work provision (as opposed to an inspectorial role) may be removed from Social Service Departments, so might social work qualifying education be removed from higher education (as is happening, in part, with teacher education).

The third strand in the history of social work development was its roots in charity organisations, settlements, and individual philanthropic activities. These might be seen to have experienced something of a resurgence in the latter part of the twentieth century in the rethinking of the roles of established voluntary organisations; the development of new forms of community and self-help organisations; and the more recent impetus given by government and the socio-economic climate

to the development of private practice and provision, (though this might only echo earlier forms of philanthropic effort in its unplanned and idiosyncratic nature).

The relationship of the organisation and delivery of social work education to this third strand is less obvious, since the scope and form of social work education has been substantially determined by the requirements of the largest employer of newly qualified social workers, SSDs. However, the spur to changes in the funding of placements was the explosion in use of the voluntary sector, and NGOs often form a numerically significant element in DipSW partnership arrangements. The separate development of youth and community work courses (not usually in the same department as social work with a few notable exceptions in the new university sector), and in fact the near demise of community work in both social work and youth and community programmes testifies to increased pressures to individualise both assessment of and responses to people presenting problems.

In relation to 'privatisation', there is no obvious parallel yet in the private provision of social work education, though the employment of sessional staff (who might see themselves as 'freelance' trainers) or the development of open and distance learning routes to qualification suggest marketisation of labour and education which could become more prevalent. It is also likely that relationships will be developed with a growing private care and therapy sector, if existing placement models continue.

Social work educators have recently experienced increased pressures of a bureaucratic, technocratic and managerialist nature, familiar to social workers in the statutory sector (and sometimes in evidence in large voluntary organisations). While these are partly related to the same processes within higher education institutions, they can also be attributed in part to the CCETSW requirements placed on providers of qualifying and post-qualifying and advanced awards. It seems likely that, with the exception of the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), CCETSW has taken a more prescriptive line than most validating bodies in requirements relating to partnership arrangements as well as to course content, assessment and monitoring, and this has undoubtedly impacted on social work educators, and on agencies in the extent to which they are willing or able to contribute to the educational process.

This latter point is also related to the purpose (and thus content) of social work education. Qualifying programmes have been seen as highly geared to the needs of social service departments, with about one third of courses also aiming to equip students to work in the

Probation service, and smaller numbers offering training for employment in the education, health, psychiatric or other fields. Possible changes in the role of social workers in SSDs have implications for the focus and scope of social work education. Further, it seems likely that social work education is not addressing more broadly based concerns, for instance about poverty or other generic themes, which are not necessarily or appropriately encapsulated in teaching about particular client groups or settings.

Should more substantial elements in social services be shifted to the voluntary and private sectors, the power of the NGO sector to determine the content and standards of social work education, particularly through the placement component, may increase. The moves to problem based or enquiry and action learning signified in some of this research suggest ways of constructing a curriculum and delivering programmes which are more flexible, relative to the shifting nature of social work.

The eighties and nineties have seen a renewed focus on informal care by family, friends and neighbours, and this has implications for the need for qualified social workers; the nature of their role; and the extent to which 'consumers', including informal carers, might have a say in the design and delivery of education and training programmes, as well as social work services. The notion of partnership comes to the fore again. There was little evidence that this has yet been seriously addressed by social work educators, although occasional references to 'empowerment' and collaborative forms of research suggest some patchy development in this area.

One of the characteristics of professional groups is their tendency to demarcate territory and erect barriers to outside 'interference', and of institutions to 'protect their boundaries'. There is little evidence that social work organisations or academics are much different. With reference to social work education, the involvement of service consumers in courses, in ways which are not tokenistic or exploitative would have resource implications, and require negotiation with the host institution. The picture looks rather different if one regards the consumers of social work education as students, and it is at this level that modelling, of (staff) attitudes and (course) systems, to promote participation, responsibility and feedback, seems more in evidence and capable of further development. This is based on the assumption that social work students will then behave in practice in ways which they themselves have experienced as enabling and empowering.

As indicated in some of the literature reviewed in Part 1, the relationship between the professional field and the educational process is not a concern unique to the UK. Social work educators and researchers elsewhere seem to struggle to maintain relevance and credibility with the profession while also establishing academic credibility. Such tensions have been noted in countries which illustrate a variety of traditions in social work organisation and practice, and in educational models, namely, Sweden (Svensson, 1994); the USA (Rice and Richlin, 1993) and Australia (Hartman, 1989).

Boundaries And Alliances

The concern here is with the content and functions of social work rather than its organisational form, and again parallels can be drawn between what happens in the field and what has been observed in social work education. Despite various attempts to demarcate the social work territory (including the functional analysis undertaken in 1994, prior to the revision of Paper 30), the boundaries of the social work role are frequently unclear and overlapping with related and quite wide ranging occupational groups.

Other groups may share a similar knowledge base, but they are unlikely to have the same goals, values or powers; and the experience of conflict or lack of contact, rather than co-operation, between social work and other agencies and workers has been well documented in relation to social work's failings (in the child abuse field but more recently in relation to 'community care'). The implications for social work education are two-fold. On the one hand it mirrors some of the territorial disputes and difficult (or non-existent) relationships between social work education and adjacent academic and professional subject areas; and on the other it suggests that far greater emphasis needs to be given in courses to the development of particular skills (such as networking and negotiation) and to 'inter-professional work' than was evident from the data.

While some of this input might need to be at the qualifying stage, it is perhaps more important and feasible at the post-qualifying and advanced stages of professional education, for various reasons. One of these relates to the current length of social work training, in which there are issues about both curriculum content (already overcrowded if construction and delivery are adhered to) and about the socialisation process into professional role and identity which qualifying training should provide. Conversely, while post-qualifying training is essentially concerned with consolidating learning, this stage or the next (concerned with extending knowledge and expertise in particular directions), are appropriate locations for learning in relation to multi-disciplinary or

inter-agency practice. The need to address systems and policies at a higher level, which this usually entails, is perhaps also more appropriately addressed when personnel have more experience, including organisational roles.

However, many factors impact on the development of good working relationships between allied professional groups, not all of them directly under the control of social workers or amenable to change by them. Improved understanding of the factors militating against inter-professional work, as well as innovative attempts to engage professionals in shared learning, need to be addressed locally in in-service programmes as well as in more formal and theoretical aspects of continuing education. It can also be suggested that course design and delivery are in part influenced by the prior experience of social work educators, and limited attention may be given to interdisciplinary work if it was not a feature of their own roles and agency culture. This may be compounded, if, to accept Barnett's view, there is little encouragement of inter-disciplinary within higher education itself (Barnett, 1994).

Levels And Length; And The Continuum Of Training

The question of the length and level of training has already been indicated as a source of status problems vis a vis other professionals and relative to social work outside the UK. While there are historical reasons for the development of courses at post-graduate level in the old university sector, this had implications for an occupational group which was largely untrained, with an elite group (in class and educational terms) in positions of relative power or status. This fed into both external perceptions of the profession (into the sixties and early seventies), and some of the internal schisms about status and elitism (in the later seventies and eighties), manifest in resistance to the ASW award and in BASW's open membership policy.

Currently, a two year course at postgraduate level may be appropriate and sufficient as a conversion course for those who already hold a first degree and enter social work later. But in this case, the adoption of the American term, MSW, would distinguish this qualification from other masters level courses being developed sometimes in conjunction with advanced professional awards. The persistence of half of the qualifying training at non graduate level is of concern at a time when 'qualification inflation' is widespread in other areas, and when there are problems of unemployment for well qualified graduates. It also seems an anomaly, given the likelihood that social work students enter university at a later stage and have relevant work or other experience.

On the other hand, in the face of student poverty, some social work educators regard a two year non-graduate route as part of a commitment to open access, and such routes areas favoured by employers if secondments are available to increase the numbers of qualified staff (Wallis Jones and Lyons,1996). However, in the changed circumstances of the late nineties, further consideration of this position is necessary and it may be that increased use of APEL and exemptions could accommodate two-year (or part-time) routes through three year degree awarding programmes.

There are indications in the data that social work educators are reaching this conclusion and implementing change on an ad hoc basis. It is presumed that this is with the tacit approval of the field since rules about partnership in course design and delivery still apply, and there is no evidence of increased demands on agencies (for example through a third placement). There is no guarantee that graduate qualification in itself ensures status of the occupation or freedom from government intervention, as an example from another British field, teaching, illustrates (Becher, 1994), but it would bring the occupation into line with, at least teachers and nurses, and with counterparts in many other countries.

The question then remains about the nature, level and status of post-qualifying awards which CCETSW 'pitched' at degree level and expected to include both approved social worker and practice teacher courses. This may have recognised the reality of the likely level of qualifying awards held by potential candidates for such courses, or a too ready acceptance of the government veto on three year training, but it seems as if this was not an appropriate level of qualification for people who were expected to have at least two years experience, who were intending to take on more specialist roles, and who, in any case, may have gained their initial qualification at degree or post-graduate level.

This research suggests that the post-qualifying awards should be seen as essentially concerned with consolidation, including induction to the workplace, rather than extension into specialist roles in the mental health and practice teaching or other roles, such as management. Professional awards in these areas could reasonably be part of post-graduate courses, bearing diplomas unless undertaken in the context of more theoretical studies and research based dissertations, meriting masters level awards.

The foregoing discussion presumes the relating of professional awards to academic levels, about which there has been much discussion between representatives of agencies and academe and with

CCETSW, in the operationalisation of the requirements of Paper 31. Recognising that qualifying training is but a beginning in terms of professional development (and the less education students have at that stage the more they might need later), it seems consistent with wider societal and professional trends (and likely personal aspirations), to include the possibility of obtaining academic as well as professional credits in a new system of continuing education. There is evidence for some support from educators for this development. The design of the requirements also reflect a move to encourage improved availability, standards and recognition of agency in-service training programmes through the inclusion of universities minimally in the assessment and validation of such programmes, but also sometimes in more overt joint planning and delivery.

The imposition (and acceptance) of the current continuum of training can also be seen more cynically alongside CCETSW's role in the Care Sector Consortium of establishing pre-qualifying training at NVQ Levels 1-4, and the concern, not least among educators, that NVQ training will be extended to Level 5. This would then incorporate the qualifying stage of social work education (as proposed for the Probation Service), leaving higher education with only the top or elite end of professional training. While there has been some development of the new awards as college based programmes, there have also been protests from well established academic courses (which had CCETSW recognition under former post-qualifying arrangements) that money previously available to them has now been allocated to regional consortia to meet a wider range of demands.

Given the current uncertainties about student funding, including for postgraduate level and part-time awards, the implications of these developments for student numbers and resourcing of the area are considerable. This may explain both involvement in post-qualifying activities by social work educators, (as an attempt to retain some share in resource allocation) and also diversification into other forms of academic work, not dependant on CCETSW for approval.

The relatively slow progress in the early nineties in getting regional systems 'up and running' and little output, as yet, of people holding post qualifying or advanced awards under the new system, probably says more about the cumbersome nature of the system, the new learning needed by both educators and trainers to agree levels and standards, and the sheer weight of other demands on people taking on this additional work, than about resistance to the idea of continuing professional development, but further research could usefully explore attitudes and developments in this, from agency, college and consumer perspectives.

Relative to social work elsewhere, the establishment of a continuum of training was an ambitious move on the part of CCETSW, and although most countries have social work education more securely located in the university sector and minimally at degree level, there is less evidence of nationally agreed frameworks within which continuing professional development can take place. Similarly, the extent of collaboration required between the field and institutions in programmes for post-qualifying education in British social work, might be viewed as appropriate by some advocates of more 'integrated' forms of professional education (Curry et al, 1993), although arrangements seem more elaborate than in some other professional fields.

The possible 'up-grading' of qualifying awards to degree or post-graduate level, and extension of advanced courses, also has implications for the profile of social work educators. While professional qualifications and experience have previously been valued in the recruitment and promotion of social work educators, this research suggests there is also a need for more emphasis on academic credentials and leadership in research and theory development, albeit rooted in the concerns of practice.

The Regulation Of Social Work And Social Work Education

It is evident from both literature and data sources that some of the 'blame' for the current state of social work education is laid at the door of its regulatory body, CCETSW. This has partly been attributed to its status as a QUANGO, heavily subject to government and employer interests, as opposed to having defence and promotion of the profession and users as its core purpose. It was also noted that social work as a whole does not have a powerful voice in the form of a strong professional association, nor does it share the apparent advantages of other professions which operate a degree of self-regulation in use of titles and standards of professional practice and behaviour, through professional Councils.

While employers could reasonably be assumed to be primarily concerned about and responsible for practice standards, the growth in BASW's Advice and Representation Service over the past decade, in defence of members in dispute with employing agencies, and the role of other professional bodies in guarding members rights, relative to employers, suggests that there is scope for establishment of a General Council for Social Services or Social Work, as supported by some of the interviewees and recent literature (Parker,1991; Brand 1997).

Lack of a protected title was seen as one of the factors putting British social work out of step with most European Union neighbours at the time of the 1989 Directive on Professional Training (Barr 1990), and the UK has made less progress on this front than the other few countries for whom this was also an issue. However, a protected title is not in itself a sufficient guarantee of good practice and professional conduct (Henkel, 1994). Other regulatory bodies also specify requirements about professional-updating and development, as well as taking disciplinary action against members whose conduct falls short of public and professional expectations.

It can be noted in passing that other occupational groups (for example, psychologists and occupational therapists), less concerned with sheer survival, have recently been proactive and successful in furthering this aspect of the professional project. The recent election of a new government has encouraged renewed activity in pursuance of this objective by social work, and the most recent debates about a General Social Services Council suggest that consumers should also have some representation on such a Council, reflecting perhaps the ethos of 'partnership' evident in various other aspects of social work.

The proposal for funding such a body through registration fees would be in line with practice in other professions, and it can also be seen to be consistent with an approach to education and training, and even employment itself, which assumes that those who enjoy the benefits should incur an increasing proportion of the costs. However, it raises the possibility of exclusion of some people from educational and employment opportunities on the grounds that they cannot meet such costs, already observable in some fields (for example at the professional as opposed to the academic stage of legal training). It relates to the wider debate about funding of higher education and payment of student fees and grants.

This is a further aspect of political and public decisions about the distribution of resources in society and the relative balance to be accorded to individual 'good' relative to public interest. In a society where individual enterprise is rewarded and the public service ethic has been seriously devalued, it is hardly surprising that there was no encouragement for a regulatory body for social work, or that if one were formed, it could cut across recent success in opening up professional training and employment opportunities to a wider social group than many other occupations. It illustrates another area in which the aspirations of some of the occupational group seems to be at variance with values which reject elitism and exclusivity. It threatens to polarise idealists and realists and destabilise the enterprise from within.

The inability of the occupation to establish a credible 'collective image' (Becher, 1994) is in evidence in relation to a General Council, as in other areas, although considerable negotiation has virtually established an agreed position between the many interest groups. Failure to achieve it to date apparently reflects lack of political rather than professional will (personal communication). The evidence from this research suggests that social work educators are not unanimous about the advisability and appropriate form of a regulatory body, and are potentially open to dual forms of regulation if new requirements are developed in relation to academic practice.

Theory And Practice

A frequent criticism of social work education and a tension around recent changes in DipSW alluded to earlier, has been the lack of relevance between what students learn on qualifying courses and what they are expected to know in practice. This is not a criticism restricted to UK social work education, nor to this form of professional education. It is suggested that this 'lack of fit' (as more recently termed, for instance in the TQA exercise) has various facets. These include the level of job-related specificity expected of college-based elements in the programme; the pedagogical approaches and assessment methods used to enable students to learn for practice; and the contribution of the practice placement element itself.

Regarding the first of these, data from the research suggested that curricula are currently overcrowded and heavily influenced by the expectations of CCETSW and employers in the statutory sector. However, it was also suggested that there are (still) large gaps in relation to particular areas of knowledge or skills based learning, for example in relation to poverty, or ill-health and disability, or child observation, or research. It also seems evident that merely extending the length of courses by a year may not create enough space to cover the ever increasing range of 'things' that social workers are expected to know about.

It is also clear that 'training' people for specific roles, for instance to undertake child care work in a statutory agency, may result in people being qualified to do jobs which have changed, even while they have been training, and of not equipping people to do 'new' jobs or similar work in different circumstances. It seems necessary, therefore, to think in terms of greater generality in relation to some of the curriculum content, but with more emphasis on some of the process aspects (learning to learn, researching resources) and greater clarity about the particulars to be learnt in the placement context.

It can be argued that social work education should be providing students with broadly based social science knowledge, perhaps in a more integrated 'psycho-social' framework rather than as discrete subjects; more focused (but also comparatively informed) knowledge about social work principles, methods and organisation; and assisting in the development of professional skills and values (for example through use of experiential learning workshops and practicums); with the aim of producing people who are capable of critical analysis, applying problem solving and other skills, and reflecting on their actions and developmental needs (Kennedy, 1987).

An example of the close relationship between the professional field and the educational curriculum was noted in law teaching in the DipSW syllabus, and the implications for the 'knowledge needs' of social work students if professional education is no longer required for work in particular sectors, such as Probation. It also seems likely that increased numbers of qualifying students will enter practice in the voluntary or private sectors, and that the past experience in professional practice of educators will have less relevance to the new conditions.

Regarding social work principles and practice, the extent to which programmes should continue adherence to the casework paradigm (even if reframed as care management) can be questioned. In the USA, Midgley (1995) has identified the need for a social development approach which he describes as social interventions that are compatible with economic development objectives. He sees this approach as appropriate in a wide range of societies, including those where consensus about the welfare state and role of social workers has broken down (or not been achieved). It is also an approach requiring intervention at the social planning and policy process level, reasserting the need for social workers to engage at macro as well as micro and mezzo levels. Both community and social development models might be regarded in the British context as simply 'new fashions' or out of step with current assumptions about scope and focus of social work intervention. But they might also offer useful counterpoints to traditional and individualised methods, at a point where social work roles are in question, and where 'persistent poverty in the midst of economic affluence' (Midgley, 1995:3) should be reinstated as a central concern of the occupation.

American literature is a rich source of research and theory about methodology and fields of practice but there have been strong concerns almost universally to 'indigenise' social work education, and reduce the reliance on externally produced material. Certainly, British social work education does not need to 'import' concepts or teaching material, but the data suggested a

motivation among some educators to engage with international networks and develop comparative perspectives and this may assist a more academic and critical appraisal of UK developments.

Curriculum content is also closely related to pedagogical considerations and resourcing issues. There was little evidence in this research of radical change in pedagogical methods, for example, adoption, other than in a limited way, of enquiry action learning. However, the data suggested that social work educators were concerned to ensure some congruence between the medium and the message and the concept of andragogy has had some influence on the style and delivery of the curriculum, however constructed. The idea that 'modelling' of behaviours and relationships might be important, given the nature of the work for which students are being prepared, has quite widespread support, but may be at variance with reduced resourcing and other priorities within the subject area.

Traditional ideas about the tutorial role, still evident in some of the data, are being challenged both on pedagogic and pragmatic grounds. It is suggested that social work educators' adherence to tutorial work may have reflected both a need to retain a form of practice akin to social work, and have prevented development of more secure academic roles: it seems increasingly out of step with the new realities of the field and higher education.

Assumptions underpinning DipSW requirements were that (together with changes to the college curriculum) the increased expectations for training of practice teachers; partnership arrangements; more placement documentation, including agreement about learning objectives (contracts); and the use of competencies to assess that what is learned can be demonstrated in practice; would result in more and better placements and thus, improved standards of qualifying students. The current research did not set out to test these assumptions.

However, some of the data and literature discussed, suggest that, while placements are recognised as playing an important role in professional training, they constitute a very variable element in the student experience and an expensive, even 'wasteful', element in the educational process. One respondent suggested that a culture shift was necessary within the occupation to a situation where students on placement are seen as the norm in agencies, and part of a healthy culture of professional development and organisational learning rather than being exploited, envied or ignored, or simply refused a placement.

While this may represent a utopian view of the future relative to an extremely problematised view of the present, it indicates that the anti-intellectualism of the profession, coupled with the pressures and constraints on agencies, combine to produce a situation where the viability of existing assumptions and arrangements must be questioned. Questions might relate to the number, length and expectations of placements; their purpose; and the role of practice teachers relative to college-based social work educators. For instance, if practice teachers are now better trained, are the requirements about placement visits by college 'tutors' still appropriate or might there be other ways of arranging liaison between college and the field which would be more efficient and as effective?

While the norms surrounding UK training in relation to placements are sometimes respected by colleagues abroad, current expectations about the amount of time spent in placement, the specialist qualifications of practice teachers and the amount and form of assessment are unusual outside the UK. In a useful 'comparative overview' Rogers (1996:21) confirms concerns about the status and resourcing of the practice component 'on both sides of the Atlantic' and also relates these to 'the deeper debate about professional education versus technical training' (p27) apparent beyond the UK. However, it seems likely that the need for exposure to real world problems will continue to be seen as an essential element in professional education for social work.

Biography, Values And Power

One of the defining features of social work and of its education, has been the extent to which it has been seen as a female occupation. Apart from traditional assumptions about the extension of domestic care roles, originally to voluntary work in the community or particular institutions, and then to paid work in a number of organisational settings, this has also informed perceptions about the intellectual and value bases of the occupation. Even with the long-standing involvement of men in most areas of social work, a stereotype persists that women, in some forms of social work, are concerned with care, and men, in others, with control, although the establishment of unified social services departments fundamentally challenged this.

The Seebohm Report signalled a shift in expectations about the management of the enterprise, and current evidence demonstrates the relative predominance of men in senior positions, in both agencies and educational programmes. The fact that gender differences are compounded by class and race differences, (social work education having been relatively more open to non-standard entrants than most other forms of professional training), has added to the extent to which social

workers may see themselves - or be seen as - 'different' and excluded from the networks of power open to other professional groups.

Questioning the extent to which gender, race and class of social work educators themselves might impact on the nature and status of the subject area was not fundamental to this research and therefore not a particular feature of its design or data collection. It is therefore not possible to say how far the biographical characteristics of social work educators replicate those of the broader professional field (Lyons et al, 1995) - or might be similar to other academics. But there seems to be a greater likelihood of men achieving senior positions in education (as in practice), and of there being a relationship between perceptions of the subject and its female image.

It is partly an adherence to anti-discriminatory values which has led the occupation to be viewed as 'out of tune' with public attitudes, and to recent policy developments affecting its funding and legitimacy. As has been noted, status (and therefore power) is partly related to public trust (Becher, 1994:166). Quite apart from a more general diminution in public confidence in professionals, it is clear that British social work has suffered from negative public perceptions with a knock-on effect to social work education. It can be argued that the very subject matter of social work will always involve uncomfortable associations and have the potential for public criticism and blame. The centrality of 'ideology' identified by one interviewee as a strength may also constitute a significant weakness if it is at variance with the dominant social values, and even be discounted by potential allies if it is not supported by an accepted knowledge base.

The wider the gap between social work aspirations of a political rather than a technical nature and the governmental concerns of the day, then the greater the likelihood of conflict. It is thus necessary for governments to de-emphasise the professional nature of the role; to increase the scope and need for application of technical skills - with associated expectations of educational providers - or to establish alternative training frameworks; and to differentiate and isolate workers who might otherwise see themselves as sharing similar concerns.

The possibility that social workers' (and educators') concerns might include articulating unpopular or minority views and needs; and /or enabling the have-nots to get greater access to resources (including power and knowledge), makes the occupation 'subversive' by definition, and liable to be silenced or ignored if concerns do not match the agendas of those in power (Lukes, 1974). It might also be an unwelcome player on the wider professional or disciplinary stage. Such perceptions may feed into the very behaviour for which social work can be condemned - more

strident and confrontational approaches, or more isolationist and defensive ways of operating - both evidenced in criticisms of social work education.

But social workers are not the only people concerned about equity, or justice, or challenging male or white domination; and, as suggested earlier, building alliances is possible and necessary. Developing a healthy relationship with other disciplines and occupations, as well as with consumers and institutional and political systems, while maintaining commitment to the value base, is surely one of the most significant challenges facing British social work and social work education approaching the millennium.

Questions remain about the association between the characteristics of the workforce, the value base, and the power position of both the occupation and its associated subject, including whether, as Becher (1989) contends in other disciplines, social work lecturers were themselves educated at the leading institutions in the subject area. It seems possible that recruitment to social work education posts has been less influenced by academic status (as reflected in HEI departmental origins), relative to other considerations, including professional experience. This, and the lack of apprenticeship into the discipline, conventionally provided through PhDs at an early stage in academic careers, could be further factors contributing to limited perceptions of social work educators as academics, and the vulnerable status of the subject area in HEIs.

Summary And Conclusions

This chapter has revisited some of the debates and concerns of social work as an occupational field, and argued that, in many important respects, the social work subject mirrors some of the insecurities and conflicts of the wider profession. Specific parallels were drawn between the difficulties of 'defining' the purpose, core tasks and appropriate organisational forms of social work and the implications of this for an educational process which attempts to prepare students for roles which are too job-specific.

Further parallels were drawn between the imprecise boundaries in the field and the subject area, and the implications for the educational task at qualifying and post-qualifying levels. Issues about the status of social work were related back to issues about levels and length of qualifying training, as well as to broader issues of public perception and trust. Criticisms about the relevance of social work education programmes to preparation for the field, and insecurities about the status of both the occupation and the subject area seem to have many causes and extend beyond Britain.

The lack of three year training is viewed as a serious problem for UK social work, although the implementation of the continuum of training might be viewed as an ambitious and probably unique initiative. However, this research suggests there are anomalies, in terms of the 'pitching' of some professional awards, relative to the academic level at which they should be located. The general principle of a close association between academic and professional awards, and educators and employers is accepted, but the current organisational arrangements are resource intensive, and there is insufficient evidence yet to say whether the new system can succeed. Some of the literature about post-qualifying awards suggests that the costs were too great for all but a very small minority of people to benefit, and that institutions and employers might be increasingly unwilling or unable to bear the costs.

This relates in a way to issues about regulation of social work and the expectations this may carry, not just about registration, but also about continuing professional development. The suggestion that CCETSW may have a part to play in this process was floated but there may be doubts about the capacity and credibility of the organisation to take on this role, including the extent to which it can provide a more independent voice for the profession. It is appropriate that social work and education should be subject to external regulation by governments or professional bodies, but it seems as if the particular role which CCETSW currently plays in Britain is exceptional, as is the felt lack of autonomy among practitioners and educators.

The other areas considered relate to the knowledge, skills and values of social work. Although some of these are not particular to social work, the contexts and purpose of application are; and the aim of social work education should be to provide more generalist and principled *education* as well as some skills training, including attention to process. Thus, the goal of social work education should be to equip students for more varied employment, suited to both the concept of 'portfolio careers' (increasingly in evidence in social work as well as other areas of work), and to ideas about continuing professional development and life-long learning.

It was also suggested that placements might play an important part in the educational process as a way of 'grounding' theoretical and generalist principles, and enabling assessment of 'know-how' as well as 'know that'. However, again the practical question of resourcing suggested that this is an unresolved issue for social work educators and employers, which needs radical review in the light of current realities, and possible alternative models.

Finally, the place of values and biography were considered. These also play a part in the perceived weakness of social work as an occupation and a subject area. It seems likely that the value base, while not exclusive to social workers, constitutes a more distinct component of the rationale for the occupation and for its particular content and approaches. It is also clear that this has been a conflictual area, periodically, and has played a part recently in the increasing efforts by government to control the occupation and curtail its educational goals. It seems likely that there will be constant tension around this area, possibly to a greater extent than is evident in other occupations, (except perhaps teaching).

A further question was raised about the extent to which the biography of individuals who make up the workforce of both the field and the subject area, also contributes to an (over) identification with people who experience disadvantage and discrimination, and feeds into a lack of real or perceived power. In such circumstances it is predictable that some attempts will be made to raise the academic status of the subject, and to engage in other strategies to advance the professional project. However, social work's own capacity for internal dissent has been evidenced in the past and can be as damaging to attempts to improve its position as the likelihood of external criticism.

The implication of this for social work education is that the education and training process needs to be clearly aimed at producing social workers who are confident about their professional role and identity; whose values are well rooted in a sound knowledge base and can be rationally articulated; and who have the skills to access and win allies in networks and systems which are invariably bigger and more powerful than the social work enterprise.

Evidence from this research suggested a continuing strong commitment to the professional field by social work educators, but an exhaustion with imposed change, disillusionment with the direction of change from CCETSW, and an increasing recognition of the role which social work education itself could and should be playing in the wider field of professional and academic research and development. The extent to which a more proactive response to recent events accords with developments in other parts of professional education, or the higher education system is considered in the concluding chapters.

CHAPTER 14:

THE CULTURE(S) OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

Introduction

Recent literature presumes a generic field of professional education within which subjects share more similarities than differences, or that at least there are grounds for ‘association’ and learning from each other (Bines and Watson, 1992; Becher, 1994; Eraut, 1994). This chapter revisits some of the themes identified from the literature to consider whether some of the issues and characteristics of social work education are common to the wider field of professional education.

Writers have identified disciplines as having discrete cultures, related to the interplay of epistemology and the biographies and actions of the academics involved in the discipline (Toulmin, 1972; Becher, 1989). It is suggested here that professional education is culturally different from academic disciplines, and displays a range of cultures and dimensions on which particular forms of professional education differ from each other. Further, to date, the culture (organisation and values) of HEIs has favoured disciplinary based knowledge over professional education (Hixon Cavanagh, 1993), although this may be changing (Barnett, 1994).

There are variations in the power and status of different professions, and these are reflected in their associated educational enterprises. There are also different assumptions about which occupational groups constitute ‘professions’, and different histories, in their association with higher education (Freidson, 1986). This chapter does not chart the development and forms of professional educational programmes but indicates ways in which social work education is like or unlike the generic enterprise. In so doing, it clarifies further why social work education might be perceived as marginal and ‘at risk’ in higher education.

After an initial mention of possible bases for identifying models of professional education, other dimensions on which subjects could be rated, are suggested. The research findings about social work are then considered within these broad headings, and compared with other forms of professional education, and with some of the generic concerns about the field identified in Part 1. The chapter also considers whether other ways of organising professional education would seem to offer possibilities for future development of the social work discipline.

Models Of Professional Education

Bines (1992) suggested a typology of models of professional education, related to the history of professions (prefigured in Matarazzo, 1977). She identified a progression from an apprenticeship model through a technocratic model to the current position where more sophisticated notions of the relationship between theory and practice are being developed. She relates this to the shifting locus of control from the occupational group to the academy and now to the development of a partnership between the professions and higher education. This 'progression' model is recognisable in the development of social work education although there has always been a relationship between the institution and the field and it is the nature of this relationship, the relative power balance, which has periodically been contentious.

An alternative formulation was presented by Jones and Joss (1995) who considered the likely outcome of particular types of training, in the characteristic style of the resulting professionals. They identified professionals who would be practical, technical, managerial or reflective, with concomitant variations in their relationships with clients. They also included 'operatives', whom they described as deprofessionalised workers, 'subject to ever more prescriptive rules....managerial imposition....increasingly hierarchical structures'(p24). This shows some similarities with an 'evolutionary stages' approach, in which, proceeding from the managerial stage, professions may arrive at either the 'operative' or the 'reflective practitioner' stage.

Historical development, the current locus of control, and the likely outcomes of the education and training process are important dimensions of any models developed, but there are other dimensions on which professional education could be rated and cultures compared. These include where professional education is located and how it is organised (level, length, modes); the nature of its knowledge base, and relationship with research and practice; the status and resources of the occupation and its power (including of the accrediting body); and the biographies and career patterns of its exponents. How 'open' or 'closed' the occupation is (in terms of entry), as well as how susceptible it is to influence, by HEIs, consumers or government, might constitute sub-themes in such a schema.

The Organisation Of Professional Education

Characteristics of social work education identified in Chapter 7, throw into sharp relief some of the contrasting assumptions and organisational arrangements which underpin other forms of

professional education. Thus, there is a general assumption that professional education should take place at higher education level, which partly informs social work educators' concerns to maintain a place in the academy and debates about the level at which qualifying training is offered. However, other professional fields offer examples of education and training taking place (in part or substantially) outside HEIs, (medicine, teaching) and/or following an academic degree (law, psychology).

Developing a social work programme where education and training take place in an agency akin to a teaching hospital, has occasionally been advocated (Donnison, 1979). This might have been a feasible option in the 1970s when local authority Social Service Departments seemed to aspire to the 'universal coverage on the basis of need' model, and when some Departments or other agencies might have been identified as offering the scale and quality of training opportunities which would merit designation and organisation as 'teaching agencies'. Despite the fragmenting and uncertain nature of current social work, this is still a possibility, but in the context of the development of work-based training and vocational qualifications, which social work educators would see as a detrimental step and one without parallel in other countries.

Locating responsibility outside normal HEI structures suggests the power of a 'strong' profession, for example medicine, to determine content, boundaries and values of the subject. This is unlikely to be so in the case of 'weak' professions, such as teaching, where the state seeks to define the roles, skills and goals of the occupational group, for instance through imposition of a national curriculum (Graham, 1996). It is this latter model to which social work would conform if removed from higher education, and it is this loss of an independent and critical role, encouraged by a position in higher education, which clearly concerned some of the respondents in this research.

Locating education and training in a different kind of institution/agency, does not necessarily address some of the important issues related to the teaching, learning and assessment of professional knowledge, skills and values, although it may seem an attractive option in resolving problems of ready access to practical experience, (or, from the point of view of hospitals or agencies, in providing a low cost labour supply while people are learning). Issues about practice learning, which are a universal feature of professional education but variously conceived, are further discussed below.

An alternative model is offered by both law and psychology, where professional training follows an academic undergraduate course, usually without a practice component (although some psychology degrees have work experience periods built into them). Professional qualifications may then be linked to higher academic awards, or holders of approved higher degrees may be eligible for registration by professional bodies. In these cases, far greater numbers of students undertake the first degree than can proceed to professional awards: training places for the latter are rationed and only available on the basis of a first degree and the ability to be self-funding (law) or through employment which gives eligibility for training places and awards (for example, in clinical, educational or occupational psychology).

Decisions about 'suitability' are thus postponed and the profession exercises control over entry at a later stage than is currently the case with social work (or teaching or nursing). However, it might be noted in passing that, in the case of social work, the selection of mature students, taking into account prior experience, may be seen as an alternative approach to using proven academic ability as the main criterion for selection. This supports notions of 'open access' by a wide range of students but also raises concerns about academic standards in a subject already seen as 'weak' for a number of other reasons.

The post-graduate model of training was rejected by social work, initially in the 1960s when the tide was beginning to turn against experts in society and elitism in higher education, more consciously in the 1970s, under CCETSW's influence, and specifically since 1990 with CCETSW's promotion of the continuum of training and recent capping of bursaries for postgraduate students. It is possible to envisage a scenario now, where institutions choose to promote post-graduate awards, at the expense of maintaining non-graduate or undergraduate programmes, other than, for example, through more general degrees in social welfare. But the issues of funding and recognition by CCETSW, or a similar body, would need resolution.

Development of part-time routes, linked to relevant employment (the psychology model), might be in step with wider developments in higher education policies and employment patterns. It might also prevent closure of the occupation on the basis of income, evident in some of the current arrangements pertaining to legal education. There is no indication from the data gathered that there is widespread support for such a move, although it may be implicit in some of the developments currently taking place.

A further characteristic identified by the data, which differentiates social work education from other forms of professional education is its variable boundaries and size, and the possibility of its insignificance amounting to virtual invisibility in some HEIs. Other occupational groups have a clearer public identity which, in turn, is usually reflected in stronger institutional profiles, although it seems likely that a similar mapping exercise of, for instance, occupational therapy, might also reveal variations in organisational location and alliances. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that 'professional schools' automatically constitute departments, which might be related more generally to factors such as the size of a subject area and its (academic) status, with concomitant implications for resourcing and power within institutions.

Knowledge, Research And Practice

Issues about the knowledge base of social work were identified from the data and presented in relation to its curricula content, pedagogy, research and practice - which may have parallels in other forms of professional education. General issues about the nature of knowledge; its presentation in generic or specialist forms; the relative weight given to theory, skills and values (ethics); and the place of practice learning are of concern to all forms of professional education (Jones and Joss, 1995). Additionally, 'new' knowledge within the particular discipline, or related subjects, and changing requirements in the professional field, suggest that delivery of most forms of professional education requires a dynamic concern with curriculum design and content, as well as particular approaches to teaching, learning and assessment strategies.

There are substantial differences between the nature of knowledge utilised by different professions and the corresponding research paradigms. Application of Becher's (1989) theoretical framework does not explain the status differences (in academic or professional terms) between medicine and engineering (both falling within the 'hard, applied' knowledge quadrant), or between law and social work (both categorised as social professions within the 'soft, applied' knowledge quadrant), and other explanations of these differences will be offered later. The wish to make professional subjects more academically credible through research and theory development (Brown and Gelertner, 1989; Hartman, 1989) has widespread relevance, and the tensions noted by social work educators, around engaging in creation as well as transmission of knowledge, are not unique.

Walker (1992) divided professional knowledge into content (theoretical core); process; and practice knowledge: this has relevance to subjects other than social work, including the attention

to 'process'. While interpersonal and group dynamics are particular features of social work curricula, other professional groups also require skills in establishing relationships and communicating. Thus, some of the differences in curricula are in the emphasis or priority given to some aspects of learning, as well as more substantive differences related to core knowledge and purpose. Similarly, the concerns about the integration of tacit knowledge with college and practice based learning and the development of professional identity, also need to be addressed in the curricula and pedagogy of other forms of professional education.

In a different formulation, the shift from knowledge as process to knowledge as product (Scott, 1984), typified in the move to outcome-based evaluation and the use of competencies to assess learning in practice, has not been unique to social work, nor limited to the generic field of professional education. There are wider concerns to ensure that elements such as professional judgement or academic critique are enabled and assessed within the new frameworks of 'knowledge organisation' (including modularisation) and assessment of learning (Barnett, 1994).

Becher (1989) suggested that personal values are likely to impact on 'the social professions' (widely defined to include teaching and nursing) more than other disciplines, and this research suggests that 'values' have assumed a particular prominence in social work education. It was also suggested that the nature of social work places unusual demands on students (and therefore tutors) in terms of 'integrating' their individual experiences and attitudes with their learning and practice. However, even this characteristic - linking the personal and the professional - may be seen as a question of degree rather than absolute difference, relative to some other occupational groups, though, arguably personal experience and values have less direct bearing on the education and future practice of, for instance, engineers, relative to social workers.

It is likely that most professional educators will be involved in the selection and utilisation (presentation) of knowledge and ideas from other disciplines in ways which are relevant to their particular field of practice. This entails the integrating or synthesising of knowledge, and as demonstrated in the data, there are variations, even within social work education, in the extent to which professional educators undertake this task themselves or 'specify' the contributions to be made, perhaps in discrete form, from other disciplines.

Medicine is an example of a subject which draws heavily on the knowledge fields of other disciplines - anatomy, pharmacology - or where there are overlaps, and growth of new subject areas. This suggests that it is not the lack of an exclusive knowledge base that determines the

academic status of a subject, although the extent to which the knowledge is perceived as having a theoretical or conceptual basis, as opposed to deriving from practical or experiential learning, assumes importance. However, attempts by professional education to develop an interdisciplinary approach to knowledge development may be at odds with the wider culture of higher education (Barnett, 1990; Hixon Cavanagh, 1993).

It is hardly surprising therefore that professional educators have called for a reconsideration of what constitutes knowledge and valid research, and of how different forms of knowledge are organised and ranked (Rice and Richlin, 1993). The extent to which professional subjects, are 'parasitic' on more theoretical disciplines or *vice versa* is debatable, and it is more helpful to think in terms of symbiotic relationships and interdependence. However, boundary disputes occur and issues of ownership and control of knowledge arise within academe, as well as between the subject and its field. Some professional educators, not least social work educators, have found themselves weakly placed to challenge the hierarchical basis on which knowledge and disciplines are organised in HEIs, but significant changes now taking place in the scale and nature of higher education may alter some traditional assumptions and relationships.

Another dimension on which social work education might be compared with the broader field of professional education concerns research in its various facets. There are considerable variations in the extent to which professional educators engage in research; the research profile of particular subjects; the availability and sources of funding for research; the research paradigms used and the extent to which they are taught to students; the nature and degree of collaboration within and outside disciplines; and the existence or encouragement of 'practitioner research'.

A scrutiny of the subject rankings from the last RAE (THES, 20.12.96) did not reveal a consistent picture with regard to the performance of professional subjects as opposed to academic disciplines, but it can be noted that four of the subjects in the bottom third are ones identified as 'female oriented' (Becher, 1989). One explanation for the place of nursing at the bottom of the league table might be afforded by its recent arrival in higher education, and previous lack of a research tradition. However, if length of time in higher education were a main consideration, social work might have been expected to perform better, (although a substantial part of social work education now in the new university sector, dates from the seventies, rather than early this century).

It would seem, therefore, that there is no obvious relationship between research performance and classification of a subject as preparing students for professional practice, although there is some

relationship between public perceptions of professional status and research performance. Factors such as the type of institution in which a subject is located; the knowledge type (according to Becher's (1989) classification); the 'age' of a discipline; and the level and sources of funding available may all be more relevant to research performance than whether a subject constitutes a form of professional education or not. Additionally, it may be that public and professional perceptions of the *need* for research, and/or the aspirations and actual or assumed capability of staff in a subject area (with the possibility of gender bias in relation to staffing) also have more of a bearing overall than a distinction between academic disciplines and professional subjects which this chapter presupposes.

Finally, with regard to pedagogy, it is clear that some of the recent initiatives and concerns of social work educators have been paralleled or prefigured in other forms of professional education. The notion of problem based learning (from which enquiry action learning is derived) originated in medical education in Canada; Schon's ideas about reflective practice took root in the fields of management and education and were developed in relation to architecture and music; much of the research and literature about how students learn originates from the field of teacher education or educational psychology; and expectations of training for practitioners who would supervise students were realised in the nursing field well in advance of social work.

This development of pedagogical ideas and practices in relation to professional education *outside* the subject area may partly explain the slow pace of their adoption within social work education, given a preoccupation with keeping up with developments in the external field and commonly held assumption that 'social work is different' and must 'find its own solutions'. But in the context of rapid change in both social services and higher education; and of reductions in resourcing universally, social work educators have begun to apply 'new' ideas about teaching, learning and assessment more systematically.

It could be argued that some developments have been driven by external forces - CCETSW requirements and national reviews of teaching and research quality - but subjects in the area of professional education might benefit from recognition of shared concerns and opportunities for mutual learning (Bines and Watson, 1992). It also suggests, that while it is important for social work educators to share research and ideas within the social work (education) literature, it would also be appropriate to utilise, and publish in, more generic journals, that is, to develop the idea of interdisciplinarity or interprofessional work in their own (educational) practice.

Status, Power, Regulation And Resources

Location of professional education within higher education (and particularly at non- or undergraduate level) emphasises the extent to which a subject area may consider itself 'on the borders' between HEIs and professional systems, and under pressure to conform to different norms and expectations. In this respect, social work education is apparently no different from other forms of professional education (Hartman, 1989). Thus, disputes between the academy and professional bodies have arisen in relation to relevance of curricula and assessment standards, in a range of professions, in the UK and elsewhere (Hixon Cavanagh, 1993; Vang, 1994).

The 'pre-existing' status differentials between professional groups are mirrored in terms of both their regulation and the resources available to them to protect or promote their interests. Burrage (1994) suggested that the interest groups with a legitimate concern about the form, content and standards of professional education are the individual professions, the employers, the government and the consumers. 'The profession' is usually represented through an accrediting body, and the power and credibility of such organisations vary. Recent governments have been particularly concerned about occupations seen as fulfilling an activity required and sanctioned by the state, (particularly if also provided within state funded organisations), although they have had less interest in regulating occupations where public interest is apparently served by the market. (Most occupations have developed, or had imposed, regulatory bodies and complaints mechanisms which can ensure redress in the event of malpractice).

A reason for government interest in education for professions which assist in the regulation of society, relates to the responsibility carried by educators for decisions about how and with whom power, in the form of knowledge, is shared (Bernstein, 1971). Teachers have an important role in attempts at culture change within a society (apart from the more usual reasons given of concern with standards), and social work similarly can be seen to operate a particular social control role, making both vulnerable to changes, steered by their own accrediting bodies.

Regarding the mediation of interests, it has been suggested that social work education has not been well served by its accrediting body, where questions have arisen as to CCETSW's capacity to represent an independent professional voice. The lack of development of a strong professional association also seems symptomatic of lack of conviction about core identity and professional aspirations, as well as being open to media attack and government direction. While all professions have 'suffered' from a decline in public respect, it is notable that teaching and social

work (both without regulatory bodies) have been particularly subject to public criticism, with consequent government attention to the education and training stage (Henkel, 1994; Graham, 1996).

Apart from status differences between professional groups, there are also status and power differentials within them, reflected in part in the relationships between professional educators and the field. The development of collaborative work through 'partnerships' in social work education is evident in other forms of professional education, although the extent to which they operate on a formal basis varies from the substantial contracts which exist between HEIs and Health Trusts (for nurse training) and the looser associations (old boy networks) which operate in professions which are more widely dispersed in the private sector.

Policy change in higher education, promoting both links with industry and franchising of courses, has led to more systematic approaches by HEIs to partnerships through contractual agreements (other than those which were previously devised in relation to research projects). Thus, social work obligations in this field are not unique, although data presented suggest that the nature of the requirements, and of the agencies to which educators relate, have resulted in a form of 'power sharing' which has been found burdensome by some social work educators. Indeed, proposals in the original Paper 30 were not acceptable initially to some HEIs (another factor in the slower implementation of DipSW requirements in some places than others); and institutional recognition of the resource implications and legitimacy of work in relation to partnerships is still variable.

Similarly, the impact of arranging placements on professional educators varies according to the location and form of professional education. There are variations in the expectations of 'supervision' or 'mentoring' within work placements; of how work will be assessed; and of the role that the course, in the person of individual lecturers, will play in making and monitoring placement arrangements. Thus, in some subjects, such as law and medicine, placements are replaced by forms of 'internship' which are available to individuals who have successfully reached a certain point in their training or secured a place 'in chambers' or equivalent. The responsibility for gaining the relevant practical experience is related more to students' efforts than to assumptions of this responsibility by staff.

This is also true, to some extent, in subjects such as business studies or industrial design, where courses may require students to undertake placements (or paid work experience which then forms the basis of assessed academic work), and where the responsibility for securing them rests largely

with individuals rather than the course. However, a difference here is that such courses may not be validated by external professional bodies which *require* a placement, rather that such a provision is a marketing device for the course and for its students who then have the benefit of 'work experience' when seeking employment. Nevertheless, courses may feel under some responsibility to restructure or devise alternative forms of experience and assessment for students, if substantial numbers of students are unable to secure placements, as happened in some cases in the early nineties, due to contraction in business and industry.

Teacher and nurse education are more similar to social work, in that supervised and assessed placements are an essential component of professional courses and staff carry responsibilities for arranging them and meeting with student and supervisor/mentor/practice teacher, on site, during the period of practice-based learning. The resource implications, including training needs of mentors and others, were noted by Bines and Watson (1992). There are indications that the move of teacher education into schools has increased the difficulties for HEI based courses in securing practice placements. The availability of experienced staff within schools to structure learning opportunities and assess performance has also been affected by this and other changes in educational policy.

Thus, social work educators are not alone in the demands which this work places on them, and the interaction with the field in relation to students constitutes an additional aspect of an already diverse role. The individualised nature of this work also increases the labour- (and therefore resource-) intensive role of educators and contributes to perceptions of professional education as expensive, with concerns about how this should be funded. This particular aspect of the role extends beyond normal term times and break into what might otherwise be the 'quality time' which academics need to produce good teaching and research (Johnstone, 1996).

Questions have been raised about whether, if mentors/practice teachers are themselves trained, it is necessary for academic staff to be involved in this work, assuming that arranging placements might be an administrative task. Collins (1994) has argued the case for the lecturer's role in providing continuity in the student's learning, and in having a wider frame of reference regarding course expectations and student standards than the individual supervisor, and these factors would operate in fields other than social work. There is also a control issue here, since, if educators are responsible overall for the quality and outcomes of educational programmes, then some attempt must be made to monitor and engage with the off-site element of the programme. But this

seems a case where responsibilities are not matched by control over resources and where notions of 'power sharing' do not accord with accountability.

Biographies And Career Patterns

The likelihood that educators in professional subjects enter academic work at a later stage in their careers than disciplinary based counterparts was confirmed by this research in relation to social work. It also seems likely to be the case in teaching and nursing, and other forms of professional education, but there has been relatively little discussion in the literature about the implications of this for the individuals or subject areas concerned. It is apparent from the literature that there are also variations in the extent to which becoming a professional educator entails *leaving the field of practice*.

Clearly, medical education does not presuppose this 'split', although people assume the teaching role after they have gained experience and advancement in the professional field. The same would seem to be the case for law, although a number of 'professional' lawyers or solicitors, on appointment to academic posts, presumably share the similar dilemmas to social work educators. Should they retain or periodically renew some practice component in their careers or assume a conventional academic identity, developing research and active participation in the life of the institution. Architects involved in lecturing are apparently likely to maintain some element of practice; and engineers often develop consultancy links with the industrial /manufacturing sector in ways which both confront them with the 'real (and new) problems' of the engineering world and provide a source of income generation.

In the case of education for social work, teaching or nursing it is usually the case that those entering academic work relinquish work in professional practice (or management) If practice is maintained (in a minority of cases, on this research evidence), it may be in some specialist area and possibly constitute a form of private practice (for instance, counselling or therapy), under greater control of the individual practitioner. In current organisational arrangements, the nature of the work (in agencies, schools and hospitals) is likely to be reactive and prone to 'crises' which militate against continued part-time employment, other than in some specialist posts. Impressionistic evidence suggests that people attempting to maintain 'a foot in both camps' are likely to feel most acutely the differences in expectations and cultures and to suffer role conflict more than most, quite apart from career disadvantages which part-time employment in two places may bring.

More subtle factors may operate, for instance, in relation to status, where 'academic' may be thought to offer higher (public) esteem than profession of origin; or conditions of work, where there may be greater choice and control of work content, pace and direction, (- both potential sources of envy from the field). But the degree of autonomy has declined in the nineties, and a mismatch between expectations and reality may be one source of dissatisfaction and stress among educators, identified by Collins(1995) in social work.

Or the move into academic work may replace one set of expectations, opportunities and pressures with another, which may require a shift from a relatively 'reactive' role to a more proactive one, or perhaps from a group-oriented ethos to a more individualistic one. Alternatively, or additionally, the old adage, 'them as can, do: them as can't, teach', may lurk in the minds of professionals-turned-lecturers - or their colleagues in practice and students, who may well see entry to academe as 'flight' from the 'front-line'. This may account, in part, for the apparent need of some to maintain credibility through practice, or to transfer to the new role some of the approaches which characterised previous work (for instance through traditional tutorial practice), with concomitant questions about appropriateness and feasibility in the new environment.

It seems that effects on the careers of individuals in transition, with associated implications for the development of subject areas, have not been fully explored or addressed in higher education, a relative late-comer to staff development and human resource management (Warner and Crossthwaite, 1995). Issues about *legitimacy* of the educator role, as well as of subject areas, play a part in wider debates about individual and collective confidence, performance and continuance in the higher education sector. It can be further speculated that if, as in the case of social work, a measure of anti-intellectualism exists in the profession of origin, this will compound the marginal position of professional educators relative to the field of practice, and require more effort, in establishing partnership arrangements or promoting collaborative research.

Developments in higher education suggest that issues of legitimacy, external credibility and 'joint initiatives' may be impacting on a wider range of academics than those concerned with professional education. The institutional mission or the interests and contacts of particular individuals may now play a greater part in promoting and facilitating developments with industry or the community, than professional identity as suggested by discipline.

The final issue for consideration here is gender. There are clear imbalances in favour of men in some of the traditional professions, including the academic field, relative to the predominance of women in newer or less prestigious professions. The work of Witz (1991), writing from a feminist perspective, is useful in developing an analysis of the implications of this, including in relation to career patterns. Again, it seems to be the case that differentiation occurs *within* the field of professional education, and that social work education shares this characteristic (which may then give rise to other assumed or ascribed characteristics) with some forms of professional education and not others.

Despite earlier assumptions that women are not discriminated against in the academic field, this is not the case (Brooks, 1997), although the forms which such 'discrimination' might take are likely to be increasingly subtle and more actively acknowledged and addressed in some institutions and disciplines than others. It can be assumed that, if discrimination exists in relation to individual careers, then it may operate in relation to subject areas where women are in the majority and possibly in leadership roles. This research confirmed that there is no necessary correlation between women being in the majority and being in power. Just as individuals may feel undermined or unacknowledged, groups of staff responsible for a subject area may also feel marginalised or disregarded, or have less (or different) expected of them, and respond accordingly.

It might be questioned whether newer conceptions of 'knowledge' (and its relationship to experience) ; and the changed work context (portfolio careers), will shift the negative effect of (female) gender in particular occupations. However, it seems more likely that new working patterns will impact differentially on men and women, such that there is little real change in the distribution or balance of power. If, as was suggested in the social work education workforce, gender differentials are compounded by race and class, the consequent perceptions of a subject area may be further affected. It seems likely that both nursing and teaching have also been used as avenues of social mobility, contributing further to the low status accorded to some forms of professional education.

Summary And Conclusions

This chapter has reviewed some of the findings about social work education in relation to other forms of professional education. An initial assumption, that all forms of professional education might share similar characteristics and concerns which distinguish the generic field from

'academic disciplines', is not supported. Social work education has a number of characteristics in common with *some forms* of professional education, notably teacher and nurse education, but there are substantial differences of history, organisation, public perception and academic (as well as professional) credibility and status, in relation to other forms of professional education.

Differences in location and the stage at which professional education and training occurs are suggested as variables which influence perceptions of strength or relative autonomy of a professional discipline. Location within HEIs at non or undergraduate level may produce particular tensions for professional subjects, for example, in the relationship between college-based learning and practice. Some forms of professional education feel (or are seen as) marginal to both academic concerns and the professional field, and issues of control, raised in the form of 'relevance', are a constant dynamic.

Public perceptions of particular professions seem to have a direct bearing on the profile of related educational subjects, which, in turn, may be supported or weakened by the authority and credibility of professional bodies responsible for accrediting professional education, usually on a negotiated basis with higher education. The culture of the field is also likely to have a significant bearing on the culture of the related subject, and it is suggested that professional education contains a range of cultures, not a homogenous one.

Public and academic perceptions of particular professional subjects may be enhanced or diminished by relationship to the natural sciences and traditional academic disciplines. Most forms of professional education need to utilise and integrate knowledge from other disciplines but the extent to which they are also seen as creating a distinct and coherent body of their 'own knowledge' varies greatly, and is another source of status or weakness.

Concern about transmission of knowledge, skills and values, relevant to the field and in appropriate and assessable ways seems to be central to all forms of professional education. There is some evidence in the literature to suggest that subjects other than social work have sometimes addressed this issue sooner, but are also not immune from criticism. While ethics play a part in all forms of professional education, it seems likely that the relationship between personal experience, values and professional development is a more central concern for social work educators than it would be in other subjects.

It was difficult to generalise about common characteristics of professional education on the basis of research performance, (which varies considerably) although it was suggested that success in this area partly reflects adherence to a positivistic research paradigm. It was further suggested that the designation of a subject as preparing students for professional practice, was not a deciding factor in the resources and status accorded to research. However, it seems that subjects which are weak or marginal in other respects also 'score badly' on this dimension.

This research also confirmed that social work educators have had a two-fold experience of resource constraint affecting both the college-based and agency-based aspects of student learning, shared by other professional fields in the public sector. The model of 'placements' operated in social work and also teacher and nurse education result in particular pressures on educators, which may be qualitatively different from those experienced by educators for other professions.

There seem to be substantial differences between subjects in the biographies and career patterns of professional educators, including whether entering the educator role entails 'leaving' the professional field. The discontinuity in careers of such a move may be one of the factors weakening both professional credibility and academic performance. The difficulty of sustaining practice, teaching and research roles concurrently, for instance in social work, teaching and nursing was noted.

Subject areas where women are in the majority may be subject to similar forms of discrimination, disregard or different expectations as those apparent in relation to individual women and their careers. The 'gender factor' may be compounded by class and race variables, for instance in the extent to which traditionally low status, 'female' professions have acted as an avenue for social mobility relative to high status professions.

In conclusion, social work shares a number of characteristics with some forms of professional education, such as teaching and nursing, but is different in many respects from other subjects. If fundamental restructuring were to be contemplated, social work education could consider the model developed in relation to psychology and due to be developed further in the legal field, that is provision of part-time, post-graduate courses leading to professional qualifications for people who hold relevant first degrees and are employed in the field (to which teaching and assessment can then be related). Given some of the current trends in higher education, for instance in relation to funding and technology, this seems a feasible direction, although it would represent a

departure from some of the assumptions and practices which have characterised social work education for the last quarter of a century.

CHAPTER 15:

SOCIAL WORK IN HIGHER EDUCATION: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the thesis and relates some of the features and issues of social work education, as identified in this research, back to the main frame of higher education itself. After summaries of the thesis and of the research design, findings and suggestions for possible areas for further research, the initial question will be addressed, that is, whether the characteristics and concerns of the subject suggest a continuing place -or not- for social work in the HE system.

Overall, this research suggests that the responsibility to analyse, question and comment on existing arrangements and assumptions, common to all academics (Barnett, 1994), requires location of social work education within an academic rather than an employment-based framework. There are contra-indications against this position, and ultimately the decision does not rest with social work educators. While some of the characteristics identified by this research help explain the marginal position of the subject, others support its maintenance in higher education.

Summary Of Thesis

This thesis derived from the researcher's experience of significant changes in British social work education in ways which raised questions about its continuing viability in the higher education sector. This prompted a more systematic enquiry into the nature of the discipline and its relationship with its external worlds. These were identified as the immediate context of *higher education* and the professional field of *social work*. It was also considered that some exploration of the literature pertaining to the generic field of *professional education* might provide a further contextual basis and assist in the analysis of the problems and potential of the subject. Part 1 of the thesis therefore provided an overview of the main developments in social work education itself, and in these three 'systems', and identified the body of literature, predominantly from the social policy field, informing the researcher's thinking.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 summarised recent policy developments in relation to the subject area, social work and higher education, respectively. It was argued that social work education reflects, in

large measure, the changes and tensions in society as a whole. Common motivations were driving policy change in relation to all public sector institutions, and social work education was at the intersection of two systems both experiencing challenges to previous roles and assumptions. Not least of these were measures to increase accountability, economy and efficiency in pursuit of economic growth, and measures to promote culture change have been in evidence in the subject area as well as in the host institution and professional field.

Chapter 5 took a more thematic approach to identifying some of the issues facing professional education of various kinds, including a consideration of the nature of knowledge. Both this chapter, and a brief discussion about the concept of 'profession' in Chapter 4, drew on a wider field of literature, including from sociology and philosophy, to extend the researcher's understanding of possible frameworks and perspectives for analysis.

Public trust in 'professionals' of various kinds has decreased, and the relationships between them and their 'clients' has been fundamentally altered by the introduction of market concepts into all areas of public services. Academe has been encouraged to open its doors to larger numbers of students and to restructure curricula in ways that allow student choice. Externally, the market, in the form of employers, has been seen as a major interest group whose needs must be met. More graduates are being produced for a labour market which has fundamentally changed and contracted, emphasising the need for 'relevance' of educational programmes. This has long been a familiar call in professional education, and sometimes a basis for criticism, including in social work education.

It is clear that the relationship between social work education and professional education is of a different order from that between the subject, the host institution and the professional field. However, these three points of reference were represented diagrammatically as having *triangular relationship* and identified as one of a number of such relationships within and affecting social work education (Appendix 1). The notion of triangular relationships came to have further salience as the research progressed, since it seems that a number of significant relationships in social work education, and thus important issues for educational practice, policy and research, could be so represented.

The research set out to explore the characteristics of a particular field of professional education in a way which might inform debate about the nature of the subject and thus about the appropriateness and security or otherwise of its place in higher education. To some extent, the

research has taken the form of a 'mapping exercise' as, although considerable information was available and, in one sense, 'known' to the inhabitants of the territory, the material laid out in the 'findings' section has not been assembled and presented in this form previously. The researcher has adopted the procedures of social research in gathering empirical data about something perceived as problematic. The resulting case study might have wider relevance to debates about higher education, social work or professional education and their roles in society.

Part 2 of the thesis presented the findings and also drew on literature where other social work educators had already begun some exploration. This exercise yielded some useful material complementary to this study, but also revealed gaps in research and knowledge about the subject. A wealth of unused material, about aspects of social work other than social work education, lends weight to two particular conclusions. The first is that British social work educators are deeply rooted in the professional field, and, for whatever reasons, see this as the reference point for the majority of their research and writing. The second is that social work educators apparently share with other academics a relative lack of introspection about the nature of the particular role, subject area and academic world which they inhabit, or fail to view it from perspectives other than their own (Cuthbert, 1996).

A related point is that, while social work educators are increasingly drawing on theoretical material from other subject areas and professional fields in occasional forays into the epistemology and pedagogy of social work education (for example, Gould and Taylor, 1996), publication by social work educators is still largely restricted to subject-specific academic and professional journals. This parallels practice in other disciplines and is understandable in terms of reaching a particular audience but given the small scale of the subject it also means that the generally low profile of social work education in institutions (Chapter 7) is reflected in the wider academic world. It may also indicate a lack of interdisciplinarity, another common characteristic of academics according to Barnett (1994), and one of particular significance perhaps, given the nature of social work.

Part (3) of the thesis relates particular findings and conclusions from the data (back) to the original framework. A number of the characteristics of social work education closely mirror those of the professional field of social work, but also have resonance in the context of change in the higher education system (see later section on Potential for Development?), while the similarities and parallels with other forms of professional education are less clear cut. Specifically, social work education can be seen to share certain common features with all aspects

of professional education, for instance concerns about relevance, standards and pedagogy, but it apparently has more in common with some forms of professional education than others. Differences seem to revolve around long-standing debates about 'what constitutes a profession' and traditional variations in power and status between professions, which in turn may be related to issues of gender and origins in society as well as in higher education.

Thus, the framing features of social work education are more clearly seen as being the academic context and the profession of origin, returning the debate to the perennial dichotomy reflected internally in concerns about the relationship between theory and practice. This is paralleled at the boundary of the two institutions by the relationship between particular courses and agencies, mediated mainly by social work educators, and reflected at macro-level in concerns about the 'ownership' of professional education, whether by the academy or employers. This research has taken as given the threat posed to the location of social work education represented in a wish for control (responsibility) by the profession (that is employers, as seems to be happening in relation to Probation) but this assumption has not been substantially explored and would need to be tested through further research.

Finally, two points remain to be made about the research. The first is the extent to which it almost became a study of change, *per se*. The overview in Chapter 2 indicated a substantial degree of change in the early nineties. There might then have been some expectation of a period of stabilisation or consolidation. However, the period during which the research was undertaken saw further changes. It may be that the year of the survey, 1994, was a particularly difficult one for social work educators, with the subject area review, announcement of a new review of DipSW, and continuing uncertainty about probation. By 1996, the tenor of interview responses (relative to survey responses), the appearance of some literature about social work education and an improvement in research performance, all combined to present a picture of some resilience.

The findings thus identify the characteristics of a subject in a situation which is essentially dynamic. Some variation in experiences and perceptions, evident in responses of social work educators, seemed to be related to the type of institution in which they worked, that is whether an old (pre 1992) university or the ex-polytechnic and colleges sector. It remains to be seen whether current changes in higher education as a whole will enhance these differences, as universities seek to establish distinctive missions and identities, or whether there will be a homogenisation of experience as various forms of national monitoring exercises and league tables exert pressures for conformity.

The second point concerns other comparisons which might have been made between the nature and position of social work and social work education in the UK relative to other countries. While this could have provided some valuable comparative material, an earlier intention to incorporate a European or wider perspective would have taken this research in a different direction and expanded its scope beyond appropriate limits. However, systematic comparative research, similar to some already available in the policy and higher education fields remains to be carried out in relation to social work and its associated educational forms.

The Research Findings

The research started from a clear question and was intended to be exploratory, using an empirico-deductive approach. As a member of one of the interest groups closely associated with the field of enquiry, a concern of the researcher was whether a 'value-committed' orientation could never the less yield 'objective' data and critical analysis. In the event, insider knowledge seemed to be an advantage in framing a postal questionnaire which had a high response rate and, later, in securing interviews with selected educators who were regarded as providing a range of views from senior positions in the social work subject area. It also gave ready access to documentary sources, particularly of JUC SWEC; and to opportunities, formal and informal, to test out some of the findings and developing ideas. Developing a critical perspective was assisted by literature from related fields and different disciplines.

With regard to existing structural arrangements, the research found that social work education is variously 'located' within the higher education system, but rarely in basic units where its existence is readily identifiable. Further ambiguity about its nature and status is suggested in its boundaries and alliances, not least a tension between its relationship (in organisational and epistemological terms) with social science and with other professional fields. The potential for interdisciplinarity is considerable, and appropriate, but apparently only poorly realised in practice: evidence of conflict and 'disputed territory' is also available from this research, the academic subject apparently mirroring the field.

The low level at which the professional qualification is normally awarded (Dip HE conforms to CCETSW expectations) seems to be a significant concern of educators, with its implications for both content of courses and relationships with other disciplines and professions. There is some evidence of social work educators' attempts to address this by the development of top-up degree

year programmes or 'spreading' the professional training through a three or four year degree course. The position of some qualifying education at masters level is ambiguous when set against the development of the continuum of training (devised by the validating body and taking shape by the mid nineties), though their historical origins and continued existence, combined with wider changes in higher and professional education, might suggest potential for future development, perhaps in part-time form.

In terms of content, considerable conformity was evident in the college based components, both in generic and discipline based aspects of the curricula and in more specialist pathways. The latter showed a strong correspondence with current organisational arrangements in the field, and such conformity with employer expectations contributes further to vulnerability when external circumstances change. An alternative approach would suggest development of curricula less geared to the demands of particular employers, but which lay sound foundations in theory and principles, while also promoting skills development (including attention to process). At a deeper level, the competing paradigms evident in the knowledge base and research approaches of social work, with a predisposition to 'ways of knowing' (Habermas, 1978) which carry less weight traditionally in higher education (and currently in society as a whole) suggest that social work, and perhaps some other forms of professional education, may continue to struggle to attain academic credibility.

Information about pedagogical approaches confirmed that social work education is appropriately recognised as a 'laboratory based' rather than 'library based' course, and that the need to assist integration of professional development with personal values and academic learning contributes to the relatively 'resource intensive' nature of this form of professional education. However, there were differing views on the role of educators, particularly in relation to 'tutorial' work; and some evidence of pedagogical shifts aimed, in part, at more resource efficient use of staff time. Radical innovations (large scale as opposed to marginal use), for example of enquiry-action (problem-based) learning, were few, and justified on pedagogical rather than resource grounds. Such moves would seem to be supported by some of the literature about learning for practice and for continuing professional development, and a shift in emphasis from 'tutor support' to self-responsibility and peer group learning accords well with wider developments in higher education (Ramsden, 1992).

Evidence about the research component in curricula suggested that this is contingent on the length and level of the course, but that there is support for development of practice which is 'research

informed' (if not research led), even if practitioner research is a limited possibility. However, there was rather stronger support, indeed some expectation, that social work educators themselves should be actively engaged in research activity, other pressures of the role notwithstanding. Such research was more likely to relate to issues of professional organisation and practice than to their own practice or to theoretical development of the subject, and social work educators, collectively, are only recently thinking in terms of a research agenda for the profession. There is a possibility that this could be different from that currently encouraged by external sponsors and it would seem important to establish funding opportunities with bodies normally concerned to promote academic (critical) inquiry.

The extent to which academic work is a second (or third) career for staff was confirmed by this study, as was the apparent importance of professional awards relative to higher academic qualifications at the entry point. Activities, associations and self-descriptions suggested strong roots in the professional field and a group which looked outside the institution for much of its stimulus, and sometimes validation. Similar trends to those in the field were noted regarding the greater likelihood of men assuming power in an occupation which is (still) heavily dominated by women.

There was some confirmation of the impressionistic evidence of role conflict and role overload, although also of ways individuals sought to manage this, including an ordering of priorities within the role(over time), which is different from that normally followed by academics in more theoretically orientated disciplines. It is suggested that insufficient attention has been paid to the implications of career change for educators of moving from the professional to the academic culture, and for its possible relationship with academic development of particular subject areas. The relationship between a subject and assumed or real correlation with gender, race and class-based differences in workforce, would also seem to merit further inquiry.

The nature and pace of recent change were experienced as problematic features of the subject area, in the context of change within institutions and in the personal social services. The shift in power from HEIs to the field and the increased bureaucratisation associated with changes (for example in partnership arrangements), were seen as having a significant impact on social work educators, and contributing to role overload. The changing pattern (if not actual decrease) of resource allocation, in the particular form of staffing, contributed further to a 'do more with less' climate, including evidence of diversification and increased attention to research or income generating activities. Lack of control over a particular resource, the practice element of

qualifying programmes, constituted a distinct cause of stress in the educator role and weakness in the subject area in an HEI context.

Finally, two particular factors were identified as problematic in different ways. One was the nature and powers of the validating body, CCETSW, and the direction in which it has taken social work (qualifying) training (sic). The organisation itself has been variously viewed and its weak position in the face of government intent recognised. However, social work educators have been concerned about the apparent favouring of the market (employer) agenda by the Council. Some would expect CCETSW to support the maintenance (or further development) of a sound base for professional qualification in higher education, although others might think that academic critique can only be promoted in courses free of CCETSW regulation. Such tensions contribute further to current perceptions of the subject as vulnerable or needing to develop outwith the control of the regulatory body.

A further, and perhaps related, issue has been the way in which the internal values of the profession have been identified as at variance with the dominant ideology of society, and possibly HEIs. It seems likely that some conflict is inevitable between those associated with a professional field which has previously been described as a counter-culture (Sinfield, 1969) and their environment, but this is enhanced when the dominant values and internal values are based on opposing perceptions of human nature, social structures and the public good. However, it is also compounded if values are insufficiently related to an appropriate knowledge base and concepts take on the form of slogans (Barnett, 1994). This suggests an enhanced, rather than diminished need for an educational (as opposed to training) process, firmly rooted in higher education.

The foregoing summary has suggested, implicitly or explicitly, various avenues for further research. The need for theorising about the subject, its internal content and external relationships, is paramount; and its potential for development of interdisciplinarity suggests a particular focus which could be of both academic interest and practical relevance.

At a more parochial level, there are questions about the extent to which 'the field' wants or could provide a form of education and training appropriate to individual and collective aspirations in the 21st century, although the development of new forms of professional education within a changing higher education context might also be proposed and researched. The extent and nature of the development of the continuum of training might usefully be reviewed and the motivation of students in pursuing different types of education and training opportunities at different stages

warrants investigation. Both might be set against the background of learning organisations and lifelong learning - instrumental slogans or liberating opportunities?

Relating research to current practices and developments in the subject area, social work educators themselves might adopt a more critical and reflective approach to curriculum design and pedagogy, including collaborative research with other subject specialists or professional educators. There is also potential for comparative studies and model building of social work education cross-nationally or relative to other forms of professional education.

The scope for research into the biographies and career patterns of social work educators themselves is also considerable and further exploration and theorising about the nature of the role, or relationships between values and the subject area might shed further light on professional education, or the changing nature of work, more generally.

Potential For Development?

The expansion of social work education and its siting at non-graduate level in the 1960s and 1970s paralleled an initial phase of expansion in higher education. Its tendency since then to recruit female, mature and (increasingly) minority ethnic students also accorded with the establishment of more egalitarian ideals in relation to access to HEIs. Even the development of radical social work in the late seventies could be seen to reflect the wider breakdown in consensus politics, and developments in feminist and anti-racist perspectives in the eighties followed similar developments in other disciplines and in the policy field.

But it was from this period on that social work as a subject area became increasingly out of step with the changing culture and policies of both personal social services and higher education. This invited the attentions of the accrediting body, initially, and by the early nineties, the more overt intervention of the government, most evident in an increase in managerial control, accountability to the field through partnership arrangements, and changed funding arrangements. Apart from the subject area's relationship with the field (and the way in which it can be 'blamed' by critics for either failing to prepare students for current realities in social work practice, or for encouraging the worst excesses of ideological practice), this research suggests that in the mid nineties, social work education has an ambiguous place in higher education, and one which varies between institutions.

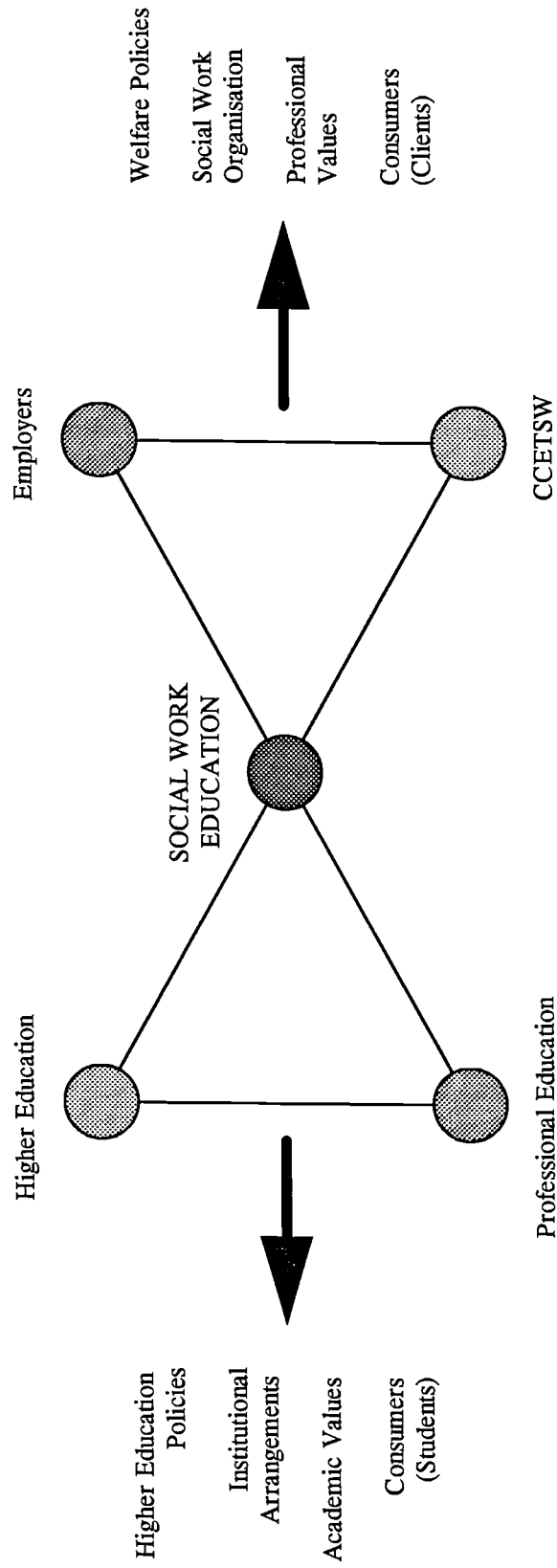
While this vulnerability is partly related to the internal characteristics of the subject area it has been suggested that it is also a consequence of the impact of external relationships and policies. Reference was made earlier to the triangular nature of various relationships affecting social work education, and its location at the intersection of two systems, and these are now further considered. Two triangles assume particular significance. The first represents the relationship between the subject, the agencies and CCETSW, that is 'the immediate environment (Appendix 1, Diagram 3) while the second represents the relationship between the subject, its host environment and other fields of professional education (Appendix 1, Diagram 4). It is suggested that the exact shape of both these triangles could be varied to represent the different power relationships between the particular parties.

The boundary position of social work education can be represented diagrammatically in the form of two intersecting triangles, assuming some differentiation between employers and the validating body in the professional field, and some between higher education as a whole and professional education in particular on the academic side (Diagram A). Again the exact shape of the diagram would depend on the extent to which the subject is 'integrated' into either higher education or its particular field (Clark, 1983).

As with all diagrams, there is something both neat and contrived about what are, in reality, far more complex and uneven relationships, but diagrammatic representation illustrates a marginal status for social work education relative to different systems, negotiating competing claims in terms of resources, priorities and values. A question remains as to whether the forces in the two systems are pulling the subject in opposite directions (as suggested above, with regard to different values and expectations) or whether there is rather a 'push - pull' force in action. That is to say, are the characteristics of social work education (including cost) such that HEIs will *push* social work education out, and will this coincide with an (assumed) wish for control by the profession exerting a *pull* from the field? On the basis of this research more can be said about the relationship between the subject and higher education than about that between the subject and its professional field.

On the face of it, findings suggest that social work education demonstrates a number of characteristics which should allow a more comfortable relationship with contemporary higher education. Utilising the 'new vocabulary' identified as characterising higher education (Barnett, 1994), the subject has vocational relevance and aims to equip its students with communication (and other) skills (preferably transferable), appropriate to employment in a particular sector.

DIAGRAM A: SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION - AT THE INTERSECTION OF COMPETING FORCES



Curriculum design is now clearly related to (required) learning outcomes and assessment is substantially based on competencies. Design and delivery of programmes is carried out in partnership with employers, and a number of courses took up opportunities afforded by the Enterprise Initiative. Many social work academics have long seen themselves as educators and been concerned about pedagogic methods which encourage students to be responsible for their own learning. Specific approaches, such as experiential and problem-based learning have been used to build on and develop students' knowledge and understanding, and particular qualities, such as flexibility.

But while the subject area often scores well on various performance indicators used to assess quality in HE, (reflecting, usually, a close association with institutional mission statements), it tends to be resource-hungry and produces people who do not contribute to economic growth. Further, it is something of an 'under-achiever' in research terms, with limited capacity for income generation; and its staff and students seem to have an uncomfortable preoccupation with values. Additionally, the very prevalence of the 'new language', and associated regulations and arrangements, may have inhibited the development of the subject itself and the maintenance of a critical perspective on social change and the role of social workers in this process.

It can be suggested that, at the institutional level, it is the extent to which the subject demonstrates these positive or negative characteristics, and the ethos of individual HEIs (including their level of support for professional education more generally), which determine whether social work is a viable or vulnerable subject area. In deciding such positions, there is no obvious correlation between the type of institutional location (old or new university) or the level of qualifying course, though there may be some relationship between size of the area (and range of work carried out) and its potential for development.

Additionally, concerns about the subject area have arisen at a time when Barnett suggests that disciplines themselves may be losing their potency (1994:136). Just at the point where social work may be agreeing its own research agenda (Toulmin, 1972) the very ideas of 'academe' and 'disciplines' themselves seem to be under threat, or at least, less relevant. But as higher education expands, so new subject areas are being developed and social work may be more compatible with a concept of subject areas as problem based domains (Trist, 1972).

Further, the view that 'developing understanding is an inherently subversive activity' (Barnett, 1994:105) helps explain concerns to reduce the social science (and cognitive) component in social

work education commented on in the findings and literature. If knowledge in itself can be subversive, how much more so if linked to particular values which emphasise the rights and needs of minorities.

The findings also suggest that social work educators may not have taken sufficient account of their higher education context and of potential benefits of alliances with other disciplines and professional subjects. The research illustrates the extent to which the biographies of social work educators and the culture of the area may have militated against the development of a more robust subject, which, while engaging with the field, can also step back from it; and which can meet academic expectations with regard to research and theory development. This is partly an epistemological issue, but Lukes' views (1974) on the nature of power also have relevance. Thus, it can be questioned whether social work sometimes finds itself not only a site of overt conflict (for instance over the degree of control to be exercised by CCETSW and the employers) but also embroiled in latent conflict, where some of the issues of concern to the subject area are excluded from institutional and policy agendas by established power blocs.

It is suggested, therefore, that establishment of the subject on a more secure basis requires renewed negotiation of its relationships with higher education, with the social work field and with other forms of professional education. Potential for development might be assisted in part by wider shifts within society. By the mid nineties various writers were calling for a reconsideration of the relationship between society and higher education and the public services more generally (Barnett, 1994; Ranson and Stewart, 1994) and it may be that the election of New Labour is indicative of a public mood which is at least open to Habermas' advocacy of values located in communicative action, rather than instrumental rationality.

Such a shift might assist in a revaluing of different forms of knowledge, and also support academics, including social work educators, in providing students with a critical perspective on their world and equipping them for change. Toulmin suggested that a role of academics was to give continuity to ideas (as well as developing new ones) and to trace 'the genealogy of problems' in a discipline (1972:142). Such a rationale for the continued existence of social work in higher education was echoed in a response to the 1994 survey which suggested that one of the strengths of the subject was its capacity to maintain 'its history and a vision for social work'. Additionally, the 'civil' role which Barnett (1994) suggested as a feature of academic responsibility in relation to the ethical and communicative dimensions of society is one clearly also applicable to social work educators, and to the professionals they are training.

But there are wider questions about the demise or development of the subject as a whole, and this analysis has suggested that the recent 'weakening' of the subject has been significantly affected by events in the external field and influence of the accrediting body, rather than through the policies of higher education in particular. Thus, there is no clear cut answer to the starting question, 'can social work survive in higher education?'. Its position relates in part to the future direction of higher education itself and more particularly to the fate of social work.

However, this research has identified a number of characteristics (internal and external) which contribute to the marginal and periodically vulnerable position of the subject. Some of these are subject specific and may be endemic. Others reflect wider issues germane to all forms of professional education, and require constant negotiation. Social work educators' responses have also indicated qualities of adaptability and resilience, as well as more specific characteristics, which suggest that the subject has a legitimate place in higher education, with potential for development.

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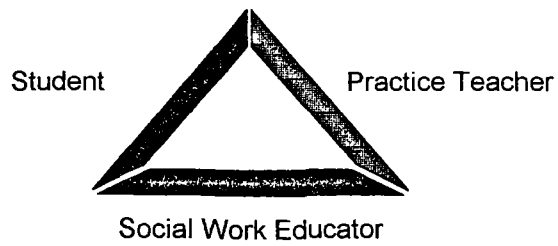
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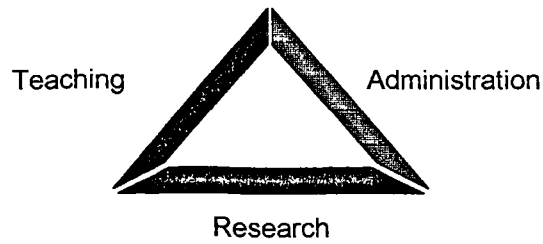
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APPENDICES

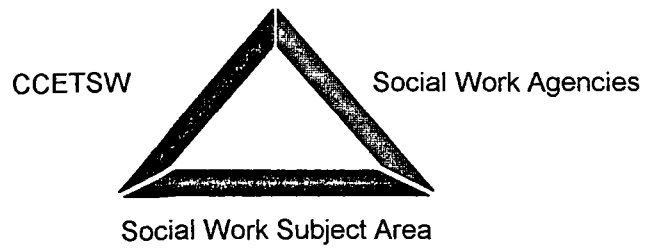
APPENDIX 1: WORKING IN TRIANGLES



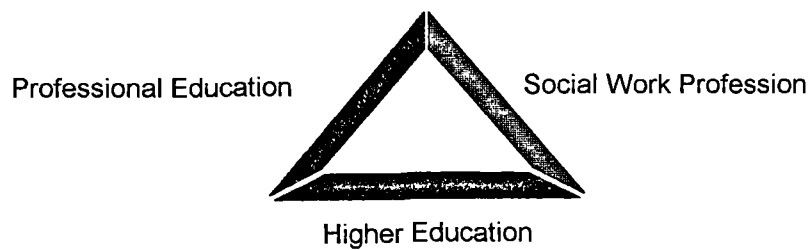
1. *The Heart of the Social Work Education Enterprise*



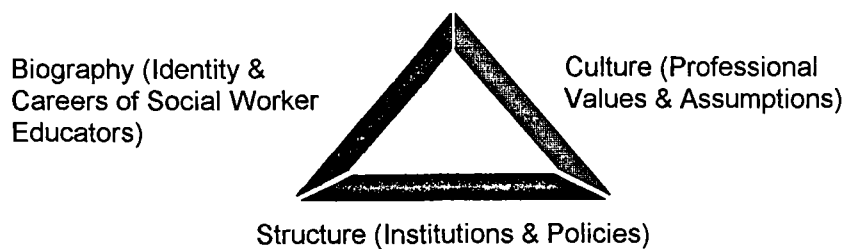
2. *The Social Work Educator's Role*



3. *The Immediate Environment*



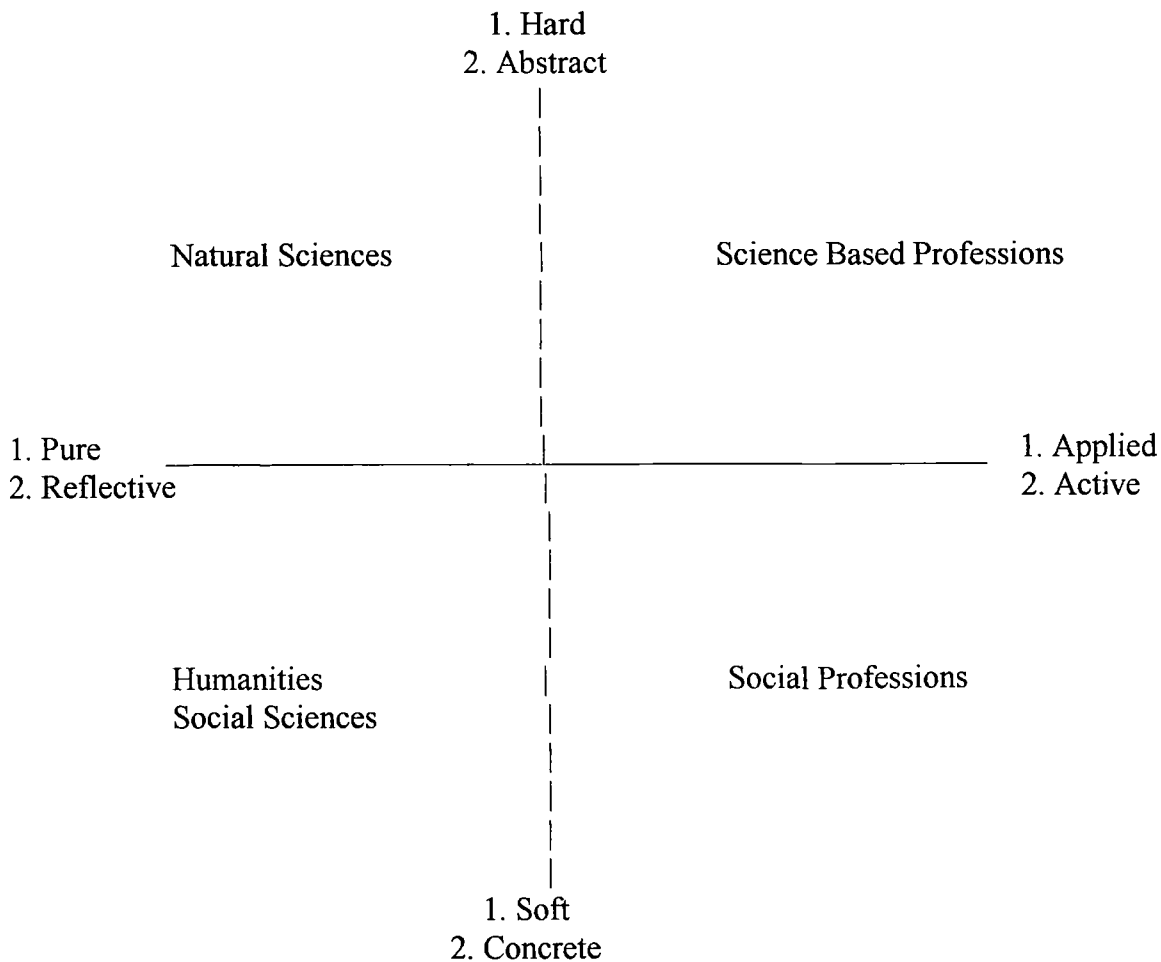
4. *The Wider Environment*



5. *Interacting Forces*

The Kolb-Biglan Classification of Academic Knowledge

A Diagrammatic Representation Of Becher's Formulation (1989:12)



Dimension 1. The Nature of Knowledge, after Biglan (1973)

Dimension 2. Student Learning Styles, after Kolb (1981)

References:

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Appendix 3

28, Battledean Rd.,
London, N5 1UZ
Tel/Fax 0171 359 2733
Work tel. 0181 590 7722

Feb. 1994

Dear Colleague,

Research Project: Social Work, Professional Training and Higher Education

I am writing to request your assistance with research into the characteristics of and influences upon social work education in the 1990s.

The study focuses upon social work education at the qualifying stage but will also consider wider developments at the pre-qualifying and post-qualifying stages. It will be centred on social work education and training in Britain in the 1990s, with some reference to trends prior to the 1990s and to developments elsewhere.

The attached questionnaire is an important first stage and I would be very grateful if you would help me by completing it. I hope to follow up the questionnaire stage with interviews of selected respondents.

As someone who has been actively involved in the development of social work education for some time, I am now carrying out this research as part of a PhD programme. I hope it will throw light on the various factors, institutions and actors playing a part in shaping social work education and contribute to the debate about the nature and future of social work education in Britain.

I will ensure confidentiality in the normal ways and would be happy to answer any queries you may have about the questionnaire or the study. In conclusion, notwithstanding the considerable pressures there are on your time, I should be very grateful if you would complete and return this questionnaire (by the end of April, if possible). I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Karen Lyons

Principal Lecturer in Social Work,
University of East London

SOCIAL WORK, PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND HIGHER EDUCATION.

QUESTIONNAIRE: **To be completed by Heads of Social Work Education
Departments or Areas in Higher Education Institutions.**

A. ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT:

1. Is your HEI a new university (ex. Poly)
an old university
a college of HE
other (please specify)
.....
2. In which Faculty or other main division of the institution is social work education located?
.....
3. (a) Does social work education constitute a separate Department or School within the institution? **YES / NO**
(b) If the answer to the previous question is **NO**, what is the title of the Department or School in which social work education is located?
.....
4. (a) Does social work education in your own institution have particular alliances with any other discipline or subject area e.g. through departmental or geographical proximity, service teaching arrangements, etc.? **YES / NO**
(b) If **YES**, please specify:
.....
.....
.....

5. (a) Has the organisational location of social work education in the institution changed in the last five years? **YES / NO**
- (b) If **YES**, please state previous arrangement:

- (c) Are there any plans for organizational change? **YES / NO**
- (d) If **YES**, please specify:

6. (a) Is social work education specifically represented on any institutional boards, working parties or other policy-making bodies in the institution? **YES / NO**
- (b) If the answer to previous question is **YES**, please specify:

7. Have social work study programmes in your institution been:
- (a) semesterised **YES / NO**
- (b) modularised **YES / NO**
8. Is your institution one which:
- (a) has been reviewed (visited) by the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC). **YES / NO**
- (b) will be reviewed by the Higher Education Quality Council. **YES / NO**

B. FACTUAL INFORMATION ABOUT SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION:

1. Do you currently provide:

	Yes	No	Academic Qualification Awarded	Student Members (I n t a k e p.a)
Dip. S.W. Programme(s)
C.Q.S.W. Course
C.S.S. Course
Pre-qualifying Course(s)
Post-qualifying Course(s)
Practice Teacher Programme
Any other Short Courses

2. In what year -

(a) did you introduce the Dip. S.W.

OR

(b) will you introduce the Dip. S.W.

(c) Please specify how many agencies (will) participate in the Dip. S.W. partnership arrangements:

- Social Service Departments
- Probation Agencies
- Voluntary Agencies
- private Agencies
- Other H.E.I's

3. Please describe briefly any specific plans you have in the following areas:

(a) to extend social work education in any way

.....
.....
.....

(b) to reduce social work education in any way

.....
.....
.....

(c) to diversify provision by social work educators

.....
.....
.....

4. How many staff in your institution are involved in social work education?

- (a) full-time permanent social work lecturers*
- (b) part-time permanent social work lecturers*
- (c) full-time temporary social work lecturers*
- (d) part-time temporary social work lecturers*
- (e) Regular sessional social work lecturers*
- (f) Regular teaching by non social work lecturers

(* = employed specifically as social work lecturers and/or who hold social work qualification and whose main task is to teach / tutor social work students)

5. (a) Have there been significant changes in level or deployment of resources (staffing) between 1990/91 and 1993/94? **YES / NO**

(b) If YES, please specify:

.....
.....
.....

6. Which Fee Band does social work operate in? (Band 1 Library based or Band 2 workshop based.)

C. TEACHING METHODS ETC.

1. Did/will introduction of Dip. S.W. entail any changes in teaching methods? **YES / NO**

2. Please give an estimate of the percentage of learning time spent in college by qualifying students only in:

- (a) lectures
- (b) seminars
- (c) project work
- (d) skills workshops
- (e) Other (please specify)

3. Please could you either append a copy of your timetable for students undertaking qualifying training or list here the subjects / courses offered. Please indicate whether these are core or option courses, and the year in which students follow them.

.....
.....
.....
.....

4. (a) Has your area initiated any 'ENTERPRISE in HIGHER EDUCATION' project? **YES / NO**

(b) If YES, please specify:

.....
.....
.....
.....

5. (a) Are you current participating in an ERASMUS programme? **YES / NO**

(b) If YES, in which year/stage do British students undertake a placement abroad?

.....

(c) If NO, have you done so previously or do you plan to in the future? **PAST / FUTURE**

6. (a) In the HEFC self-evaluation exercise did you describe your area as:

(i) excellent or (ii) satisfactory

(b) (i) Have you had an HEFC Visit? **YES / NO**

(ii) Will you be having an HEFC Visit? **YES / NO**

7. Is there any other activity undertaken by your Department / area relevant to learning opportunities for students which you would like to mention?

.....
.....
.....

D. RESEARCH:

1. a) Did the social work department/ area submit a separate return in the 1992 (National) Research Evaluation Exercise? **YES / NO**
- b) If **NO**, in which area was it included?
.....
2. What was the research rating gained by your area (or the area under which social work education was submitted?)
3. (a) How many of the social work staff listed in Section B item 4 above are active researchers?
- (b) How many (i) Research Fellows does the area have?
- (ii) Research assistants does the area have?
- (iii) Research students does the area have?
4. (a) Is the Department / area in receipt of any external funding / research contracts? **YES / NO**
- (b) If **YES**, please specify:
.....
.....
- (c) Is there currently any collaborative research with:
- (i) Another department or discipline **YES / NO**
- (ii) An outside agency **YES / NO**
- (iii) Social work educators elsewhere in the U.K. **YES / NO**
- (iv) Social work educators outside the U.K. **YES / NO**
5. (a) Do any staff undertake consultancy or training activities outside the institution? **YES / NO**
- (b) If **YES**, can you give an estimate of how many staff?
6. Is there a research strategy for the social work area in relation to the next Research Evaluation Exercise? **YES / NO**

E. PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AND REPRESENTATION:

1. Are any staff active in social work management or practice outside the institution? **YES / NO**

2. To your knowledge do any of the staff belong to:

- (a) BASW
- (b) ATSWE
- (c) NAPO
- (d) Social Work Research Association
- (e) Society for Research in H.E.
- (f) Social Services Research Group
- (g) Any other similar organisations.

3. Is your Department / subject area normally represented at meetings of:

JUC SWEC **YES / NO**
SCHOC **YES / NO**
Association of Social Work Professors **YES / NO**

Other Similar bodies: (Please specify)

.....

4. Are any members of the Department / area on the HEFC Panel? **YES / NO**

5. Are any members of the Department / area active in the local post qualifying consortium development? **YES / NO**

6. Are there any other forms of professional activity or representation you would like to mention?

.....
.....

7.a) Is there a programme of sabbaticals or other means of release for social work staff? **YES / NO**

b) If the answer to the previous question is **YES**, is this mainly used to:

(i) update practice knowledge / skills

OR

(ii) pursue research

F. PERSONAL DETAILS

PLEASE NOTE: You are free to omit this Section if you prefer, but its completion would be helpful.

Please indicate your gender: and age group:	Under 30 years 30 - 34 35 - 39 40 - 44 45 - 49 50 - 54 55 - 59 60 or over	MALE / FEMALE
--	--	----------------------

What is your ethnic status?

How long have you been in your current post?

How long have you been in social work education?

Did you have previous experience in social work practice, management or training prior to coming into social work education? **YES / NO**

What qualifications do you hold?
.....

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Could you please answer the following questions briefly (on a supplementary sheet if necessary).

1. What do you consider to be the most problematic or concerning issue(s) currently facing social work education?

.....

2. What do you think are the particular strengths or values important in social work education which could influence developments in social work or in higher education?

.....

Thank you for your time.

Please return this questionnaire to	Karen Lyons, by 30th April 28 Battledean Road, London N5 IUZ 1994.
-------------------------------------	---

April 1996

Dear

Re PhD Research: Social Work Education in Higher Education

Further to my recent 'phone call, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed in connection with the above research project. As mentioned, this is the second stage in the research design, and data from these interviews will augment that already derived from a survey in 1994.

Details of the interview arrangements are as follows:-

Date and time:.....

Place:.....

Below follows an outline of the areas I would like to raise with you. I should also like to assure you at this stage that, although I would like to tape record the interview, the normal convention of confidentiality will apply.
I look forward to meeting you on

Yours sincerely

Karen Lyons

Interview Guide

1. Name
2. Position
3. How long in post?
4. How long in SW Education?
5. Questionnaire in connection with this research in 1994? (Y/N)
6. Current role/responsibilities?
7. Should SW Education be located in HE? (If Yes, Why?)
8. How would you describe the area of SW Education?
(Boundaries, alliances, content, pedagogical concerns).
9. What is your view on the place of research in SW Education?
10. Professional identity - How do you think of/describe yourself?
11. What is valued in SW Education? (What is rewarded?)
12. Opportunities and strategies for development of SW in Higher Education?

JOINT UNIVERSITY COUNCIL: SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Social Work Education Committee is one of three committees of the Joint University Council.

This Council was established by the Universities as one body for Social Studies in 1918, with the object of developing and co-ordinating the new social studies departments.

Various name and constitutional changes followed with the formation of the

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SUB COMMITTEE	in 1936
SOCIAL ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE	in 1955
SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION COMMITTEE	in 1976

These three Committees now operate in parallel, with separate termly meetings and a combined Annual General Meeting. Each Committee elects its own officers and agrees its own sub-committees, as well as having representation on the JUC Executive Committee.

The organisation is funded by institutional subscriptions, according to the number of Committees to which Universities send a representative, and Committees make annual bids for funding, for example for sub-committee activities and conferences.

The Council provides a 'national forum for the discussion of academic issues' related to curricula, resources and standards. Each Committee 'keeps itself closely informed about developments in its subject area' and promotes research, conferences and links with relevant bodies.*

Membership of the Social Work Education Committee currently covers most institutions which provide qualifying education. Formal minutes of all Committee meetings are circulated to all representatives together with other items which keep members informed of developments or elicit their views.

The Central Council of Education and Training in Social Work normally sends an observer to SWEC meetings and occasionally makes brief presentations about particular developments. Representatives of other bodies are occasionally also invited for specific agenda items.

* Source: Information Sheet issued annually by JUC Secretary

Characteristics of Interviewees

Eleven people (4 women, 7 men, all white) were interviewed in the May- June period, 1996. Interviews lasted between 50 and 90 mins, and were tape-recorded.

Selection of interviewees aimed to take account of a number of factors, particularly

- i) contribution to the area at national level, in various ways
- ii) range of interests and expertise
- iii) senior positions in different types of institution and different regions

Geographical distribution

London and SE - 3 SW - 2 Wales - 1 NE - 2 NW - 2

Distribution by sector

Old universities - 4 New universities - 7

Age distribution

In their forties (4), their fifties (6) or sixty plus (1)

Length of time in social work education length of time in current post

less than 3 years		9
five years		1
8 -10 yrs	2	1
11 - 15 yrs	2	
16 - 20 yrs	5	
21 years plus	1	

Posts held

Head of Section/ Director of Studies	2
Professor of Social Work	4
Professors (other)	5
Budget holders	7

Particular interests

Adult services	3
Child Care	5
Probation	2
Organisation of social work (education)	5

(note: exceeds 11 since some people 'known' for more than one area of work)

Funding of Social Work Education (UK)

Educational component

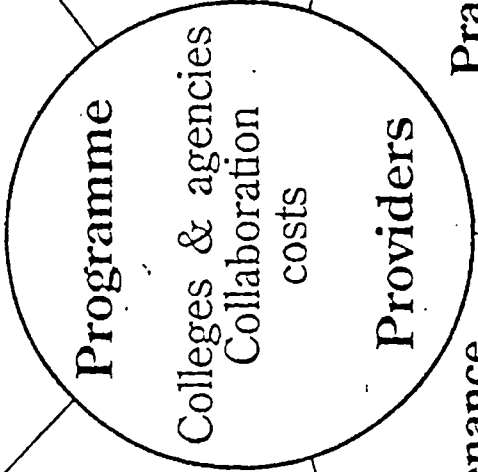
University Funding Council (UFC)
 Polytechnic & Colleges Council (PCFC)
 Local Authority Sectors
 Department of Education (NI)
 Scottish Education Department
 Welsh Advisory Body (WAB)
 Welsh Office Education Department

Education Fees DipSW Modes/Routes

Post Grad	£2000
Under Grad	£1750
Non Grad	£650
→ Some DipHE	£1750
Employment route	£650

Placement Travel Costs

University: Post Grad
 Under Grad
 Non Grad
 Polytechnics & Colleges



Practice Component

Statutory Sector
 Probation Service
 Voluntary Sector
 Private Sector

Student Maintenance

Seconded
 Employed
 Sponsored
 Post Grad Grants
 Mandatory Grants
 Discretionary Grants
 Privately Funded