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Dean Ashenden's proposal for restructuring teachers' work: a junior primary school perspective

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DEAN ASHENDEN'S PROPOSAL
FOR RESTRUCTURING
TEACHERS' WORK:

A Junior Primary School Perspective



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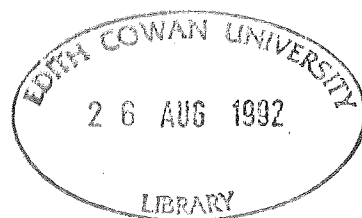
PERTH WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This report documents the findings of a study on Dean Ashenden's proposal for radically restructuring schools. Dean Ashenden is a highly influential educationist in Australia. Over the past twenty years he has written and talked extensively on equality of educational opportunity, the nature of teachers work', and Award Restructuring; his counsel has been sought by key decision makers in education systems throughout the country; and in 1988 he was a facilitator on several occasions during negotiations between the W.A. Ministry of Education and the State School Teachers Union.

In 1990, Ashenden published his now renowned proposal to raise the 'productivity of learning' in the 'education industry'. He did so within the framework of a nation-wide attempt to bring about educational reform through the use of productivity-based industrial awards and agreements. For the past five years, Federal and State governments, unions and employers have all been involved in this exercise as part of a broader agenda to make Australia's economy more internationally competitive.

According to Ashenden, education in Australia faces the following problem. Deep discontent has developed within the teaching profession because of poor wages and working conditions, badly designed work and unsatisfactory relationships with students. Teachers are required to do too many things that are not really teaching and much of their time is frittered away on low level, routine tasks that can be done by less qualified people. Indeed, teaching is the last of the cottage industries where the traditional classroom is the cottage, housing only one type of education worker - the

teacher. Within the 'cottage', teachers are forced to work with students who resist learning and create discipline problems. This situation produces discontented teachers. It also impedes attempts to teach students important thinking, communicating, and problem solving skills, and to encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning. Consequently, the school's capacity to help make Australia's economy internationally competitive is severely reduced.

Having defined the problem in this way, Ashenden goes on to outline his proposed solution. It entails reducing the number of teachers and employing other types of adult education workers to carry out routine, low level teaching tasks in the classroom. The idea here is to free up teachers so that they can spend more time teaching students thinking skills, stimulating creativity and coaching rather than lecturing. The increase in teacher/pupil ratios, says Ashenden, can be offset by new and better use of:

- (a) learning groups - for example, small group work, peer and cross-age tutoring, student managed learning groups;
- (b) technology - for example, computers, distance education packages, sequenced learning programs; and
- (c) pedagogy - for example, goal/work based assessment, negotiated curriculum, behaviour contracts.

Ashenden's proposal also supports reorganising schools on the basis of programs rather than subjects, decentralising administrative responsibilities, setting up a collegial system of school governance and using Advanced Skills Teachers as an alternative to traditional Heads of Departments.

To illustrate the staffing changes in his proposal, Ashenden presents the example of Suburban High, "a typical Victorian comprehensive and co-educational secondary school, of modest size (about 750 students from years 7 to 12) and with middle-of-the-range resourcing" (1990:13). See Table 1.

Recent developments at the national level have heightened the significance of Ashenden's proposal. In fact, his proposal anticipates an important initiative of the National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning (NPQTL). Last year (1991), the NPQTL launched the National Schools Project. It involves 70 schools from all States and Territories

examining how changes to work organisation can lead to improvements in student learning. Employers and unions have indicated their willingness to set aside preconceived positions on what is best for these 70 schools and allow them to design their own form of organisation and teaching. The W.A. Ministry of Education and the State School Teachers Union has already established a steering committee to oversee State participation in the Project. In addition, Ashenden builds into his model what is now a feature of the Ebbeck proposals to change teacher education, namely, internships for student teachers in schools as a significant aspect of their training.

Despite these developments, there has been very little public debate of Ashenden's proposals. In fact, the only published response seems to have come from a few teachers union officials and several academics. (See for example, Flinn 1990, Maloney 1990, Seddon 1991). Apparently no one has systematically researched and published what classroom teachers think.

To be effective, educational reforms must come from bottom up pressure as much as from top down policy determined by representatives of peak councils. The voice of classroom teachers should be heard. Central Office decision makers need to know whether the advice they receive from consultants is considered useful or hopeless by those who have to implement change where it really matters - in the classroom. This applies particularly to structuring the parameters and possibilities for change, prior to their adoption.

Ashenden outlined his proposal with reference to a suburban high school. The purpose of our study was to investigate whether teachers think it applies equally to a junior primary school and if so, why so - and if not, why not. In other words, we wanted to find out from the staff whether there are any characteristics of junior primary schools, and the nature of teachers' work in them, that would make these schools particularly suitable or inappropriate settings for implementing Ashenden's proposal. We also wanted to find out from teachers what they considered the costs and benefits of adopting Ashenden's proposal would be. For example, under what conditions would it work? What would have to be provided or changed to make it work? If it were adopted, how much difference would it really make to the productivity of learning?

CURRENT				RESTRUCTURED			
<i>Category</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Sal</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Sal.</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
Principal	1	48	48	Principal	1	60	60
Deputy	1	42	42	Deputy	1	50	50
Snr T'er	7	36	225	AST	7	42	294
T'er+SRA	11	34	374	T'er+SRA	6	37	222
Teacher	14	32	448	Teacher	9	35	315
Teacher	10	29	290	Teacher	5	32	160
Teacher	15	26	390	Teacher	10	29	290
TOTAL	59		1,844	TOTAL	39		1,391
Registrar	1	30	30	Registrar	1	30	30
Ass Reg	1	23	23	Ass Reg	1	23	23
Typist/CO	3	20	60	Typist/CO	8	20	160
T'er Aide	1	20	20	T'erAide	6	20	120
DA maid	1	14	14	DA maid	1	14	14
Emer t'er			47	Emerg T'er			47
Cleaning			104	Cleaning			104
				Assoc T'er	10	8.5	85
				Social Wkr	2	30	60
				ParentAsst			31
				Consult's			20
				Prof devlp			57
TOTAL	8		298	TOTAL	29		751
GRAND TOTAL	67		2,142	GRAND TOTAL	68		2,142

TABLE 1 - A school restructure based on the Ashenden's Model
SOURCE: Ashenden, 1990 p14

To find answers to these questions we conducted extensive interviews with all the staff at Kewdale Junior Primary School (KJPS) in October 1991. Prior to the interviews we attended a staff meeting at the school and spent an hour outlining and clarifying Ashenden's proposal. After the interviews we sent staff the transcripts and invited them to add, delete or modify anything they had said. A first draft of the report was then written, circulated to the staff for comment and discussed with them at a one hour meeting. At that meeting they approved the use of the school's name in the report, identified some factual inaccuracies and informed us of several developments in the school this year (1992). Overall, they endorsed the report as a fair representation of their views. The italicized comments in footnotes throughout this report present information provided by staff at the one hour meeting.

Before presenting the findings of our study, a thumbnail sketch of the school is necessary. KJPS has 150 primary and pre-primary students who are organised into six classes: two pre-primary, two Year One, and two Year Two. A principal, seven teachers, two teachers aides and a clerical assistant make up the staff of the school. Two of the teachers are in a support role and work part-time. One of the teachers aides is employed part time.

KJPS is set in a working class area. About 20% of the children are of ESL background and many come from State housing areas. A school decision making group, consisting of all the staff and an equal number of parents, meets twice a term and has input into determining the school's purpose, performance indicators, priorities and budget. Several academics from Curtin University serve as informal consultants to the school and a speech pathologist works as a part-time research assistant. KJPS was built 20 years ago on a flexible area plan design so that open classrooms could be arranged by removing partitions. In the Year Two teaching area, there is no division at all. For most of the time, the two Year One classrooms are kept divided. The pre-primary area is under the main roof of the school.

CHAPTER TWO

Are Teachers Unproductive

Ashenden argues that teachers are relatively unproductive and unhappy. These two characteristics reinforce each other. Teachers are unproductive partly because they are unhappy, and they are unhappy partly because they are unproductive.

To raise the productivity of learning, teachers need not trade off their conditions or expect employers to spend more on resources, says Ashenden. In principle, they simply have to work differently to produce better results; that is, work smarter not harder. In practice, though, working smarter is no simple matter. It requires revolutionary changes to the definition of teachers' work, the labour process of schooling, and the division of labour in schools.

DEFINITION OF TEACHERS' WORK

According to Ashenden, a major factor inhibiting educational productivity is that teachers are asked to do "too many things that aren't really teaching" (1990:12). They do too many things that are really the work of clerical staff, managers, administrators, parents, and other professionals. Real teaching is complex work that requires the high level skills of a trained teacher. Work that can be performed without these high level skills, says Ashenden, is not real teaching; it is not really the sort of work that we can afford to pay fully trained teachers to do. The staff at KJPS readily agreed with this distinction between work that is real teaching and work that is not.

When asked to describe aspects of their work they considered to be real teaching, they gave answers such as:

I think it's giving children ways to problem solve, to learn new skills, and experimenting, finding out how to get an answer, that's teaching. The administrative things aren't teaching.

When I get them (students) to really think about what they're learning and question things and to ask me questions about things that can lead on to other areas and just also enjoying what they're doing too. That's when I feel like I've really taught them - when they've enjoyed and learnt at the same time.

When I've been helping them (students) with writing their stories and I come across a child who I know is more capable than the other children and I can point out something that he is ready to learn and I can see in his eyes that he does understand what I'm saying and then when I read another story that he's done and the next moment he's actually put those ideas into practice and he's remembered them, and that's teaching.

Despite knowing what real teaching is and wanting to do it, the staff at KJPS said the biggest problem stopping them is lack of time. The following comments support the line taken by Ashenden.

Giving children individual help I find very difficult to do. There just doesn't seem to be the time The time constraints are really crucial. I really enjoy the one to one, or one to three and four, but there is just not enough time to do that.

I would like to do more activity-based learning and more individualised learning but there's just not enough time in the day and there's just not enough time to organise those sort of things constantly.

I would dearly like to be able to do work in smaller groups, with some peace and quiet. We have bright ideas about the language groups and this and that and the other but I haven't got the time to take those children out.

I haven't got time to hear everybody's ideas and you know I think you've got to either be tight or very well structured programme to carry that out.

In Ashenden's view, teachers lack time to do real teaching because too much of their work involves non teaching 'clutter'. The staff at KJPS agree. In response to a question on what aspects of their work they consider to be not real teaching, they cited activities that fit into five categories:

- (a) supervision - eg. lunch duty, taking children to swimming lessons;
- (b) administration/clerical work - eg. collecting money, giving out notices, taking lunch orders, photocopying;
- (c) preparation - eg. of lesson material, equipment, classroom furniture;
- (d) routine, mechanical, low level teaching - eg. reading a story, drilling, hearing children read; and
- (e) attending to children's problems. The following comments add some flavour to the list.

Administration / Clerical:

The staff observed that not all paper work fits the 'non teaching' category. Some of it is quite technical and requires the expertise of a trained teacher. A lot of it, though, is seen as 'administrivia'.

Collecting money, giving out of things. Those things can be really time consuming, and we waste so much time on them and it is difficult to know what to do with the rest of the class when you are collecting money.

The Department keeps lobbing off everything to us, more things, like in the morning - taking money, and sorting out things.

Preparation:

At KJPS staff can spend "at least half an hour every morning just preparing and photocopying and doing things that somebody else could do." Furthermore:

There's a lot of physical stuff. For instance at the moment we're working with circles and the circles are of the size that the children really aren't able to cut out. Therefore I've sat down and cut out lots and lots of circles which I didn't really think needed three years training for.

Getting my resources ready, going out and finding things for me; go to the library and get these books for me or go into the reading room and bring me the boxes and things like that, the reading material that I need.

I spend my time, my DOTT time just taking things down. I've got an aide, but the aide is only a short time there and I have her doing a myriad other things, like photocopying.

I suppose menial type things like cleaning up.

I spend all my DOTT time putting up some of the children's art yesterday. It could have been spent on catching up on records and that's another thing too, record keeping. Sometimes all you need to do is tick boxes or sit down and be able to copy out a report or something like preparing children's record folders and keeping those up to date.

Low Level Teaching:

Technically, lower level teaching is still teaching. It is included in this list because Ashenden and some teachers at KJPS see it as getting in the way of high level, sophisticated work.

I have mothers helping me with drilling and flash cards and things that I don't have to be there to supervise or be directly involved in.

There are times in the day when I'll sit down for ten minutes and will read a story. I mean, there's teaching within reading too, but sometimes you know it could be just pure enjoyment of literature and you can go off and do something and that's not really, you can't call that part teaching. I spent ten minutes doing some flash card draws this morning; I needn't have done that.

Supervision:

As part of their work, the staff supervise children inside and outside the classroom. When inside, supervision is similar to low level teaching.

Supervising of writing! I don't really see that as really, for me, best value for time. I could see someone else coming in and supervising writing in a way where children are just needing a bit of assistance with words and that. So a parent or someone could take over that role. Hearing children reading! I

wouldn't like to see someone take that role altogether for I feel I learn a lot from what that child knows and how they approach words. But I think as a practice thing, I think that someone else could take over that role as well.

Next week I've got swimming lessons, where I take the children to swimming lessons. I don't do anything there. I am not responsible for taking the lesson. And then I bring them home. That is a waste of my time as a professional person.

Children's Problems:

At times, dealing with children's problems becomes a bottomless pit. In the words of one teacher at KJPS:

You're always coping with children's problems. I mean when you have the children coming in late because of various home reasons, then you have to delve into those. And just helping sick children, counselling children who are having problems, behaviour problems or emotional problems. It's trying to get the children organised, trying to cope with the discipline problems.

UNPRODUCTIVE TEACHING

A lot of non teaching clutter occurs because schooling is the last of the mass cottage industries, says Ashenden. Within the classroom cottage there is virtually no division of labour, scarcely any technology and the teacher is the sole education worker. With the support of Shanker, he claims that the traditional organisation of schools prevents teachers, "actively coaching them (students), teaching thinking skills, stimulating creativity, working with students on rewriting papers, and helping students to learn to read, argue, and persuade" and develop the skills of problem solving (1990:13). Real teaching is not simply producing good citizens and workers, or readers and writers. It is teaching students to think, to be "creative, critical, reflective, autonomous learners" (1990:15).

The staff at KJPS agree with Ashenden. They said they do not do enough of this type of teaching and would like to do a lot more of it.¹ They either state

¹A teacher who was not at the School last year when the interviews were held expressed concern that the report might create an impression that women can not teach in groups and

or suggest that the culture and organisation of the traditional school stifles opportunities to do so. In line with Ashenden, some staff went on to say that thinking, creativity and problem solving skills are taught inadequately because of large, mixed ability classes. The sheer size and complexity of the teacher's role in the 'cottages' seriously hinders real teaching, particularly for the 'bright' children.

No, I don't think I do (teach thinking, creativity and problem solving). I feel that the groups are too big to do that. So, you are teaching to a middle of the road ability. To get problem solving going, you really need to have smaller groups for children to understand and for you to know what they are on about.

And then you've got your range of children to cope with too. You've got your really weak ones who might need extra time to explain things to them. Meanwhile your brighter ones are sitting around probably getting bored because they know it all and they want to get onto something else. And then you are still trying to teach to the middle of the range as well, so you have to spend extra time with the slower ones and it's really hard to have enough activities and be able to say to the really brighter ones, "Well you know what I'm talking about here, off you go and you can discover new things over there with this activity." It's a massive organisational exercise having to cope with the different ranges, the different abilities.

Time and I suppose the organization of the centre itself, and the fact that I have had, like most classrooms, a big range of abilities, and I suppose I do feel that those upper and middle children miss out, and it is the lower end of the scale that gets the attention.

If I have a language session that goes, say for three quarters to an hour, say it's reading a story and then doing some follow up work on thinking and brain-storming or anything like that, where they're working in pairs, giving their ideas. I find that will take up say half an hour and then I've got to cut

that Junior Primary School staff can not teach thinking, creativity and problem solving skills. Her impression was that the staff at KJPS were very skilled in teaching these things and were being modest in not saying so. In response, some staff said that any problem solving they do teach tends to occur at an informal, incidental, hit and miss level rather than be consciously built in to the formally taught syllabus. A supporting view was that only low level problem solving takes place in the classrooms and that more needs to be done to link problem solving to thinking and higher order oral skills. Further discussion suggested that different opinions existed within the group about what counts as problem solving skills.

something else out because I'm doing it on my own. Because I have to listen to every child and they all want a go, I find that, "Oh, I haven't had a go." You've got to listen to them and it's time consuming. If they break off and go into small groups and if you have another person or an adult there, like an aide or a parent and I break them up into groups, I find that more effective.

Not as much as I'd like to. I think that may be due to the class structure I've got. The really bright kids are the ones I would like to challenge in a thinking capacity and I do some but not as much as I'd like to because the others are on a totally different level and they just wouldn't be able to cope with that sort of thing. It's like a split class I guess from that point of view and the thinking, logic skills that you might be trying to teach, the smaller ones the other ones are just way above that level. If they were all more equal you could spend the time doing it for the lot instead of higher level skills for one lot.

Apart from the constraints of working with large, mixed ability classes in the classroom cottage, the staff at KJPS cited other types of factors that interfere with attempts to teach the skills of thinking, creativity and problem solving.² A major constraint for the pre-primary teacher was the age and stage of the children. In her class, social and personal development took priority over intellectual development. In response to how much time was spent on teaching the skills of thinking, problem solving and creativity, she said:

Very little, actually. I spend quite a lot of time teaching social skills and independence skills which are necessary for Year One and may be they are more important than the thinking skills at that stage, because until they can work in a group or be independent learners they are not going to start getting thinking skills. So we have to get on top of that to begin with: the social side and being independent; looking after their belongings; knowing where things are kept; knowing routines, knowing rules and accepting them. And once they get that under their belt, then you start on the thinking skills and problem solving. You try and incidentally work on the problem solving by saying, "What do you think", and try and

²This year (1992), KJPS gained funds from Canberra (DEET) through the "Good Schools" strategy to explore the development of education leadership and the professional roles of the principal and teachers. This will be achieved partly through classroom based action research addressing problem solving and thinking skills.

bring that in incidentally. But I would say I do not actually set them a problem and get them to solve it.

These sentiments are consistent with the views of Ashenden. For him, developing independence and learning how to learn belong to the same genre as learning to think, problem solve and be creative.

In some cases a physical factor impedes attempts to teach the skills of thinking, creativity and problem solving. As one teacher explained:

I've got such a small room, and things that take up room. I'd like to be able to have more room physically. Just a bigger classroom with lots of little nooks. I could have a reading corner, a writing corner and a maths corner.

We don't have the additional classroom areas to really accommodate small group work.

A third factor, and one less consistent with Ashenden's argument, was outlined in terms of 'teacher deficit' rather than 'school deficit': that is, teachers being held back not by the structure of the school but by their own level of skills and perspective. The following comments are significant, then, because they imply that the solution to making education more productive lies with changing the teacher, not the school.

I don't think in the specific language that I'm doing at the moment I give them much chance for creativity. My daughter goes to a school where it has happened. And I see that her school, her classroom in very much language based and so it is done. It's not easy though. Maybe if I was trained better in that We had a lady come and show us some fabulous ideas. We were all really taken by it and it's really set in my mind but I'd like to see it right there and someone demonstrate it for me and I can go on from there but I suppose not having taught in that particular way, I'm not really happy to do that In fact I'm learning quite a bit from my daughter's teacher and I feel happier but I haven't had the opportunity to take that role on. I can see the effect it has on the class.

I'd say, not enough (teaching the skills of thinking, creativity and problem solving). We have decided that we are going to do more in that area generally, and we have already allocated somebody a day a week to be responsible for that. The language person we have got from the Ministry has got a great interest in that area. She is working with individual teachers on giving

them ideas, starting in pre-primary, on how to get children more active in the oral roles.

Not much (teaching the skills of thinking, creativity and problem solving) because maybe it's just not a way of teaching that is stressed. I would find it difficult because I don't think that way myself. It would take two or three years to get myself to teach like that The teacher would have to change. To think that you might not get a result or an answer in black and white; that would be the hardest thing to change. I suppose the noise level would go up because there'd be a lot of experimenting and everything formalised would have been tossed out of the window. And that is how we've been bought up ourselves, going through the school system, that's why it would take a long time. People don't like change and a lot of teachers rely on how they, what their school experiences were like. I had a brief stint at a school in South Australia back in 1970 that was the first open school, when they started open schooling, but most of my experience has been formalized, traditional. So I think the biggest hurdle would have to be the teacher's attitude. Those other things could be learned as you went along, learning about the noise level and learning about not getting results

While these comments locate the problem in the realm of teachers' skills and attitudes, the reality could be more complex than that. For instance, the last comment suggests that teachers' attitudes are determined largely by the way schools are organised and that, by implication, those attitudes can not be changed in isolation from changes to the structure of schools.

UNPRODUCTIVE LEARNING

Ashenden observes that because the nature of teachers' work in the cottage consists largely of routine and mechanical teaching, the nature of students' work (the labour process of schooling) is largely routine and mechanical learning. Instead of doing creative work, and learning to argue and persuade and produce, students spend their time sitting still and being quiet.

The KJPS staff generally agreed that real learning does not occur all of the time in their classrooms. Some referred to a tendency to "frill and not skill" and said that only about 50 percent of classroom activity was productive. They described unproductive activities as listening to stories (where

children learned to sit patiently), playing (undirected learning), marking time (children learning to wait for the next lesson, especially brighter children), and practice work (typically keeping kids busy endlessly colouring in an assorted array of blackline masters). And while they acknowledged that wait time can be a valuable learned skill, they worried that when it reached a certain proportion it became counterproductive. In the words of one teacher:

My ideal classroom is where a lot of work is going on which really does produce real learning, as against 25 kids sitting in the class doing a blackline master. I would say here we are not blackline master crazy but it still goes on, as from a real learning point of view there is not as high a percentage as I would like to see it. In any situation where there's a wide range, there's going to be slack time with those who have finished quickly. They are not being productive because they are just waiting to get on to the next task the smaller the group the less slack time there is because you can cater for individuals more easily.

On the other hand, staff were aware that appearances can be deceptive, particularly in the junior primary school. They pointed out that making judgements about what constitutes productive learning can pose real problems, as this teachers muses:

In the pre-primary you know there's the great saying: "Play is children's work". So maybe they're doing some learning that I can't particularly record or write down, like in the block corner, when they're building a fantastic building or they're balancing a fantastic block on the other - that sort of thing - and they're learning about balance and they are learning but it's not chalk and talk type learning.

CLOSING COMMENT

The staff at KJPS accept Ashenden's distinction between work that is real teaching and tasks that are not real teaching. They also agree that having to do too many things that are not really teaching reduces the productivity of learning in their classrooms. However, whereas Ashenden holds the 'cottage' responsible for limiting the effectiveness of teaching, the staff at KJPS focussed more on large, mixed ability classes and insufficient ancillary

help and "room to move" as factors structuring the nature of their work. This is not inconsistent with Ashenden's diagnosis, but it does represent a difference in emphasis.

Another difference between Ashenden and the KJPS staff emerges when teacher performance is seen as a function of ability plus effort plus opportunity ($P = A + E + O$). Ashenden's diagnosis of the problem concentrates almost exclusively on the opportunity component of the formula, particularly opportunities limited by the cottage industry organisation of schools; though, his argument does imply that teachers must learn to do things differently. For some staff at KJPS, the key to good performance is the ability of the teacher. An issue here is whether the overriding cause of low educational productivity should be located in the realm of school deficit or teacher deficit.

While the staff said that the productivity of learning could be higher in their classrooms, some of them indicated that it was not as low as Ashenden suggests. For example, they gave varied estimates of how much time was spent on non teaching activities. The range stretched from 10-20%; that is, from half a day to one full day a week. Put differently, most staff said they spend most of their time on real teaching.

Finally, in line with Ashenden, the staff at KJPS acknowledged the importance of checking their outcome focus against national thrusts, particularly the recommendations of the Finn Report. As the Principal observed:

This exercise will highlight the need for us to spend more time on developing skills in areas such as thinking and negotiating.

CHAPTER THREE

Restructuring Teachers' Work

Ashenden contrasts the nature of teachers' work with that of other workers. He points out that the division of labour in the metal industry developed into 364 separate occupations characterised by narrow and rigid demarcation, restrictive work practices, and de-skilling of workers. Restructuring that industry requires broad banding jobs and multi-skilling workers to perform them. However, says Ashenden, the education industry faces the reverse situation - the range of tasks given to teachers is too broad and the range of education workers in schools is too narrow. Instead of being multi-skilled to take on a wider range of jobs, teachers need to be deep skilled to concentrate on high level educational work.

On these grounds, and within existing levels of resourcing, Ashenden proposes a different division of labour. It involves employing proportionately fewer teachers and more of two kinds of other workers, namely: education workers (interns, paid parents, and trained teacher aides) to do the lower level, less complex teaching tasks; and non-teaching workers to do clerical/secretarial tasks which support the teaching and learning process. With the assistance of these two types of workers, teachers could concentrate exclusively on high level sophisticated teaching, curriculum development, and supervising the other education workers. In Ashenden's view, the introduction of this tiered system would remove the flat structure that typifies the organisation of teaching, allow teachers to shed some of the clutter, and enable schools to raise the productivity of learning.

We were interested to find out from the KJPS staff how much work is done already by parents and teacher aides in the school, what level of involvement they would like to see from such workers, the tasks such

workers might be involved in, and what impediments to Ashenden's proposal they might foresee.

INVOLVEMENT OF OTHER EDUCATION WORKERS

At present, parents at KJPS, participate in classroom activities such as supervising small reading and maths groups, assisting with art and tabloid sports activities, and helping in the library. The extent of this involvement varies considerably and depends upon the teacher, as in the case of one who has up to ten parents in her room for some activities. More generally, the Principal reported that when a morning tea was held for parents who had helped during the year, over one third of the families who send children to KJPS were represented. The staff felt that the junior primary level of schooling manages to attract parent participation in a way the upper levels of primary schooling do not. They viewed parents currently working in the classroom in positive terms and as affecting outcomes. For example:

They're really helping me out because I would have to run groups anyway. What they're doing is supervising my groups with my work, making sure the task gets done.

At a more general level, parents, other adults, and in some cases other students, participate in school activities for various reasons, including research, work experience, and community sharing. The staff said that these inputs add to the diversity of the schooling experience for students but do little to change the work role of the teacher. Also, they require considerable amounts of co-ordination and structuring in order to maximise opportunities.

Two teacher aides work part-time within the school. For some teachers, this amounts to no more than two hours per week and was seen to be inadequate. An aide often allows a great deal of activity-based work to take place and enhances the quality of learning. Several teachers expressed a preference for a full-time aide. Almost all staff agreed that they'd like more adult workers in the school, because:

There'd be so much more you could do. And the expectations for these kids and their individual differences could be catered for.

It would be great. I'd love him or her to be able to take a group out, take a walk out, or be able to direct some questions.

If you can shelve off some of them as clerical or administrative types it would be very convenient. You would be able to devote your attention to children and their needs.

QUALIFIED SUPPORT FOR MORE EDUCATION WORKERS

The staff qualified their enthusiasm for employing other types of education workers. They said that planning, skill areas of the curriculum, direct teaching, managing student behaviour, assessment, recording and documentation, and the basis of the programme must be closely controlled by the teacher. The following comments were offered in response to the question, "What wouldn't you hand over to para professionals and parent workers?"

The organisation, like the planning. I'd have to be involved in the planning and organisation and set it up. Once it was set up I could say to them, "The group over there needs an adult. And there's a group over there that are involved in some art and craft work and they need direction and that's the direction I want you to take."

I'd be very hesitant in handing over managing behaviour because the children in my classroom know the sort of boundaries expected from me just being there ... my presence.

The teacher would still have to do all the planning. You could hand over some of the preparation once you got on the same wave-length and they knew your methods, expectations or system.

I wouldn't let go of maths. Possibly I would hand over social studies, health, physical education perhaps. But even then I would want to know what they were doing.

The assessment, some of the direct teaching, well all the direct teaching because I know what I'm wanting to get over.

Some of the recording would have to be done by the teacher because if you're actually doing it and involved in it, it makes you more aware of where the children are at. It is a fairly mechanical thing but if someone else did that and you just glanced through it, I don't believe you would get the same feel for it.

Although the staff viewed some of these tasks as a bit mechanical, they felt the issue at stake is their intimate knowledge of the child's progress. They considered that an increased supervisory role would separate them from the students and potentially undermine the often fragile sensibility teachers have of the child's progress and dilemmas. Either way, paraprofessional and parent workers would have to be carefully chosen and well-trained.

AN IDEOLOGY OF TEACHERS' WORK

The more we interviewed the KJPS staff, the more one paradoxical point became clear: while the staff endorsed Ashenden's proposal for a different division of labour, they did not want to abandon the classroom cottage. They wanted more paraprofessional and paid parent help, but only within the cottage. Ashenden would see this as a case of reform by additional resourcing rather than reform within existing levels of resourcing - perhaps a case of more of the same, rather than working differently to achieve better results - a case of teachers wanting their cake and eating it too.

In analysing the staff responses to questions surrounding this issue, it also became clear that in the final analysis they were arguing basically for the status quo - albeit a better resourced status quo. If forced to choose between having extra adult education workers and keeping their own classroom cottage, they would opt for the cottage. In one way or another they put forward a wide range of reasons for wanting to work within their own traditional classroom cottage. These reasons represent a case for retaining tasks that are not really teaching, for retaining the division of labour established in schools over the past 100 years, and for retaining a broad, generalist, caring role with students. Not all staff cited all the reasons outlined below. However, the list does constitute the makings of an ideology for a traditional organisation of teachers' work which incorporates the cottage industry approach to schooling.

(1) As part of their whole school approach and philosophy of education, the staff believe that raising the 'productivity of learning' requires more than just 'real teaching'. It depends on a broader condition - creating the right environment for learning. This entails establishing positive interpersonal relations with pupils, providing pastoral care, and building good relations with the community. It also involves teachers taking part in the corporate life of the school and getting to know all the children, not just the ones they teach.

Lunchtime duties are a good time for contact with children throughout the whole school, so they do have a place, but I do find them a burden to.

I think that playground duty would be okay for because teachers get to know the other children a lot more. It is not necessarily their own class. And I think if they only do a playground duty or two a week, I can't see a problem there.

Yes, but I enjoy that though (playground duty). I enjoy all parts of my teaching so I suppose there are lots of things that could be named as not teaching I think it reminds you once you are out on playground duty that they are people, that you are not there just to teach them all day long. They've got their socialising to do and understanding of other people and things like that. So it brings you back to earth I suppose I enjoy it and it's freeing - you can chat to that person that you might not have had contact with in the whole week but that little personality has something to tell you. One particular girl all year made a point of being, when I was on duty - that I was accessible to her to talk to. She barely talked all year but when I was on duty she'd always come and stand next to me for half the year and then for the last part of the year she chatted to me.

If you really want to involve the community it involves having a lot of functions, like grandparents' day, which generally ends in a BBQ or some things like that which really entices the community in and gives great support, but then immediately the teachers have an additional role.

(2) Another reason relates to efficiency and effectiveness. Some staff felt multi-skilled to the point where it is quicker to do their own clerical work than hand it over to a secretary. Others saw the preparation of lesson materials, even those requiring only low level skills, as an effective medium through which they could equip themselves for high skill tasks.

It's probably a little more different for me because I've had a secretarial training so I naturally type all my own notes that go home to parents and anything else I do and I don't mind doing that It gets done more quickly than if I have to jot it down and give it to the secretary to do. By the time I've explained exactly what you meant and she went away and did it, it wouldn't save any time.

I've thought of the preparation you do before school or at home at night or in your DOTT time as still part of teaching. The preparation of materials I do because that's something you've been thinking through and it is directly connected to the children's learning and outcomes.

(3) The staff at KJPS also saw a broad role within the 'cottage' as providing teachers with a lot of autonomy and flexibility, enabling them to be responsive to the changing moods and interests of children.

I think the ideal situation for me is in a full time classroom because your teaching can be over the day instead of in a couple of hours. If something interests the children - that particular lesson might be done on a Wednesday afternoon rather than just Monday morning. That is the downfall of having a specialist staff because you do lose flexibility. I remember back to (.....) - you have the room and you're allocated the TV room till 2 o'clock or whatever. So you're restricted by your timetable and high schools would find it even more so - that's their daily routine. But I think in a junior primary your flexibility needs to be there.

There are mechanical and routine things but I see them as being minimal here at the moment I don't see much of my day not being a teaching day. I think about children's news sessions. Initially when I first came out of College I thought, "Oh gosh, we're going to have news, and why do we have news." But now I can see real value in that and use it so that it becomes a teaching situation. They're in control of that whole audience. And now my views have really changed. I realise just how important it is for them to have control of an audience, to speak, to feel confident, and I use it as a session on modelled writing as well. So we often write our news up straight from that person's conversation. As I go through my day, with things in mind I could pass on to other people to do, there is not many I feel comfortable giving to other people to do.

(4) Two thirds of the KJPS staff wanted their job to remain broad rather than narrowed, partly because of the nature of the junior primary school. For them, a more specialised role may be appropriate from Year Four up, but not for the lower grades.

I don't know at an early age in junior primary that specialisation would be ideal. I can see the advantages in high schools definitely and grade six and seven. Maybe even Grade Five. But in Grade One and Two, I really don't know to be quite honest with you.

I feel that it's quite different in pre-primary. It needs to be broad. It is because there are so many areas that need to be developed.

(I prefer being a) generalist, because if I wanted to be a specialized teacher I would have done high school teaching and chosen a pathway in one subject to do. But I didn't want to do that.

(5) A related reason, for keeping the teacher's role broad, centred on perceptions about the nature of junior primary school children. In the view of some KJPS staff, young children need a 'cottage parent' type of teacher, together with the patronage that such a teacher can bestow. They saw the close relationship between student and teacher, generated by the cottage model, as being central to their own construction of a competent and caring teacher.³

Most children need one particular teacher all the time. I think there should be somebody they relate to - I suppose it's a parent figure - that's there most of the time or they know where or how they can contact even if it's through someone else. You have children who come and say, "I need to talk to Mrs such and such, can you tell them a message?" They obviously need to relate to a particular person.

³Last year, the teachers thought the children should have a home base with one teacher all the time. This year (1992) a Year One class has lessons in a transportable with one teacher in the morning, goes to another room with a different teacher in the afternoon and, according to the staff "It works OK". Further, this year there are times when one teacher takes both Year One classes simultaneously and conducts lessons with the assistance of parents. In fact, when the staff reflected on the matter, they said that by the time specialists are taken into account, as many as six adults work with the same Year One class of 26 children. Another development this year involves half a Year One class going to the pre-primary centre for a short time while half the pre-primary class go to the Year One room.

Up until about Year Three or Year Four they're still children, they're still babies, they still need to have someone that they're so close to. I would feel very flattered if a child regarded me as a parent figure. Very flattered! Because it means that they're close to me and they've formed a relationship.

I'd like to see it the way it is now. You still have that individual contact with the child. For the junior primary I think the children should stay in their own classroom, where they can learn to trust the person.

Collecting money or whatever is always part of the job that's going on anyway. You collect the money and say, "Let's see what we've got and that's why we're collecting and whatever and that's part of it. It becomes part of the day because we are collecting money and it's part of their day. I really believe children like to be involved in administration too. If you give them a job which you think, "That's a job I really don't want to do, can that child do it?" And they learn by that experience - they've learnt that social contact with the principal or the registrar and I think that's an important part of their social growth as well. My daughter comes home, "The best part of the day was I got to order the teacher's lunch." That's been a real plus for her that day and I think a lot of children are like that.

I think too many people dealing with kids at this age is not a good thing. Teachers need to keep a finger on things.

I think (within the cottage model) you have a better relationship with children. They need to relate to somebody like a home teacher.... somebody they can talk to.

(6) Several staff cited the nature of the curriculum as a reason for maintaining a generalist role. In their view, a broad curriculum generates a broad role and even if a bit unpalatable, teachers have no option but to accept that situation.

I feel at the primary level you have to look at the teacher as being a generalist, because there is so much that she, or he has got to teach. I think the problem is that so many of the things that we do, have not had professional development accompanying them. We now get asked from Central Office to teach child abuse procedures, you have to teach LOTE in the primary school, these sorts of things. It is just that teachers then say, well that was not in our original training. We go, but it still something additional.

I think it's pretty broad, you're encompassing so many things throughout your time in the school and throughout the day. You're expected to do so many things.

(7) A different type of rationale centred on what it means to belong to a team and exercise collegiality. Teachers at KJPS feel that the division of labour needs to take into account the work-related and personal needs of support staff. At times, living and working together at the school requires sharing the skilled and less skilled work. The perspectives of a teacher's aide and the teacher she assists provide an interesting case in point. The aide's story is as follows:

Q: Having been the assistant for six years - if you had to take over the job tomorrow for a month or so - because there was no one else to come in - could you do it?

A: I could do it. I wouldn't be allowed to do it. But I could do it.

Q: You feel that over the years you've gained the skills and the knowledge and the understandings?

A: Yes, but I'm not a teacher.

Q: So the only thing stopping you is formal requirements?

A: That would be the Ministry's understanding. It wouldn't be allowed. But yes, I do it, often.

Q: What sort of things do you do that teaching assistants are not trained to do?

A: Very often the teacher might be called away and I just take over and the class just runs as if she was there. But it's a mutual agreement that we do it that way. I might be telling the story and she might clean the paints - that sort of thing.

Q: Does that happen very often, by mutual agreement?

A: Yes.

Q: What else, apart from the story and the paints?

A: It might be outside equipment. There again I might be going to tell the story and she'll put the outside equipment away.

Q: Apart from that, what else?

A: I might take a maths session, I might take a music session.

The teacher's perspective on the situation was as follows:

For the last few years the Department has said that my aide must work half a day in the primary area of the school, whereas in years gone by there were two of us, and now I'm doing a lot of the aide's work because she has no time to do it. So last Friday I spent cleaning out a cupboard, which she just doesn't have time to do. The time she used to have to do that she's now working with Year Ones. From time to time I clean out the paint pots and things but that's more my choice than really having to do it. It's because I've thought, "Well it would be nice for the children to have this story read by the aide, who's a good story teller, and it would be nice for her not to have to do paint pots for once." And so I'm fairly flexible that way. I pick up where I see there's a need, if the floor needs wiping or something. Or if the aide is busy there's no point in stopping her if I can do it. So I made that quite clear to her when she first came here that we share the job, and if there's things to be done that need to be done that are normally done by her and I've got two free hands, then I'll do them. Usually we're both doing activities. At the end of the day I'll help her if we've been very busy, and I'll still read the story, but if there's still a lot to put away then I'll help her do that.

All of this is not to say that aides can replace pre-primary teachers. There is a lot more to teaching than keeping a class together for an hour. The whole role of the teacher needs to be taken into account. This includes responsibility for planning, preparation, programming, record keeping, evaluation and follow up work, student and parent counselling, and report writing.

The following four reasons for remaining in the cottage, and retaining the traditional division of labour in schools, focus more directly on the interests of teachers than on the interests of students.

(8) For one teacher having a paraprofessional in the classroom would do little to alleviate the workload, for she would delegate very little, aside from bringing out pencils and sharpeners and doing some casual marking. All else was seen as teaching and therefore her work.

They'd (education workers) have to be someone who could organise and resource and write out programmes for themselves. Otherwise it's just a waste of time: I'm just doing double work, and I wouldn't want them. I manage better by myself, organising myself.

(9) The prospect of losing power and control made Ashenden's proposal unattractive to some teachers.

I am still hesitant in relinquishing my power and control in working with paraprofessionals.

I don't like the idea of not being a mother duck I suppose.

I'm one of these people who wants to take on the responsibility of teaching and teaching happens to be a big part of my day.

(10) For some teachers, the prospect of extra adult education workers and a new division of labour invoked feelings of incompetence about working in a team and, in some instances, with large groups of students. Most teachers in our study had never really worked in a team. They viewed themselves "not as a team-teaching person" and worried that they might "lose sight of their own teaching". Again, the spectre of sweeping aside the cottage model and cottage mother threatened the teachers' sense of professional satisfaction and security .

(Under Ashenden's proposal) you wouldn't be assigned to a class or a group of children. So you wouldn't be responsible for those children and therefore do your utmost to develop them.

I'm not all against the other one (Ashenden) because I'm sure it could be very effective in a well managed way. You see I've got to change my whole line of thinking, for I've always taught one teacher one classroom. I've never even cross-set or even

in smaller situations team teaching... but I'd have to change my whole idea of teaching and thinking, for I'm fairly set in my ways.

I don't think I am the sort of person to (team teach). It's not that I like to be in my own room and close the door, but I don't think I can cope with that.

I think the size of 70 children would not be so effective with such low grades because they are very distracted by each other. And even if you had on the periphery other teachers or support staff, I still think they are going to find it hard to concentrate on that one teacher giving instructions. I would worry that I wasn't getting through, that I couldn't be aware of 70 children, and that they were all listening and that they were all interpreting what I meant accurately. Whereas you can do that much more easily with a smaller group you know just with eye contact and seeing by their manner whether they are tuned in with you or not.

(11) For one teacher, being relieved of all her non teaching tasks raised the problem of legal responsibility:

The teacher who was here before me didn't want anything to do with the money or the registers and so she got the aide to do them. When I came I knew that the register is a legal document and my responsibility. The money is also my responsibility. If there's anything wrong, the buck stops with me.

DEEP SKILLING VERSUS MULTI SKILLING

Deep skilling entails two types of development: keeping on top of curriculum subject matter and devising new ways to teach students, particularly in non classroom settings. As indicated in the previous section, the KJPS staff in effect opted for maintaining the cottage and the cottage mother role within it, in preference to Ashenden's model of a restructured school. Not surprisingly, given their acceptance of a multifaceted role, they also opted for professional development in the area of new skills rather than deep skilling. In response to the question - "Would you rather develop new skills or strengthen the ones you already have?" - the KJPS staff made comments such as:

I tend to look on the job so that if I don't know something I will go ahead and learn it. I'll go and find out; that's just me. If there is anything I feel I need for the job, well I'll take account of the courses. When I've had to fill in a job specification, I had something like 300 questions I had to answer. I did not put in lots of professional development needs, because I had just thought I would sort that out. If there is anything I don't know I will go out and decide whether that is something I need to take on board. I've never really had a problem with keeping myself as a professional.

I suppose one always wants to acquire new skills. I'd like to learn a bit more about the computer.

I'd say, to develop new skills. The skills that I have are fairly well developed. I guess you could still develop them naturally, but I still think the sorts of things probably that we would like to achieve, teachers don't have those sorts of skills.

I think as you're teaching you develop greater strengths in what you're teaching - like in the specialist area that I've got now, I'm developing skills that I need. I've had very little contact with pre-primary and I'd really like in a few years to get into a pre-primary but I've not had the opportunity to do so, so I'd like to develop more skills in that area. I think you broaden your own skills as you teach.

However, some staff who said they would like to develop new skills rather than strengthen existing ones may in fact have been referring to deep skilling rather than multiskilling. This applies particularly when deep skilling refers to anything which improves the teacher's expertise to develop children's capacity to think, problem solve, be creative and take responsibility for their own learning. For example, despite appearances, the following comment from a KJPS teacher really represents a plea for deep skilling.

I think I would like to develop new skills, such as helping the children with difficulties, particularly with the children who've got the ability to be pushed on. I'd like to have the skills to be able to extend the children as well, learn new skills for that, because I feel I don't do enough of it to become really familiar and at ease with it. I don't quite know where to take them next, because my time is with the lower end of the children, trying to get them up, rather than extend the top ones. If I could get new skills on how to extend the children and had

skills in time management, that would be the two that would stand out at the moment.

With several other teachers, a preference for deep skilling, based upon a narrowing of their role, was quite unequivocal.

I think to strengthen the skills that I already have. I mean I'm always open to new skills but I feel as if I've got enough skills at the moment but just to be able to strengthen them and to have the time to implement them.

I'd like more depth in my own skills. So that I really know what I'm doing and that I am really confident that what I am doing is the right thing. The specifics of programming. Exactly what steps you should follow when taking and developing reading skills. And the maths as well, although maths is something that is more natural to me. The steps for reading and learning to read I feel are very specific really, and to really get to know what they are and to follow then and reassess what you are doing.

THE ORGANISATION OF LEARNING GROUPS

Ashenden's proposal to experiment with different ways of doing educational work in schools has implications for the organisation of learning groups and the use of technology. Changes in these areas are necessary, he says, because employing less teachers and more adult education workers will increase teacher/student ratios. They are also necessary to reassure teachers that schools can operate without traditional classroom cottages.

With respect to the organisation of learning groups, Ashenden advocates greater use of team teaching, peer tutoring, individualised learning contracts, and cross age tutorial sessions. At KJPS formal peer tutoring takes place in some classrooms while in others it occurs incidentally. The staff also said that isolated instances of individual learning and cross age tutoring occur occasionally. Apart from peer tutoring, however, the strategies referred to by Ashenden occupy a minor place compared with traditional whole class teaching at KJPS.

When they sit down with things like playing with parcels you'll hear them helping each other, and they'll say, "Can I come and do that with you?" And they're sort of showing, saying, "No, that can't go there cos it hasn't got a straight edge", or whatever, and so they're learning from each other in that way. You don't have to illustrate that, it just happens. I encourage them to ask if they can join in or sometimes say, "Can so and so do that with you?" But I'm not really directing it.

One or two of them will help their next door neighbour with spelling words or with work when they are doing a sheet, so there's a little bit of it that goes on.

The peer tutoring is used to a limited extent. I am thinking of one of the Year 2 teachers getting some of the children to read stories to the Year 1's and to talk about it at that level. We get some very efficient computers users in Year 2 and they assist some of the other children at that level.

When they have activity times they will work together in a group, unsupervised, with a game or something like that. They will help each other and say, "That's not how you do it." So there is scope for it, but it is not structured

Team teaching takes place here in pockets. I mean some teachers are quite comfortable to do that, the kind of collective Phys Ed. that you saw this morning, collective folk-dancing. It's almost as if they are really very happy to do it in a kind of frill situation rather than the skilled.

According to the Principal, the staff had seriously considered how best to group the children for better learning. They decided that, "looking developmentally at children," the best form of organisation would be to group them across the grades, but the shortage of rooms tended to "dull the thinking in that area." Just before Christmas, the school received news of an extra demountable for 1992. As a result, said the Principal, 1992 is to be a more imaginative year: four small classes in the morning to merge into three in the afternoon - in order to free a teacher for professional development - and "teachers are already discussing team teaching in the P.M. sessions.

The KJPS staff, then, are not opposed in principle to team teaching, peer tutoring, individualised learning contracts and cross age tutorial groups. In practice, they do use some of these strategies within and across the cottages,

particularly in the case of mathematics, language, arts and crafts.⁴ But the extent of the use is limited. Interestingly, in singling out the major constraining factor, the staff identified not the nature of the junior primary cottage or the nature of the alternative strategies. Instead, they nominated the nature of the children. For example:

I think may be with children who are further on than the others, you could use it (individualised learning contracts) a bit.

No, not at present, but I have used them (individualised learning contracts) and I think they worked especially well with those that are achieving at a high level.

(Do you use individualised learning contracts?) No, not with this class. I don't think I really could. Maybe with one child I could probably do it, but that to me is not enough to warrant to do all the work that I'd need to do for it. I have use contracts before quite effectively with a different class but this class doesn't really lend itself to that. They're less independent. They really do need guidance to keep on task.

Despite their perceptions of junior primary school children, and past experiences with alternative organisational strategies, the staff at KJPS had not dismissed Ashenden's proposal out of hand. They saw considerable potential in the strategies he proposed and remained open to persuasion.

It'd be an organisational nightmare, but I think once you got the organisation going probably the bigger class sizes with more help would be really goods - you could really do a lot of activity work, a lot of things together.

I think the individualised learning contract approach would be a really good way to go, especially if we had the people to help.

You do tend to get very isolated in you own classroom. (With team teaching) you can see different ways of teaching - different methods and different kinds of activities. You just have so many more ideas and methods to combine. I think everybody would benefit -the children, you, the whole thing would benefit.

⁴For example, this year (1992) teachers have organised mathematics groups across Year One and Two and have utilized parent help. They are currently planning to do the same with language groups.

TECHNOLOGY

A further component of Ashenden's proposal for enabling teachers to work 'smarter, not harder' entails greater use of technology - computers, distance education materials and self paced learning packages. Basically he argues for student self-managed production processes having forms that are visible and invisible, manual and 'on-line'. Using this typification, computers are visible and automated forms of technology, whereas self-paced learning packages such as SRA boxes found in many schools are invisible and manual. In the latter case, student's learning experiences and outcomes are structured by the ideological controls within the form and the content of the box.

Although the staff at KJPS make limited use of self-managed learning technologies in the classroom, they have tried to 'move with the times', particularly with regard to computers. Most staff were prepared to examine how greater use could be made of computers in the classroom and undergo further skill training to do so. As the following comment indicates, the school has made a substantial effort to upgrade its work in this area.

One of the Year One teachers has given a couple of hours per week to be our Computer Person. She's quite interested so she's been able to assist teachers. We have a system where all of our Year Two's have gained a certificate for skill of operation. They all know how to operate a computer, put a programme in, take it out, put the software disk back. They are beginning to use it for word processing now. We think that's very good for a Year Two child and we have a lot of Year One's who are able to do that as well. Over the last two years we have put a lot of emphasis on that. I think we have a really good assessment programme in that. We assess even the pre-primary when the children come in - what their awareness, knowledge, their language skill in computer language, their use and skill - and we move through those four parameters of learning and we know exactly where the children are across the school in that. We could be basically audited in terms of use of computer in the school and we could present very detailed information on that - how many children are still at that basic awareness level, how many are really into skill and use, how many are getting into using more technical language with computers. We are really monitoring that and getting quite a kick out of doing it. [Is it one of your priority areas?] Yes it is. And again, going along side that, it's opened up the teacher development issues because the more we've assessed the more

we've found the teachers have said, "I want to do more but I don't know how to do it." So we've opened and been able to direct quite a bit of our money into that area and send them on courses. All teachers here now can operate a computer, which is a lot better than we had.

Again, despite the staff's willingness to 'give computers a go', they do not regard computers as a serious alternative to whole class teaching. Their reservations are based not just on lack of adequate software, but also upon what they regard as the excessive influence of non creative screen time in children's lives - school visual display units, television, videos, and home computer games.

As the (pre-primary) children still can not read, it is hard to find enough software that is suitable for their level. Maybe it is out there somewhere but we don't have it in the school.⁵

I think there is not enough software, plus you have to spend some time at the beginning of the year teaching them how to use them and you have to be very careful with the Year One class especially at the beginning of the year - that they have got things they can actually do without having to read them too.

I feel they get enough of looking at screens elsewhere and I would rather devote time to something more creative.

No, I'm yet to be convinced. Though on the one hand I did have a little boy who had very very short concentration span, but who sat in front of the computer for ages. How much he was actually taking in was another thing. He enjoyed it, but what he was learning I would question. I don't really, I'm not convinced about computers in pre-primary. Nobody's ever told or shown me that it does any good.

Few staff had thought through the possibilities of using distance education materials and self-paced learning packages. As with computers, they were not opposed in principle to using them. They just considered the value of these packages to be limited to those few children who could not be serviced adequately within the 'normal' whole class teaching approach: children going overseas, children with learning difficulties, and gifted children in need of enrichment. Also, from the viewpoint of job satisfaction, the

⁵*It is starting to happen now (1992)*

teachers regarded these technologies at best as irrelevant and at worst as detracting.

My day is organised so that I'm keeping control. We have a lesson and they do follow up work. You know, if the (self-paced learning) material was there, if it fits into the programme of work, yes.

I think, well I've had no problems in the past and I'm happy with the way things are going. You know, if there's anything there I need to change I will, but basically I've been really successful in the way I've been teaching, so it's I guess very hard for me to change, so you do what you know is right.

ORGANISATION OF THE SCHOOL

Ashenden argues for the school, not the teacher, becoming the unit of change. He wants educational reform to be based on a broad industry rather than a narrow (teacher) award restructuring perspective. This means a shift away from an individual and own classroom outlook to a wider corporate one. It means adopting an organisational structure based on the broad functions that have to be carried out for a school to achieve its purpose, rather than having an organisational structure built on the established interests of individual departments or units within the school. It means replacing heads of subject departments with managers of programs that cut across the traditional boundaries of the school; that is, replacing subject fiefdoms with a cabinet style of school governance.

The staff at KJPS readily agree with Ashenden on these matters and claim that a program approach already prevails within each classroom and to some extent across classrooms. At Kewdale, children are grouped for learning by age, not subject, and subject learning occurs largely within an integrated or thematic structure. When asked whether the nature of their work was organised around subjects, the staff said:

Not really because, I mean when you concentrate on one particular subject, that blends into a lot of other subjects. It's really - how would I term it - whole of life learning.

I do teach things like reading, so there is subject centredness in it. But I tend to integrate that as much as I can in the curriculum.

I'm conscious of what needs to be in each subject, but I try to put it together so that it becomes an interesting package rather than a set of isolated situations.

I suppose we could say thematically. We work around themes, about social and nature and health and things like that, community.

It sort of works out a little like that. So you think that your timetabling is areas, so you are not locked in to certain subjects for certain times. I am quite flexible. I could have a language session when it could be maths time. Then it becomes a language mathematics time, so it's sort of fairly integrated so it doesn't need to go from subject to subject.

KJPS does not have heads of subject departments, so, unlike traditional high schools, there are no subject fiefdoms to dismantle. Instead, it has key teachers in areas of computing, language, maths, equity and library. The coordinators encourage staff to take a corporate role within the school, and to assist in developing a school profile for activities within these specific areas. They also assist with student assessment in their priority areas and take a leadership role in programming, resource management, and informing parents.

We've got an equity program, transition language, and I'll be involved in the library next year, so I'll be more or less responsible for it.

The (coordinators) have a role other than a class role. They have their class, but to try to get this idea of corporate role in the school, they have identified what they consider to be a talent they have.

We have somebody who has been looking into the maths. She's responsible for getting the gear together for the maths, and finding out about the latest things in maths and as a group together we've sort of come up with an assessment for maths. Same with the computer. The coordinator does all the computing and buys the programmes for the computer and sets out aims and things for the computer so we do have people who are responsible for areas.

As part of their key teacher role, they demonstrate good teaching practice, and document planning programs for the whole school.

KJPS has adopted a whole school approach to governance that makes it more participative than Ashenden's proposal for a cabinet style of decision making. In answer to the question - how would you describe the system of decision making in the school - some staff said:

Very democratic, although the principal does a lot of the planning for school development and things like that and gives us a lot of guidance, but generally around the table. We get a lot of chance to contribute.

I see a very strong leadership role here, but in a very democratic way. Everyone has input into many decisions that have to be made. But the ultimate decisions are always made by the Principal. But she always consults everybody and everybody feels their view is important.

I (the Principal) hope it's participative. That's what I've worked on. People's opinions are accepted and respected. I want people to participate, therefore I've got to model and the people have to model this acceptance. I see it as part of their professional growth. I want it to happen and I want it to happen well. I have put a lot of thought into that and tried to model in both our school based groups and staff meetings that it's not just me that runs it. We all have a role in this. Anything in the school, even to the management of an individual child in another class, if it's a particular problem in the school, everybody is informed about it so that we listen to everybody's opinion and then we make the policy or the judgement from everybody knowing that everybody has a role with that child.

CLOSING COMMENT

The staff at KJPS have a lot of sympathy for Ashenden's view that the school should be regarded as the prime unit of change. In fact, KJPS has been at the forefront of recent reforms advocated by the Western Australian Ministry of Education. It has established a school decision making group, adopted a whole school approach to managing student behaviour, and developed a comprehensive information management system.

Further, in a number of ways KJPS has already put into practice what Ashenden advocates: the staff receive help from parents, support teachers and teachers' aides; the school has been structured to some extent along program lines; and a form of leadership has emerged that is neither authoritarian nor bureaucratic.

Potential:

At the end of the interviews we asked the staff for their overall reaction to Ashenden's proposal. Generally, they felt it held considerable promise, as the following comments indicate.

My first response was, "Thank goodness somebody's thinking differently." I feel we are very restrained.

I look at it as - even though you've got more children and less actual teachers, you've really got more actual teachers in the long run because you are able to have smaller groups a lot more often which is really the aim of smaller class sizes. So you are getting the best of both worlds. You're getting someone taking the workload off you and that definitely takes the stress off all the work you have to do. And you get to spend more quality time with the children and I'm sure that would benefit everybody.

You'd have smaller class sizes with more equal ability levels to be able to help children. They would get a lot more quality time.

There would be more models, more parent contact, and I suppose all the time you're increasing the adult/child ratio because I really think that increases the children's learning effectiveness. So if you have your teacher training students coming in, parents, more teacher aide time, and an opportunity for a specialist to come in on a subject that I'm not good at, then obviously the children's learning time is much more effective and much more enjoyable.

Thumbs up! But they would have to be careful of the pre-primary.

I thought it was very interesting. It was, as a concept, quite exciting, especially if it were workable. But I guess the reservation of the teacher is to take that role of becoming more a supervisor. I think you've got to be very selective in the other people that would be working with that teacher.

Concerns:

Despite such warm sentiments, the staff at KJPS held equally strong, if not stronger, reservations about Ashenden's model. KJSP has always been organised along cottage industry lines. The staff firmly believe in that system. They do not feel reassured by Ashenden's suggestions that alternative ways to organise learning groups and use educational technology make it safe to abandon the cottage. In their final comments the staff re-emphasized the following concerns.

Firstly, Ashenden's model relies considerably upon employing student-teacher (intern) and paid parent help. Student-teachers would need to be carefully monitored and supported. Several staff doubted the capacity of young interns to organise others in their bid to survive in the classroom. Also, procedures would have to be developed for scrutinising parents, training them and ensuring that ethical practices were observed. As one teacher explained:

Paying parents - that would be a sticky problem. I know some parents. They'd see the dollars and would instantly think, "Oh yes, I can do that." It would be a very big task for whoever had to do it, to interview and decide who was going to do the actual teaching and who was going to help and who wasn't.

Second, Ashenden's model carries within it the danger that teachers will be drawn out of the classroom and into the management of education workers. Children would then be left in the educational care of semi-professionals. The overall response of one teacher to Ashenden's model was:

Fear! Fear that children were not going to be educated by a professional person. It is so important that children get the best education possible. This is what all parents are trying to do.

Other staff voiced concern that by making teachers more remote from the traditional teaching process, the Ashenden model would undermine their rapport with students as well as remove opportunities to observe and evaluate the progress of the student. For them, without adequate involvement in the classroom it is impossible to teach effectively and gain an understanding of the development of the child.

Third, Ashenden's radical model of restructuring teachers' work was seen to overlook how conservative educational communities are. In the view of some staff at KJPS, doing things differently and reducing the number of fully qualified teachers would raise the ire of both the Union and the Ministry of Education.

Fourth, teachers would need to develop much better administrative and organizational skills than they have at present. Ashenden's model assumes that teachers would be able and willing to develop these skills. Also, technological resources such as computing would need to be upgraded significantly. The success of the model was seen to hinge on the extent to which this upgrading could take place at all levels of education.

The Future:

Ashenden has powerful conceptual allies. One is Max Angus, Chair of the NPQTL Working Party on Teachers' Work Organisation. In arguing for far more flexibility in school organisation, Angus states (NPQTL, 1991:6)

There may be better ways of organising teachers' work than putting a single teacher in front of a group of kids for five or six hours each day. We're not saying that classrooms will be abandoned, but we'll be questioning the amount of work done in this way. The possibilities are unlimited. Once a group of teachers sit down to talk about it, an amazing number of Options present themselves.

Another Ashenden ally is Laurie Carmichael, Chair of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training Skills Formation Committee. Carmichael points out that the changing nature of work requires industries to restructure the traditional division of labour and establish self supervising teams or work units. Each unit has responsibility and autonomy for setting production targets, devising strategies to reach them, evaluating progress, and being held accountable for outcomes. In the case of schools, this means moving away from an assembly line design of teachers' work and the isolation or compartmentalisation of the cottage industry approach. According to Carmichael (NPQTL, 1991:2)

On the issue of teachers' work organisation there's a major problem in that people tend to think of schools as individual teachers working in isolation with a limited number of children. However, we need to look at the total resources available to schools, and the ways in which they can be combined to maximise the management of the learning process. We need a paradigm shift to a new way of learning which focuses on skill formation. If the very process of learning is didactic, then students are not learning in a way that's coincident to their future study or work.

Over the past 100 years, the education industry has not been short of reformers, many of them advocating and practising what Ashenden, Angus and Carmichael propose. The brute fact, however, is that while experiments in schooling have come and gone, the cottage model has survived all challenges and proved to be remarkably resilient. Why? Is it because, as Angus says (NPQTL,1991:6)

Unfortunately, what happens at the moment is that individual schools may run successful experiments, but staff leave, the momentum is lost and the orthodox system rolls on.

Or is there something inherent in the nature of the formal teaching and learning enterprise that makes a cottage approach mandatory?

CHAPTER FOUR

Are Teachers Unhappy

Within Ashenden's diagnosis of the problem facing Australian education, teachers are portrayed as not only unproductive but also unhappy. According to Ashenden, "teaching is now a deeply unhappy profession." The discontent springs partly from the poorly designed nature of teachers' work, details of which were outlined in Chapters Two and Three. However, the interview material presented in those two chapters does not clearly confirm Ashenden's claims. For example, it showed that the staff at KJPS felt they did suffer from poorly designed work but not enough to make them deeply unhappy. This chapter will pursue the matter further by examining the other origins and indicators of teacher discontent outlined by Ashenden - low morale, teachers wanting to get out of teaching, low public regard for the profession, poor wages and conditions, and unsatisfying relationships with students.

TEACHER MORALE

We found that regardless of what might be the case across the profession as a whole, morale at KJPS is very high. The staff were unanimous and emphatic in saying so. They offered a range of reasons in explanation of their position. At first glance, their accounts convey an impression that when it comes to morale 'people make the difference', not the organisation of the school. From what the staff said, two factors stand out as being particularly influential: supportive leadership and a culture of collegiality. The only structural factor explicitly mentioned is the size of the school - its smallness. However, closer analysis suggests that the positive professional

relationships enjoyed at Kewdale are not simply a function of staff personalities; they are also an outcome of a planned approach to school development. For example, with respect to morale at KJPS, the teachers said:

I think basically the morale is very high because I feel that we're all aiming in the same direction and the communication is so good; fortunately being a small staff makes it easier for us to communicate.

Well I guess it comes from the top. We have a pretty good captain at the helm and we're encouraged to say if anything is bothering us.

This staff here is excellent. They really are very caring, very sensitive to everybody else's needs. They communicate really well. They compromise when it needs to be done.

We're very supportive of each other. We are doing new things. We're involved in things other than our classroom.

The staff morale is pretty high. We're small and that means you don't get the cliques that perhaps you get in bigger schools where there's a bit of factionalism. We don't get that here. It's all pretty open and the Principal encourages us if we've got problems to go to her before they become big ones.

There's a fairly high standard of professionalism at the school and the Principal sets such a high standard. I think you feel you want to do the best for her because she has high expectations and believes that you can achieve them, so you want to I think.

General morale is very good; we're generally very supportive. We sort of sense each other's areas of concern and back each other up and we can sort of say, you know, "Enough is enough", or, "We've had too much; how about we don't." And it's fine. Everybody understands that.

All of this is not to say that the KJPS staff are free from stress. As the following comments indicate, morale is not continuously high at Kewdale. However, through their positive outlook and a number of staff communication mechanisms, they cope with periods of professional depression in a positive fashion.

There is a lot of stress sometimes, and there is a lot of pressure on staff because of extra things that the staff do. We do a lot in the area of school development. People coming into the school sigh and think, "Oh goodness, there is a lot of work going on." But as you get involved in the school you grow with it and you really know what to expect.

We work hard on it. We try to make sure that if there's any kind of niggle we get to know about it before it gets to be anything big. I (the Principal) have tried to work out and separate when it's really a home problem and not a school problem. We would have a couple of instances in that situation, ill health at the moment, where I've got to try and lessen the load, but be aware that it's not a classroom driven problem, it's a home driven one. The staff would at times say to me that they've got a bit too much to do and we need to talk about it. But I think we've got enough mechanisms there that it can be talked about, and we release somebody to go and help. Everyone at the staff meeting has an input. People are prepared to speak, and people are also prepared to come and say to me, "I think so and so has got a bit of a personal problem," and I'm kept very aware which is really excellent.

General tiredness rather than absenteeism. Many people, cooperative people, said in the last few staff meetings, "Let's not overcommit ourselves." And they have gone about it in an appropriate manner and said, "We really can't manage everything along the way." So it is being managed.

I felt that this year there have been quite a lot of demands on me outside my own classroom: going to meetings, expectations, being involved. Although I find that very positive and a good thing, I keep thinking that sometimes I'd just like to be left alone.

Every now and again you probably think, "Well that's something else we've got to think about": a parent's day or a concert or something like that that's been organised. It would be nice if we didn't have to do a lot of these things but you know it's part of the job and you sort of get on with it.

Our school development planning is fairly progressive and well on the way to doing things, but the workload itself is quite heavy so I'd put that as one of the things we have to bear.

Evidently, some instances of low morale at KJPS are a function of the volume of work generated outside the classroom rather than by the nature of teachers' work inside the classroom. Not that the staff wish to disengage themselves from such situations. They accept responsibility for solving their own morale problems and are confident of their capacity to pull through. For them, teacher stress and discontent are matters to be addressed at the school level. They gave no impression of expecting their problems to be solved at a system level by something like the 1989-9 Ministerial Taskforce on the Status and Conditions of Teaching in Western Australia.

GETTING OUT OF TEACHING

To uphold his claim that teaching is a deeply unhappy profession, Ashenden cites evidence such as: two ex-teachers setting up a consultancy for teachers wanting to get out of teaching, and being overwhelmed by the demand; maths and science teachers leaving in droves; and 50% of trainee teachers in NSW expecting to quit teaching within ten years of starting. The staff at KJPS lent little support to this line of argument. Virtually none of them indicated any serious desire to quit teaching and take up other jobs. In response to the question, "Have there been times when you feel like getting out of teaching?" some staff said:

No, I've just got in. No, not yet. Because I am a mature age entrant I always said I would only teach as long as I enjoy it. Financially I don't have to teach. Once it became no longer enjoyable I would stop because I don't think it's fair to the children or myself. There's no point.

No, never. I've always wanted to be a teacher from a young child. My elder sister was a teacher and I used to watch her frequently and wish that I could be a teacher. So it has been by desire, and now working - I don't have to work. But, I love teaching I've always enjoyed working with children. And that is what I always wanted to do.

No, no. I can honestly say I've never thought of that. Perhaps I thought I might like to job share. Perhaps not yet. In another few years I might like to do that. [Why?] Just the thought of doing it part time and having a bit more time to myself.

I think pre-primary teachers are inclined to stay around a little bit more than classroom teachers because we have a lot more to

do with the families. We're the introduction to the family to the school and you see one child coming in after the other. You become, at my age certainly, almost a grandmotherly figure or somebody that they feel they can trust.

A few other staff said they periodically found teaching heavy going and would like a breather now and again in the form of part time teaching or a complete break for a while. But this did not represent deep rooted dissatisfaction with the nature of their work.

There are times when I feel that I would like to be able to stand back from it for a little while, because I have been doing the job non-stop for quite a long time and because I haven't had the change of school that maybe some teachers have had.

I would like to do tandem or be a support teacher and maybe have a little bit of a break from the whole responsibility, the programming and the decision-making and the fronting up first thing every day. That is, just at the moment. But I wouldn't like to get out of it altogether.

Two teachers remembered particular incidents and periods in the past at other schools when they thought of resigning. In both cases, the reasons for wanting to leave arose from dissatisfaction with the Ministry bureaucracy as much as from problems in the classroom and school.

(I thought of getting out of teaching) probably only once in my life and it was when I was perhaps trying to come to grips with a pre-primary philosophy translated into a junior primary mode. I was trying to come to grips with what could work and what couldn't and finding a junior primary with a traditional superintendent saying, "You don't do that - you teach, you deal with this book on March 23rd and you deal with this sound on August 15th."

In my third year I had a very difficult class. I had two secure years in (.....), and I moved to (.....) and I was given a split one-two. Obviously I was last into the school and I got the class that was fairly difficult - mainly because the principal gave me very little support. I applied for leave and don't ask me what happened about that. They accepted it but sent it somewhere else. The principal wouldn't allow me to ring the Ministry because the superintendent had told him not to ring the Ministry about transfers. They had approved it and lost it. Eventually I applied for a transfer and that was lost.

And two of the staff intimated that now and again the pressure of work did create an interest in considering the possibilities of life beyond the classroom.

Yes, there have been times (when I've thought of getting out of teaching), quite a lot of times actually. [Why?] I think sort of mainly just when you finish your day at school it doesn't quite finish at school on the day. I mean, I just don't cut off and you sort of think that if I worked behind a counter of something I could go to work, come back and your time's your time. I'd probably like to get out for that reason. Nothing else seems to bother me, the conditions or the pay, I'm quite happy with those generally.

I just find that the times that I get the children's attitudes of, "This is boring," that's when I really start getting stressed out again and I think, "No, I've got better things to do with my time than do this."

PUBLIC VIEW OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Low public regard for the work of teachers, says Ashenden, makes teachers feel misunderstood and undervalued and it contributes to discontent within the profession. He cites a survey which found that on a social prestige scale, primary teachers were rated in thirtieth position behind fishermen (owners), nurses and radio announcers.

When questioned on this matter, the staff at KJPS distinguished between members of the general public who hold a negative stereotype of teachers, and particular members of the public they mix with who have a more positive view of teachers.

So, on the one hand, the staff at Kewdale agree with Ashenden that teachers are held in low regard by the broader community - the main problem being public disdain for the holidays and working hours of teachers.

I think the public generally doesn't perceive teachers as a very highly regarded profession at all.

I'm sure the public used to think, "Oh well they have all these wonderful holidays and they seem to come in to school with

the children and go out of the school with the children", but it's certainly not true.

The public's perception is that you're only there from 9 to 3 and you do absolutely nothing else and you don't deserve your money and all they do is downgrade you.

But on the other hand, these perception make almost no impact on the morale of teachers at KJPS. Most staff said they rarely think about the negative image of teachers in the community or come into direct contact with people who hold it. With respect to whether the public view of the teaching profession affected them personally, they said:

Not a lot. I wouldn't think about it enough to affect me greatly.

I don't get into much discussion about it with the public because the people I mix with outside know how well, how hard the teachers work and what kind of a job they do, the good job that they do No, I don't think about it at all, because I don't personally hear about it. It doesn't affect my morale. I know I work hard and I deserve everything I get - even more I'd say.

It doesn't worry me, I've heard it all.

No I don't feel angry about it. I think probably most of the people I associate with either know or understand teachers. So I think about it on a personal level and don't think too much about it on a large public point of view.

Further, while the staff at Kewdale realise that teachers are held in low esteem by the general community, they do not accept the validity of the public's judgement. They consider it ill informed.

Until you work with the teachers, they don't know what they do and what they have to do.

They don't know any better, so they are speaking about something they don't know of. If they could work in a school environment they might speak differently. Maybe the people who are saying these things are the people who have had a bad experience with teachers and they have just put the teachers in that bracket - the whole lot of them. You get one bad apple and everybody is classed in the same way.

I suppose at times I would feel it's misdirected.

No, because they don't know what they're talking about at times. If they came to a school and watched, or if they lived with a teacher, they wouldn't have to say those things, so it's really ill-informed people that bad-mouth teachers.

In contrast to their perceptions about how teachers are regarded by the general public, the staff at Kewdale find the attitude of the local community, particularly parents, to be quite reassuring and morale boosting. They know parents who have cast aside the negative stereotype and developed a positive impression of teachers.

This year a couple of parents I know from a questionnaire I gave at the beginning of the year had very negative attitudes towards school generally - and it's been nice to see them change over the year. I think they had bad experiences themselves at school and they were intimidated by teachers and schools but by coming into the classroom and helping and seeing what happens you can see that they're much happier and in some instances that's reflected on their kids as well - their kids are making more effort to participate or try.

But the people who are in this community or come to school are very appreciative. I constantly get feedback from them that the teachers are working really hard, in fact, more than what the average worker would be. I hear a lot, like, "This is well done, the teachers are doing a marvellous job," and how much effort they've done to organise this or that. My own family know how hard I work.

I find the reception of our own parents is a very positive one and I think they feel reassured and I feel reassured about that.

Finally, those who reported being adversely affect by the public's view of teachers said that the effect only lasted a short while and that they had overcome it.

It makes me angry for about five seconds, then I think, "How stupid."

I used to but I don't now. It used to worry me that people would always concentrate on holidays, and you have so many holidays. Now I just think that they don't know. And the people who do know really appreciate what you do, particularly the parents here, I think they realise that you are putting a lot of hours in, and they do appreciate it.

On the whole, the staff at KPJS are coping well with their image in the community. They are aware of the negative and positive public feeling towards teachers. The hurt they feel from being misrepresented by the general public is outweighed by the sense of endorsement and appreciation they gain from members of the local community who are real to them. KPJS is not a fortress school. Its staff have the confidence and commitment to welcome parent participation. Their experience of community involvement in the school has made them far less discontent about the public image of teachers than Ashenden claims is the case across the profession as a whole.

WAGES AND CONDITIONS

Industrial conflict in school systems throughout Australia constitutes another indication of how deeply unhappy the teaching profession is - according to Ashenden. He points out that much of the battle has been fought on the ground of teachers' wages and conditions - and rightfully so, he says, because there have been serious problems in those areas. However, governments can not afford to pour extra resources into education anymore, so pay increases for teachers have to be funded from within existing levels of resource allocations. In short, suggests Ashenden, pay rises need to be cost neutral. Within his proposal that means larger teacher/pupil ratios.

In relation to these issues, we asked the staff at KJPS, "If you were offered a 20% salary increase (about \$6000) for taking 20% more pupils (about 6) would you take the money or stay with the present size of your class." Two thirds said, "No", mainly for educational reasons, but also for personal and industrial reasons. From an educational viewpoint, most teachers considered that larger classes would deny students learning opportunities and place a burden on students within the class.

I don't like that idea at all. I find it very difficult to pinpoint anything that I do that you could do as effectively with a bigger group - even story time, when you read a story. So I would go for no pay rise.

Not worth it, for the children. Five children extra in your classroom is a burden to them. If you don't have to have it, there's a lot more opportunity for others to learn.

It would interfere with student outcomes because you wouldn't have enough time to spend with some of the stragglers and they might stagnate.

I'm still one for keeping a finger on the children, the ones that really have the problems, because there would be too many people dealing with them. In junior primary I would still like to see that contact with them.

The teachers' personal reasons for ranking small classes above a salary increase, centered on stress and the volume of work. These reasons prevailed even in cases where the need for more money was acute.

20%. Mmmm. I think I'd rather have smaller class sizes, even though I'm so desperate for money - I'm in the red. I think I'd go for the class size.

There'd be more work and I don't think the money would make up for that work.

There'd be more work and I don't think the money would make up for that work. It depends on the children you get and the conflicts. You might get a couple of disabled children and that would even be more hard work.

The stress involved having those extra children and the amount you could achieve just by having an extra six children wouldn't be worth the \$6000, half of which would go in tax anyway.

I mean it depends on the kind of children you are getting. If they were middle of the road to brighter children then sure, but you're never guaranteed to have those sort of children. I mean if all the children were going to be of lower ability then that would quadruple the workload or more. No, I would prefer the smaller class sizes and forego the money.

And from an industrial viewpoint, one staff member observed that because classroom teachers affiliated with the Union had worked so hard over the years for smaller classes, more money would not be a sufficient incentive to turn the policy around.

While most teachers at KJPS were prepared to forego the money, a third said they would be willing to trade class size for a salary increase. For them, a 20% increase in class size was not much different to classes they had experienced in the past, and there was a sense in which it was manageable or 'do-able'. However, there was an upper limit. Further, as indicated in earlier comments, a lot depends on the type of children involved.

I'm handling 27 quite effectively and 6 more wouldn't make any difference and so I'd take the 20%. [What is the upper limit, say 10?] If I didn't have to do much more work. 10, that's 37. I've taught 37 and 38 once before, so I'd take another 20% [Would you double the class for double the money - 54 kids for double your salary?] Forget it. You're crazy.

Yes, well I guess you can organise your classes differently. And your workload could be restructured in a different way, maybe. Larger classes wouldn't be that much of a problem. But getting that extra money would be okay. When I first started teaching the money didn't enter my mind. I was doing it for the love. And I still am. But when you've got other things on your mind, like building a house, and you need money, money makes a big difference.

That's a hard one, isn't it. Now we're really getting down to it. Impulse says yes I'd go for the money, cos may be those six would be like lateral thinkers and get me excited, but six people can make a huge difference to a group Well I've had 36 in the class, so yes I'd take the money.

Ashenden acknowledges that attempts to remove discontent within the teaching profession must address teachers' wages and conditions. However, he criticises teacher organisations and employers for restricting the battle to that territory. In his view two things matter more than wages and conditions: the scope and control of teachers' work, and teachers relationships with students. The staff at KJPS agree with Ashenden. We asked them, "What for you is the most important: a salary increase, having children who really want to learn, or having more control and choice over the type of work you do in the classroom?" Most of them, in the words of one teacher, said, "Kids who want to learn - first and foremost." A salary increase received the lowest rating.

TEACHERS' RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

With respect to teacher/pupil relationships, Ashenden says that while the best of times for teachers occur in the classroom, so do the worst of times. He goes on to suggest that job satisfaction for teachers springs largely from successfully performing two dominant roles - being a disciplinarian and an instructor. In his view, teachers are victims of student resistance - behavioural and academic. They face "defiance, insolence, subversion of authority, even physical assault" from students - sometimes in blackboard jungle classrooms (1990:12). A less spectacular but more widespread problem is "the steady dull pressure on teachers to make their students learn." Teachers continually have to drag unwilling students to the water and then force them to drink. In the process they miss the "deeper human excitement, the joy of getting a young human being to catch on, to understand, to learn." (1990:12)

Teachers' Best Moments:

The staff at KJPS unanimously support Ashenden's claim that teachers' experience their best moments in the classroom working with children. They said that their high points come from making a breakthrough - from helping struggling children to learn something worthwhile - and that job satisfaction comes from a sense of progress, a sense of achievement, a sense of 'making a difference'. In the words of some staff:

I've got a class that is set up with some children who have a lot of learning problems and the other set are extremely bright kids. The most enjoyable and satisfying and rewarding are the top group, perhaps in the language skills because you can just see the development.

I suppose the best part is seeing success, a child going from a low level to a high level achievement. I've got one little girl in my class who came in with very low sight vocab, low comprehension level, so I put her in the bottom group 'cos that's where she fitted into. Could hardly read orally at all. Now she's in the top three in my class in reading, maths, spelling. Incredible change over the year.

I think the rewards come in the classroom when you finally realise that you've done something, when you suddenly realise that the children have matured under your guidance. You're

inclined to lose sight of that during the year and it comes back to you at this time of year (October) when suddenly you say, "Right, I want you and you and you to do this", or "Everybody do that," and it's done. And that doesn't happen at the beginning of the year and you have to keep reminding yourself about how far you have come.

The progress that I see children make. They are often little steps with the Year Ones. I find that very very rewarding. [Is there a highlight that stands out?] When they can read. When they first come in they really can't read. And then halfway through the year they can read.

Working with children is just my life. I suppose the children's achievement and your own achievement at having been successful at teaching them language, maths, whatever. I suppose just day to day things that you can see children with disabilities does give you that greatest sense of achievement.

In the classroom with the children, particularly during reading when you can see them improving in writing their stories and in learning to read. They're magical moments, when you can see their little minds ticking over and they really understand what you've said and they've remembered what you've taught them.

I also do the library. I get a lot of enjoyment out of that because I actually take the children for library seeing the progress on how they learn a lot more about the books in the library And knowing how to use the system. By the time we've finished at the end of the year, I've taught them to stamp their own cards and things like that.

I suppose seeing a child who's been struggling begin to improve is a really positive thing. And I think also being that kind of reflective person, of really sort of trying innovative ideas out. And when you do try something and it works, it gets to be a very high point.

They (teachers) really thrive in there (the classroom). You can see it when you go to drop material off in the classroom. You can see it on their face. They really enjoy being there with the children. (Registrar)

So, the teachers' best moments come from working in the classroom with children - not working with children who behave themselves in an obedient, passive sense, but who engage in active and successful learning. Evidently, the highlight of their career does not take the form of extrinsic

rewards or a single spectacular event. It takes the form of an ongoing series of modest achievements which are intrinsically satisfying.

Worst Moments:

While the staff wholeheartedly agreed that their best moments occur in the classroom, half of them did not support Ashenden's matching claim that teachers' worst moments also occur in the classroom. For them, the main pressure in the job comes from colleagues rather than children. Comments from a range of teachers suggest that the lowest points in their working day came from feeling inadequate in certain staffroom situations:

The worst moments come from having to stand up to other staff, because your ideas don't match theirs, and having to put forward your own views and stand by them - especially when others feel confident and you don't feel so confident.

I know the worst moments and it's when it's taken for granted that I know something. For instance, if it's some evaluation and they know where to get all the (things) that you're supposed to use for each test, and coming in new I don't and I do the wrong thing and am just kept in the dark a bit. It just happens because they're so used to the system they're doing and they just assume that I know what I'm doing. I feel frustrated. I feel like I've wasted my time.

The problem of feeling inadequate to satisfy the perceived expectations of colleagues occurs not just in the staffroom. It can occur also with colleagues in the classroom, as the following comments from support teachers and teachers' aides suggest.

Sometimes I am given too much work and I feel that if I haven't finished the work in the allotted time I've got I'm a failure in some way.

It's hard to work in someone's classroom that's not very flexible or co-operative I suppose it would be at staff level, rather than child level.

For another teacher, the worst moments occur in the staffroom and playground, not because of pressure exerted by colleagues or children, but because of inadequate time. The worst moments come from:

Having to attend lots of meetings and duty And when it's your duty day, I hate it cos you're sort of rushing all the time And I find that there's certain deadlines or there's organisation for parent open days and concerts. Things like that I find that really stressful.

All of this is not to suggest that staff relationships at KJPS are conflictual or judgemental or anything like that described by Webb (1962) and Hargreaves (1972). Quite the contrary. The staff are highly collegial and professional. They have worked hard and successfully on team building and developing a whole school approach to their work. As a consequence, they individually feel responsible for maintaining high standards and not letting the team down. In these circumstances it is easy for individual staff to be self critical when they feel their performance falls a little below the high standards set.

While one half of the staff did not support Ashenden's claim that teachers experience their worst moments in the classroom, the other half said their most trying times do occur when dealing with children - mainly in the classroom, but occasionally in the playground. Usually only a handful of students are involved and they tend to belong to low achieving groups.

Yes, I would think the most frustrating or pressured moments are in the classroom again, because of the time constraints and things you feel that you haven't done. Or through discipline problems. Maybe you've got one child who just completely disrupts the whole group and that's frustrating and sometimes can make you quite angry within yourself that one child can have such an influence on the whole group of children.

Probably in the playground. I see the behaviour of some children - you know, when you see that you've got the rules and the children aren't taking any notice of them.

In the classroom when the children say, "This is boring. What are we going to do now. I want to do activities. I don't want to colour that in any more. I don't want to do this now."

I think probably, the social problems that we're having to deal with and the fact that in this kind of a school where the children are so young, you know, seeing children left, seeing children coming in without breakfast and that sort of thing. You can't get away from getting attached to the children and the social part bugging you. And I think probably seeing the consistency that you do try to develop in terms of discipline

and behaviour not always being encouraged in the home situation.

They would occur with the lower ability children who are also the discipline problems. It's very frustrating when they aren't making the headway you feel perhaps they could make if they applied themselves better and they were getting more help from home.

For several reasons, the problem behaviour of children at Kewdale, as reported by the staff, does not in itself seem to justify a radical reorganisation of the school. First, it is not as bad or widespread as Ashenden suggests. Secondly, the staff see it as a product of the students' homes, not the school. For them, changing the school would not change the difficult behaviour of the students, unless it was instrumental in changing their homes and Ashenden does not suggest that as a real possibility. In other words, whereas Ashenden bases his proposal upon a 'school deficit' model (blaming the 'system'), the staff at Kewdale make sense of difficult pupil behaviour in terms of a 'cultural deficit' perspective (blaming the 'victim').

It is not surprising that the staff at KJPS blame the victim rather than the system. As experienced teachers they have a sane estimate of their own expertise and are reluctant to accept responsibility for student behaviour they believe to be the result of factors beyond their control. Moreover, the collaborative and democratic system of governance at KJPS allows the staff to participate in setting up the way the school is organised. They helped create the structure. Because they identify with it, they hesitate to hold it responsible for student misbehaviour.

Discipline:

As mentioned earlier, Ashenden claims that teachers suffer from the 'discipline problem' and experience awful pressure from student "defiance, insolence, subversion of authority, even physical assault." Those claims hold no validity at KPJS. According to the staff, there are virtually no control problems at the school and, apart from a few children, very little student disruption, disobedience, and disrespect.

Most of the time it's fairly easy. I've got a small class, only about 18 children, so that makes it easier. The tone of the

school is such that the discipline problems, and there are some, are dealt with very well so you have support going back into the classroom and you know you've got other avenues. I mean I've never had to resort to other avenues because the children are fairly easily controlled but some children are sort of, it's a terrible term, but repeat offenders. Because they don't understand the work or are bored because they want to get on and something else. Their attention span is very low.

Once they know the routine then they're easy to manage. I have had defiance but only from one child.

They (behaviour problems) are a mixed group but one teacher has most of them and she has a hard time.

No, they are not cheeky. They come in and excuse themselves, and say Mrs P. they are here to see Mrs R or is Mrs M here. They are quite courteous. Even when they come to pick up the absentee book.

No, there are a handful and they can be controlled.

We've only got pockets in the school where we have problems. I've never had any behavioural problems.

There's always discipline problems but I think in this particular school they're very mild. I think those children, those particular few. It doesn't affect me in my own classroom.

The rules are pretty much internalised.

The interview material indicates that two factors account for the positive working relationships that teachers share with students at KJPS and the orderly school environment which which they work: a whole school approach to managing student behaviour, and teachers skilled in classroom discipline. For several years the school has employed a modified form of Canter's approach to managing student behaviour.

We've had to embark on that model (Canter) which I myself didn't see the need for. At first I wasn't happy about doing it, because I personally didn't have any problems and I knew how to handle my own children We went through the program last year and it helped those teachers concerned. It helped the school.

We have an adaptation of the Canter discipline model here, where as teachers we decided to take it on board. As teachers we operate it quite well.

I don't have a behaviour problem with the children. I think there are some children who could be, but we have a fairly tight discipline policy and I think with that in position, people follow that and these children know and you know what you can do if they come out of line. That has really helped. That has only come into existence, since, say twelve months from now. Prior to that we had a problem within the school. I think a firm policy has really helped.

But the discipline method, the Canter method, is reasonably successful in maintaining our sanity. We have an understanding with other teachers that when you get to that stage, they're into another room and they go to the Principal and then we call in the parents. Well in some instances the parents have been called in a few times and we've talked through behaviour modification possibilities.

KJPS has a relatively stable and experienced staff. They are fairly strict and confident of their own capacity to keep the children in line. For example:

I don't know, its probably I'm, I was going to say, I'm an ogre, I'm pretty strict, and you know they know where they stand in my own class. And generally, the school's pretty okay, I mean we've got one or two here in the school that tend to be a little bit of a problem out in the playground and in their own classroom, but I sort of haven't had too much to do with them, but when I have I haven't really had any real problems with them.

Oh yes, I have had children who have given me a mouthful and who haven't done what I've asked them to do in both schools, but I just sort of start off with a positive attitude that nobody says "No" in this classroom to me; "That's a word I don't hear and if you are asked to do something you will do it, and you will." If they don't then physically I help them to do it; things like sitting down or whatever.

All of these comments should not be taken to mean that the children at KJPS are perfect. As individuals their behaviour fits the normal pattern and the absence of a significant discipline problem can not be taken for granted.

They are just like normal children of that age - telling tales, pinching, he called me a name or whatever.

We've got things reasonably easy. I couldn't have said that yesterday. On reflection we had a terrible day because of the rain. We had kids going wild, but that's kind of an expectation.

We have a few boys in our Year Two area that need a bit of careful handling.

When making sense of student misbehaviour, about half the staff again employed a victim blaming rather than system blaming model. They adopted the cultural deprivation view that poor discipline was a result of parental and home background, not the way the school is organised. They saw the student behaviour in terms of cultural deficit rather than school deficit. Consequently it is unlikely they would consider a change in the organisation of the school along Ashenden's lines as making any difference to the behaviour of the students.

I think parents need to really to be more aware of discipline in schools and I think that would help them.

I think that some of the attitudes of the parents aren't really good. Socially some races don't have a high opinion of females, let alone teachers, and that comes across sometimes too, through the children.

A lot of them (children) are from broken marriages, or Mum is too busy to spend time with the children....Well if you went on an excursion, you would have to keep you finger on them the whole time, but they still play up. A lot of them have learning difficulties.... They don't want to learn so they disrupt. It is not so much the hitting. Again it's is the parents. One of them I am thinking of his Mum just doesn't think he does anything wrong: "My boy wouldn't do that." A lot of it is the background. A lot of the parents don't care. There is no discipline at home. That is one of the big breakdowns.

The class that I've got are the less independent of the Year Ones. And they are a lot younger and more immature than the other Year One class.

I'm worrying more from the aspect of some of the kids who are deprived. If I have any qualms about coming to school it's not for those behavioural kids, it's for the ones that who are going to be late again because the parent hasn't bothered to get out of bed or they've missed breakfast again and should I be getting more involved or not... Just where do you cut off your

emotional involvement with them? How much can you afford emotionally to take it to heart or when should you cut it off?

Pupils Resistance to Learning:

A more widespread and insistent form of pressures that lowers teachers' morale, says Ashenden, comes from having to make unwilling students learn. That is, expending huge amounts of emotional energy pleading, cajoling, encouraging, threatening and bribing reluctant learners to take lessons seriously. In relation to this type of pressure, the staff at Kewdale fall into three categories: those who say they do not experience it; those who experience it occasionally; and those who, as Ashenden suggests is the case with most teachers, experience it often and intensely. About half of the staff at KPJS find there is very little resistance to learning at the school.

Most of them are really interested and volunteer to come You can always tell the ones that are going to be last. I mean it's always the same ones. It's not because they're reluctant. It's because they are busy doing other things. I mean they might be in the blocks every day or in the home corner every day.

95% of the children are very happy to learn.

There'll always be a difference between junior primary and a high school. I think the way things are run in a high school, some of it doesn't apply at all - like a lot of time out and they focus heavily on behavioural management, whereas we just have it as a side line and we focus more on learning. I mean, they focus on learning too, but that's a real priority to us, because the kids do want to learn, whereas there they have to force them.

Some, you have to drag to particular waters, but they are all quite happy to come in. You don't have anybody not happy to come in. Some do find some of the things that I ask them a bit tedious because they don't like sitting still and they prefer the more physical things like block building where they are moving about, and they do other things where they're not having to actually concentrate too much, but basically they all accept it.

I would say that with my kids, they are very positive, very enthusiastic, and they love anything that you give them. I'd say that they may be a bit tired of doing this or that, but they like

going to phys.ed. and maths, and they notice things when they don't have it The children in my class are like sponges.

About a quarter of the staff said that their classes contained a mixture of responsible and reluctant learners, but intimated that the problem was not as serious as Ashenden suggests.

So, there's definitely is half a dozen and I think that the pre-primary teacher this year will tell you that she is experiencing that. And that is something she has not experienced for a long time, of quite disruptive children who will try and get away with things at the pre-primary level. I can't disguise it. We do have some boys we do have trouble keeping motivated, on task.

No, I feel as though quite a few of them are reluctant learners. They don't want to spend much time actually doing formal lessons. They like activities. Children do learn from activities, they learn all sorts of concepts but if I let them do nothing but activities all day long they'd be quite happy - most of the children. And if I ever dangle the carrot over them that, "If we get this done really well we'll have ten minutes of activities," some of them will strive to do it really well and others will just think, "Oh well, I'm going to activities, I'll do whatever I can and in whatever condition." So I really feel as if sometimes it's a real struggle to get them to learn.

The remaining quarter of staff agreed with Ashenden in saying that for them, student reluctance and resistance to learning was a relentless and significant problem.

I've got the complete range. I've got a group, and it would be more than half I think, who would be very willing to absorb anything that you offer them and cooperate and try. Then, there's some that resist a bit, possibly to get attention, possibly because they don't understand or they are nervous about it, and others who are just switched off and you can lead them to the water but they don't seem to care whether they drink or not. They are not thirsty, therefore it's of no relevance to them. A lot of them will take responsibility for their own learning and some of them are quite competitive and trying. The brighter ones would certainly take more responsibility than the less able ones.

Once again, I have a bit of a mixed group in my own class. With one group, I can quite rely on them to go away and I don't even

have to tell them what to do. The next minute they are back in their desk doing the other activity they were meant to do. So there are groups that are quite responsible and independent, and there are groups where I've got to be there all of the time with them. They wouldn't do anything if I wasn't there.

CLOSING COMMENT

Ashenden's claim that "teaching is now a deeply unhappy profession" does not apply to the staff at KJPS. Generally, they enjoy high morale, have no desire to resign from teaching, feel highly regarded by parents, and relate positively to their students. The overall impression gained from interviews with them is that they consider themselves to be on top of their work, receive a lot of satisfaction from what they do, and feel comfortable with the way the school operates. Some of them have bad moments in the classroom and staffroom because they feel inadequate to satisfy the perceived expectations of their colleagues. On these occasions they hold themselves responsible for their own feelings - they do not place blame on the organisation of the school. A somewhat similar perspective prevails when the staff endure trying times with a few difficult children: they place blame not on the school structure but on what they regard as deficiencies within the children produced by cultural deprivation.

CHAPTER FIVE

Concluding Considerations

A central theme explored in this study of teachers' work and restructuring in a junior primary school is Dean Ashenden's claim that teachers are currently caught in an apparently seamless web of low productivity and unhappiness. In his view, there is a way out - change the division of labour, the definition of teachers' work, and the labour process of teaching. Doing that, he says, will enable students to learn more creatively and help teachers to achieve what they aspire to do: really teach! But, is this likely to happen? In order to go some way towards finding out, we would like to call in the evidence by asking three questions.

Firstly, what might a junior primary school staffing profile actually look like if restructured using the general principles embodied in Ashenden's restructured "suburban high school"? Secondly, if such a profile were restructured, would Ashenden's four claims (better salary, more support staff, different work for teachers, and higher teacher/student ratios) still hold, and how do staff interviewed in our study view these claims as solutions to the problems of education? Thirdly, are there tensions and contradictions between Ashenden's claims in terms of the model of the restructured school itself and the perspective of the staff at KJPS?

THE RESTRUCTURED JUNIOR PRIMARY SCHOOL

The essential features of Ashenden's model include increased salaries for the remaining professional staff, increased funds for professional development and support (such as consultants and social workers), and greater use of a range of educational workers (such as interns, aides and parents) to assist with both administration and teaching.

In our model, outlined in Table 2, the public purse pays about \$317,000 in salaries, 70% of which is paid to professional staff. By reducing the number of professionally trained staff in the school by some 35% (as in the Ashenden model), payment to them is reduced to 57%. In other words the number of professionally trained staff falls from seven to four and a half, a decline of two and a half. This then allows a dispersion of funds to increased salary payments, professional development, teacher aides, interns and parent assistance. Would the staff at KJPS accept such a "trade-off"? Not according to our interviews. Most staff said they would oppose increased salaries if it meant an erosion of other conditions, such as larger classes or additional teaching support in the classroom.

By reducing the amount of money paid out to professionally trained teaching staff, funds are theoretically available to pay a range of other additional education workers. Table 2 indicates that the number of staff currently available to either teach or support teachers in the school is eight and half teachers. In the restructured model, the number of staff available to either teach or support teachers is just over ten, a gain of about one and a half. That gain could provide additional staffing support to the school in the form of two student interns, one and a third full-time parent assistants, and an extra half-time teacher aide. However, while this represents a slight overall increase in the number of staff available, the additional staff are minimally trained and would need considerable support. They would require significant levels of training and monitoring by the remaining professionally trained staff within the school.

We note also in the Ashenden proposal a significant increase in the number of teacher aides and clerical assistants within the school. In attempting to strictly apply the Ashenden formula to a junior primary school, we found little flexibility. Employing a larger number of teacher aides or clerical assistants means either not employing interns and parents (and they are a cheaper source of labour) or providing funds for professional development and support. There are other possibilities. For example, an alternative to employing clerical assistants would be to provide better computing facilities and software for staff studies so that teachers might undertake their own clerical tasks.

CURRENT				RESTRUCTURED			
<u>Category</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Sal</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Sal.</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Principal	1	48,	48,000	Principal	1	60,000	60,000
Teachers	6	32,	192,000	Teachers	3.5	35,000	122,500
TOTAL	7		240,000	TOTAL	4.5		182,500
Registrar	0.6	30,	18,000	Registrar	0.5	30,000	15,000
T.Aide	1.4	20,	28,000	TchAide	2	20,000	40,000
LibAide	0.2	20,	4,000	EmergTch			7,000
Emerg Tch			7,000	Cleaning			20,000
Cleaning			20,000	Prof Dev			9,000
				Consultant			3,000
				Social Wk	0.3	30,000	9,000
				Interns	2	8,500	17,000
				ParentAsst	1.3		13,500
TOTAL	2.2		77,000	TOTAL	6.1		133,500
GRAND				GRAND			
TOTAL	9.2		317,000	TOTAL	10.6		317,000

TABLE 2. Current and Restructured Models of a Junior Primary School (Based on KJPS)

How do these changes sit with the claims that Ashenden makes with regard to the outcomes of restructuring? Clearly there would be a better salary for all professionally trained teachers, including the Principal. The Principal gains at least a 25% increase in salary, while other teachers on staff receive an increase of approximately 10%. The staff at KJPS welcomed the prospect of a salary increase, but not in preference to gaining more control and choice over teaching and having students with positive attitudes to learning.

With respect to the claim about big increases in the support available to teachers, we suggest that the increases are both marginal and illusory. While a restructured KJPS might gain an additional one and a half staff members overall, it would be at the expense of losing a significant pool of professional talent and relatively low teacher-student ratios. The staff at KJPS were interested in working with a larger range of education workers, in addition to those already involved in the school. They argued that team teaching with a parent assistant, teacher aide or intern would give them opportunities to attend to special problems within the classroom. However, an additional one and a half education workers in the school above the current allocation, to be shared amongst one hundred and fifty children, would do little to lift the pressure from teachers.

Ashenden's third claim refers to a major change in the work teachers would be expected to do. In a restructured KJPS, the remaining professionally trained teaching staff would be responsible for some or all of the training and supervision of interns, parents and teacher aides. In addition, they would be able to shed some of the more mundane administrative work to other education workers. However, given that there would be only a slight increase in the number of education workers within the school, such shedding would be at best marginal. Of course the remaining professionally trained staff would be involved in more complex teaching work, given their expertise within the school. But shedding preparation and follow-up work along with student counselling would undermine what teachers at KJPS regard as fundamental components of teaching: planning, preparation, teaching and evaluation. For them, these components are integral to building teaching-learning relationship with students, and central to their own construction of a competent and caring junior primary school teacher. In addition, several teachers claimed that having to write detailed work

instructions and explanations for others was quite inefficient. A preferred option was to involve children themselves in some of the more routine administrative tasks in cases where this provided useful learning opportunities.

Ashenden's final claim is that there would be less jobs for teachers and a big increase in staff/student ratios, thus encouraging teachers to look at other ways of combining students. With the current average class size of approximately 20, it is clear that under the restructured model the junior primary pupils would spend a great deal of time in other than small group work. Increased class sizes would increase the range of abilities in any one group, an issue which surfaced as a major problem facing many of the teachers at KJPS. That problem becomes compounded when a significant minority of the children have major learning difficulties. In those circumstances, according to the teachers at KJPS, it would be better to have smaller classes rather than a salary increase.

If students are spending more time in larger classes or on computers and peer tutoring, how might students manage their own behaviour? In a school such as KJPS, behaviour problems at school are minimal, but they do occur. Would larger classes exacerbate this? Given that teachers are less able to "keep an eye on students" because of the increase in class sizes, it might be fair to suggest that students would experience greater feelings of both frustration and alienation in school, two significant factors in student misbehaviour.

Ashenden conveys the impression that student behaviour problems are determined predominantly by the organisation of the school. The teachers in our study were less convinced, seeing instead many of the discipline problems as emanating from the wider social environment. While no doubt some of the blame for discipline problems can be sheeted home to school organisation, there is equally no doubt that social dislocation, alienation and the effects of economic impoverishment are also significant determinants of school discipline problems.

Finally, Ashenden proposes that in order to accommodate the loss in professionally trained teaching staff and the creation of larger classes, teachers think through new ways of combining students and teachers. He

suggests that one solution might be to teach more classes, a suggestion which would appear to have limited scope in a primary school. Indeed, Ashenden's own model (based upon teachers teaching four periods per day) is a far cry from the reality of most teachers, at least here in Western Australia. Another solution is for teachers to look at changes in work organisation, the use of technologies, peer tutoring and so on. With limited computing facilities (hardware and software) at the school and constrained by money, KJPS would need to focus upon other types of pedagogical strategies. Currently, instances of such strategies operate at the "frill" rather than the "skill" level, according to the Principal. Nonetheless, we noted an enthusiasm to try different approaches to teaching while at the same time pointing out the limitations of both space and the cottage form of work organisation.

We would also add that a focus upon more technological strategies (such as computer-aided learning and learning packages) carry the danger of other forms of control embedded in them and the production of relatively docile and passive learners. Perhaps this is what one teacher was referring to when she stated she would prefer to limit the amount of "screen time" children were exposed to. Some analysts (see Bigum and Green 1992) suggest that rather than produce critical literacy, such technologies have the potential to not only undermine the development of critical, reflective and autonomous students, but also to exaggerate divisions of class and gender within the school.

Does the Ashenden model assume a level of independence that is simply not there in junior primary age children? According to some teachers in our study, many junior primary children require considerable support to negotiate their way through the school curriculum. They noted, for example, that much of the computer software available requires a level of language competence young children do not have.

Would the restructured school produce a more creative, autonomous, critical and reflective student? With fewer professionally trained staff available within the school, teachers would have less opportunities to develop more intimate relationships with students - relationships that help them determine where students are in their own personal and cognitive development. In such circumstances, students might well find themselves

increasingly "minded" rather than challenged to become critical and reflective learners. Spending more time in larger classes again might not lead to more creative and autonomous learning. Rather, docility and patience could be rewarded as education workers attempt to implement mechanisms for controlling larger groups of students.

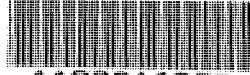
It is difficult to determine which of these claims and counter claims are true. The cottage industry approach to schooling has history on its side. Perhaps only further experimentation will tell whether the same applies to the future.

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