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THE
MORPHOLOGY
OF
CHANGE

An Exploration of Perceptions
about Changing the Age of Transfer of pupils from
Primary to Secondary School

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ABSTRACT

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THE MORPHOLOGY OF CHANGE

by

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The vast majority of studies of educational change are contextualised within the school. This is a new qualitative multi-level study of the interaction of the school with its LEA and government and the current changes to the structure of the education system. A number of LEAs have changed, or have plans to change, the age of transfer at which pupils move from primary to secondary school. The effect is to dismantle three-tier systems, i.e. first, middle and secondary schools; and to replace them with a two-tier system of primary and secondary schools. This represents the abolition of middle schools in those LEAs.

  Principal access for the research was at Chief Education Officer level, with headteachers, governors and parents also targeted. Some pupil interviews were possible. Research data was collected in these interviews and through documentary evidence gathered from both study areas, and from any LEA which had formally considered change. The quality of the data was ensured by encouraging participants to comment upon and check the accuracy of their contributions. Analysis was achieved by the constant comparative method.

  In 1970, Birley wondered how far age of transfer was a national issue, and how far a matter for local discretion. The evidence of this research would suggest that it has the appearance of a local discretionary matter, but, in reality, enormous pressure is applied through government direct action or its agencies. This study concludes that the relationship between LEA and the government is ambiguous; that LEA planning can be thwarted by cross-cutting aspects of legislation - what may be called 'bureaucratic bolt-holes'; that changing the age of transfer from 12 or 13 back to 11 is demonstrably unnecessary on purely educational grounds; and that the tensions between choice and economy contributed to the decline of the middle school.

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Abbreviations and Data Coding References

This list contains both an explanation of abbreviations used in the text, and the coding used to indicate the source of data, such as the transcript of an interview, or a committee paper.

C	Committee Paper
CEO	Chief Education Officer - This is a generic term and applies to Directors of Education or of Education Services.
CH	Chair of Governors
CLR	Councillor
D	Document
DEO	Deputy Chief Education Officer - A generic term applied to 2nd tier appointments.
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment*
ERA	Education Reform Act
FAS	Funding Agency for Schools
GM	Grant Maintained
GOV	Governor
HT	Headteacher
L	Letter
LMS	Local Management of Schools
N	Newspaper report
NAHT	National Association of Headteachers
NUT	National Union of Teachers
P	Parent
SCAA	Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority**
SEO	Senior Education Officer - A 3rd tier appointment in one of the study areas.
T	Transcript of an interview
PU	Pupil

* Originally DES, DFE (1992), DfEE (1995).
** From 1 October 1997: QCA (Qualification & Curriculum Authority).

Local Education Authorities are named except where they are the subject of analysis. LEAs that are the subject of the Case Study have been guaranteed anonymity. Similarly, where an individual has been quoted in the analysis that contribution has been coded. Data coding is after MAYKUT, P. and MOREHOUSE, R. (1994).

Chapter 1

Setting the Scene

Change is now ubiquitous, persistent and non-linear:
this is the chronic condition in which we live, making
for a world that is increasingly complex with the
unpredictable becoming a normal part of experience.
(Ransom, 1994)

Have we witnessed the rise of the middle school, only to become spectators at its fall? Why are some Local Education Authorities (LEAs) seemingly forced to change their school system? Why are some LEAs apparently immune to the tremors of change? And what do those involved, think, feel and know about it all? The aims of this research are to unpack the rationale behind a major structural change in the education service, and in so doing to explore the perceptions of those involved. To this purpose, the research has been conducted in two distinct and geographically distant areas of England, and Education Officers, headteachers, some governors and some parents and children have been interviewed.

Introduction

The objectives of the first chapter may be summarised as putting the research into context by explaining the current changes to the structure of the education system. A number of LEAs have, for example, changed the age of transfer at which pupils move from primary to secondary school. The effect is to dismantle three-tier systems, i.e. first, middle and secondary schools; and to replace them with a two-tier system of primary and secondary schools. This represents the abolition of middle schools in those LEAs. Conversely, some LEAs have not found it necessary to make such profound changes. Why do they find the arguments insufficiently persuasive? Lastly, the aim is to dissect the arguments by delineating the political, economic and curricular forces that are the basis for changing the age of transfer, and both the developing costs of surplus accommodation and the adjustment needed for schools to address the key stages of the National Curriculum.

In describing the ramifications of substantial educational change, the chapter first discusses incremental and radical change; the one more easily assimilated and the other a major reorganisation. The causes of this particular change, in the age of transfer, are examined. The means of assessing surplus capacity are

defined, and the mis-match of the key stages of the National Curriculum with first and middle school organisation is explained. Both root causes have implications for staffing. Some LEAs have yet to decide whether to change or not to accommodate the new framework for education. A few defend the middle school system eloquently. A description of the study areas within the research is completed with a statement on the latest position within three LEAs, one of them being one of the study areas.

Educational change has always been with us. Some people manage much better than others. There are schools, Heads, and even individual staff members, who know how to view, cope with and manage change. Such schools or staff are included in a growing body of evidence, and, indeed, a growing argument that schools can make a difference even under trying conditions (Fullan, 1993). This researcher 's credentials are a teaching and administration background over thirty years, with the most recent appointment as headteacher of a middle school in the Home counties. That middle school no longer exists - it has been transformed by its amalgamation with the neighbouring first school and by reason of a change in the age of transfer has become a 5 - 11 Primary School. The researcher's present role is that of an inspector of primary schools. Observations of attitudes and motivation during primary school inspections confirm the wide variety of response by teachers and management to changes in curriculum, the review of curriculum content by Dearing (1993), and even to the present system of inspections! Clearly, some cope better than others.

Incremental change
Incremental changes are gradual and additional, rather than a disturbance to the fundamental basis of a school, or , indeed, any other type of organisation. They are managed well partly because they are manifested in the internal life of the schools. Organisationally, it is usually possible to accommodate changes that are incremental - a new curriculum built onto the remnants of the old, discarding old texts in favour of new, possibly multimedia, resources. Even staff changes have, up to now, been incremental as typified by the comment of a Deputy Chief Education Officer (DEO) in Coventry: *'Up to now, we've waited for one of the heads to leave or retire'* (Haigh, 1993). Retirement of one and the recruitment of a new, young teacher in his/her place has been regarded as normal, in the natural course of things. Changes in the government of schools - increased representation of parents, increased powers of governors' committees, specially finances - are all incremental. They are 'home-

grown' versions of each school's response to national legislation, sometimes distilled through committees of the LEA. Some have coped better than others.

Radical change

The *raison d'etre* of this multi-level study is current changes that cannot be regarded as incremental or internal to the schools. Indeed, these changes affect the very existence of categories of schools that no longer seem, in the view of national bodies like the Audit Commission or local education committees, to meet the requirements of curricular efficiency or of cost-effectiveness. The panorama of schooling has changed shape. This is a new morphology, the development of new, different schools supplanting the old. This is not a mechanical model. Changing the age of transfer was organic, with each change affected by the last change in a connected way. Morphologically, schools changed from one kind of organisation to another; teachers found their careers enhanced or diverted, even obstructed; and LEAs reorganised their administration to take all this into account.This study asks a number of basic questions which focus on the general factors influencing a broad policy decision such as the change in the age of transfer. What perceptions are there of the pressure(s) that caused the decision to change? How did the consultative process affect the opinions/perceptions of those consulted? What perceptions exist of the management of the change? What benefits were thought to accrue? What perceptions exist of the cost of the change? It is hoped that such perceptions illuminate, *inter alia*, the processes of educational change.

The age of transfer

On the face of it, some LEAs with first and middle school systems are arbitrarily changing the age of transfer - the age at which primary school children transfer to secondary schools. The effects of switching the age of transfer from 12+ or 13+ back to 11+ are far-reaching and fundamentally alter the pattern of school provision. LEAs state that their principal aim is to improve educational opportunities. They admit that financial considerations play a part in their proposals for change; those financial and educational considerations often complement each other - as, for example, in the question of the problems being experienced by very small sixth forms, or the improved continuity in an all-through primary school. The changes to the education system are on a grand scale, largely unnoticed at national level. Local papers, however, have picked up the most immediate community concerns of 'schools under threat'.

The picture in those areas where major changes have occurred or are under way, suggests that four things have happened or are happening, though sometimes more than one features in the same LEA, or even in the same school. By making separate infant and junior schools into all-through primaries there are savings made on staffing costs of about £40 - 50,000 annually per school. In Coventry, there are no single stage primary schools left. Secondly, against a background of acute community concern, Warwickshire, for example, has two hundred schools affected by a 'significant' proposal involving closure, amalgamation or change of character (Rogers, 1994). Leeds has closed 166 schools and opened 142 new ones. Surrey's two-phase adjustment from transfer at 12 involved four hundred schools. Ealing has reduced the number of primary schools from 97 to 79. Doncaster is phasing out both its 9 - 13 and its 8 - 12 schools (Haigh, op. cit.). In all such examples the middle schools are disappearing. Thirdly, at secondary level, many schools have lost their sixth-forms to tertiary or sixth-form colleges. The final group of Stockport's high schools received no sixth-form entrants in September 1993. Lastly, straight closures, specially of small primaries, have continued for some years now.

Causes of changing the age of transfer
If changing the age of transfer is not arbitrary, from where is the pressure to change ? There are seemingly two root causes - falling rolls and the National Curriculum. Looking at them separately is artificial because they are, in many ways, inextricably connected. It will, however, make clearer their effects if each one is dealt with on its own. A major survey of middle schools (HMI, 1983) came to the conclusion that they would be hard pressed to offer appropriate specialist provision as pupil numbers fell. Reorganisation of the education service by any local authority was presaged by the Education Act 1980, Section 12, which was further explained and articulated by Circular 3/87. This created the expectation that LEAs would make 'appropriate consultation' with parents, teachers and other staff, governors and other interested parties. Time and sufficient information had to be given to permit intelligent consideration of, and response to, the issues involved.

The Audit Commission's 1986 report *Towards Better Management of Secondary Education* argued that,

Local education authorities (LEAs) are in general not reorganising their schools to bring capacity into line with school rolls. As a result, money

*that should be spent on teaching is being devoted to maintaining ...
redundant buildings and to teaching 'empty desks'.*

At the end of 1990, the Commission's report *Rationalising Primary School
Provision* recognised that,

*The framework within which LEAs undertake their role as planners is
both complex and hazardous ... Nonetheless the Commission sees a
compelling case for action to tackle surplus capacity to release resources
which were voted to support pupils' education. By itself, parental choice is
unlikely to drive waste out of the system.*

It also addressed two aspects of falling rolls - the resultant spare capacity in
many schools, in both primary and secondary phases, and the associated
problems of the 'small' school. Incidentally, and in possibly the most
'educational' aspect of the Report, it referred to the other root problem - the
National Curriculum. It listed five key attractions in transferring from a three-
tier to a two-tier system :

1) *it removes the misalignment which a three-tier system has in
   relation to the key stages and ages of assessment for the
   national curriculum.*
2) *it can tackle surplus capacity in all phases simultaneously.*
3) *it can reduce home-to-school journeys for older primary-aged
   pupils, because middle schools commonly serve wider
   catchment areas than first, infant/junior or all-through primary
   schools.*
4) *it can remove the difficulty experienced by middle schools
   with falling rolls in sustaining an appropriate range of
   specialist subject teaching for their secondary-aged pupils.*
5) *it may release whole sites.   (Audit Commission, 1990: 22)*

The influence of the Audit Commission is analysed below in Chapter 8.

Defining spare capacity
Spare capacity, by whatever measure, is referred to as 'surplus places'. An
LEA, in determining to change the age of transfer to eradicate surplus places,
needs to agree how that surplus capacity is measured. In 1992, Warwickshire
was inspected by its external auditors, Price Waterhouse, on behalf of the
Audit Commission. Their survey revealed that, overall against the standard
number capacity, they estimated that the LEA had approximately 19,000
surplus places or around 20% of the school capacity.

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The measure they used was indicated by a Department for Education (DFE) Circular 6/91, concerning the exchange of information between the FAS and local education authorities and the DFE. This stated that the capacity of schools should be recorded by what is known as the More Open Enrolment (MOE) or physical capacity method. Basically, this method of calculation had been used since 1988 to determine secondary school capacities and has been one of the factors taken into account in determining the standard number of primary schools since 1991.

> *For primary schools the method is simply to measure every space which can usually be used for classroom teaching, counting 54 sq.m. as capable of taking 30 pupils, smaller spaces pro rata to this and larger spaces less than 108 sq. m. also as 30 pupils. School halls and libraries, general circulation space, rooms used wholly or mainly for the teaching of children with statements of special educational need or subject to assessment in accordance with the 1981 Education Act, and rooms so equipped as to be unsuitable for general teaching can be excluded. There is obviously scope for interpretation in the application of these criteria, especially with regard to the last category'* (Warwickshire, 1994: Supporting Paper G).

In order to bring some consistency to the assessment of capacity in all its primary schools, Warwickshire LEA discussed and agreed the calculation and interpretation with county schools and the Diocesan Authorities.

> *In general, it was assumed that all small teaching areas (normally 23 pupils or less) should be discounted from the calculation as should some specially equipped practical areas. However, some schools had spare rooms currently designated by them as, for example, TV room, Resources room and Music room where there was no physical impediment to them being used as general teaching spaces if there was sufficient demand in the locality. Similarly, rooms used by, for example, voluntary playgroups or private nurseries should be counted in the basic capacity, but those nursery classes funded by the LEA can be excluded. The MOE capacity is also affected by the number of statemented children in the school. Clearly, there could be annual fluctuations'* (loc.cit.)

The standard number for a primary school was defined for Warwickshire LEA, and presumably for all other LEAs, as the highest of four measures: (i) the MOE/physical capacity divided by the number of age groups; (ii) the number of children on roll in May 1991 divided by the number of age groups; (iii) the most recent standard number published in a statutory notice for the school; (iv) the published admissions limit for the school in 1990/91. Schools had to admit at least up to their standard number and by agreement could exceed that. It

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would appear that for a number of schools the standard number capacity was higher than the MOE one, and that the MOE capacity was frequently lower than the classroom x 30 common-sense approach. Thus, if the character of a school changed, say through changing the age of transfer, then an opportunity would be created to realign standard numbers more closely with MOE capacity figures.

> *... some schools criticise the 'classroom x 30' method as 'inflating' their capacities and thereby giving a false impression of the number of surplus places. Some argue that their standard number-derived capacity is a fairer reflection, others that their floor area-derived capacity is more accurate (sometimes these two figures coincide)*
> (Warwickshire, 1994:1, 4.2.2a).

Yet others claimed to have no surplus places whatsoever.

> *Some, for whom closure was proposed, pointed out that their schools have no or few surplus places and that the problem lay elsewhere. Some combined schools proposed as primaries, and first schools proposed as infants, pointed out that their number of surplus places would increase as a result* (ibid:1,4.2.2b).

The LEA's answer was to refer to its own objective to reduce surplus capacity in each area by at least 30%. Its proposals sought to achieve a 'best fit' between provision in each geographical area and the demand for places. The LEA explained that this could lead to the situations the schools describe because small capital projects at some schools would produce a more cost-effective system overall. *'This highlights a tension between value for money and parental choice which permeates the whole debate'* (ibid: loc. cit.). There were many more surplus places in the secondary phase than in the primary phase. Bringing down the age of transfer moves many pupils into the secondary sector thus reducing the pressure to look for surplus places there. It also makes it *'easier to get rid of the crumbly buildings and rotting huts which house so many primary school-children'* (Haigh, op. cit.). Reorganisation is often driven by straight economics; usually the removal of surplus places, as referred to above, and, in some cases, also the avoidance of charge-capping. The government White Paper 'Choice and Diversity' (HMSO, 1992b), was one of a number of pressures brought to bear on LEAs to remove surplus places, including the Education Act of 1993 and continuing correspondence between local authorities and the DFE. The White Paper of July 1992 stated,

*Too much money is being spent in England on maintaining surplus places.
This is wrong and represents wasted money, money which ought to be
going into schools for the benefit of pupils* (para. 1.59).

In August 1992, the DFE corresponded with Warwickshire's CEO to ask for
information,

*As reiterated in the recent White Paper, the Government is concerned at the
high level of surplus places that appears to exist in the primary and
secondary sectors. I should therefore be grateful if in consultation with the
relevant Dioceses the Authority would let us have the following information
in relation to its primary and secondary school provision:*

*(a)   Details of the Authority's plans to reorganise its provision and
         the number of places that this would be expected to remove.*

*(b)   Details of any plans to reorganise provision in the voluntary
         sector and the number of places this could remove.*

*(c)   Any reasons why existing surplus places cannot sensibly be
         removed.*

*(d)   Details in respect of those primary schools for which no return
         has so far been made* (Warwickshire, 1994:**1**, 1.2.3).

The DFE repeated the central tenet of its belief in a further letter to the CEO in
September 1993,

*As you are no doubt aware, the Government attaches a high priority to
ensuring that the level of surplus capacity across the country is
minimised, if necessary, through the use of new powers in the 1993
Act to issue directions to LEAs, and, once it is established, the new Funding
Agency for Schools* (ibid: **1**, 1.2.4).

What were the new powers in the 1993 Act? The Secretary of State may, if he
(sic) thinks local provision is excessive, direct the LEA, governors or Funding
Agency as appropriate, within the Section 232, to make proposals to remedy
the excess. The Minister may specify the timescale within which proposals
should be made, and set out the principles against which they should be drawn
up. Section 233 parallels Section 232 but deals with situations where provision
is insufficient. Through the authority of Section 234, where Section 232 is
exercised and the time specified has expired, the Secretary of State may make
his own proposals in such manner as may be prescribed. The LEA, governors,
Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and any ten or more local

government electors for the area, may object to the proposals within a period of one month from the date of publication. There are further sections to 237, and all of them came into force on 1 April 1994. The statutory basis for the reorganisation of schools in Warwickshire has general relevance to both study areas and to the rest of the LEAs which decided to change the age of transfer. The paper *The statutory framework: school reorganisation* is in Appendix D.

Possible efficiency savings through the removal of surplus places is one of the factors which central government takes into account in deciding its view of LEAs' spending needs. From 1990, the DFE's reports on government expenditure plans have set annual targets of 100,000 to 120,000 places to be removed nationally, which were incorporated in the grant settlement. Through the DFE criteria for annual capital allocations and through its Education Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) system, it ensures that LEAs that fail to remove surplus places and pro-actively manage their provision of school places are penalised (Warwickshire, 1994: 1, 1.2.7). The chair of Warwickshire's education committee, John Airey, argues there is little choice. The county is faced with £4 million annual costs of carrying so many surplus places; the grim experience of cuts through three years' capping; an 'unrealistic' SSA; a £50 million backlog of school repairs with the Government refusing funds because of surplus places. The county had made annual bids of £12 million and been rewarded with just £2 million. In addition, they needed to get rid of half of the county's two hundred temporary classrooms (Rogers, op. cit.). The repairs that the county had hoped to fund fell foul of the Government's continued practice of giving a high priority to LEA bids for Annual Capital Guidelines (ACGs) which were linked to an absence of surplus places in an area or which facilitated the removal of surplus places.

The DFE's Education Capital Expenditure 1994/95 notes of guidance say: 'In determining ACGs, the Secretary of State will give priority to:
(i)   committed expenditure ... arising from earlier ACGs ...
(ii)   Basic Need for school places in areas of population growth [taking account of all surplus places within a two-mile radius of the growth area for primary schools and three miles for secondary schools]
(iii)   cost-effective proposals, either statutory or non-statutory, to remove surplus places' (ibid: 1, 1.2.8).

Government Ministers emphasised the message. *The Times* of 14 March 1994 reported the Secretary of State as saying that local authorities were wasting about £200 million a year on between 600,000 and 700,000 places that could be removed without limiting parental choice. The report went on,

The emphasis is firmly on squeezing spare places out of the system through amalgamations and disposal of school buildings, as well as through closures (quoted in: Warwickshire, 1994: 1, 1.2.6).

Educational change

Most authorities, however, also cite educational criteria as reasons for changing the age of transfer. They claim improved continuity in an all-through primary school, or make the assumption that the age of transfer should line up with the break between the key stages of the National Curriculum. The National Curriculum was introduced in 1988 and is organised around four key stages, covering the ages: 5 to 7 years, 7 to 11 years, 11 to 14 years and 14 to 16 years. The key stages fit the majority position in the country for age of transfer, that is approximately 80% in England transfer at 7 and 11. Thus the assessment of children's progress and reporting to parents takes place at the end of their time in each school they attend. At the beginning of Key Stage 3, at age 11, schools are required to begin teaching children a Modern Foreign Language and more detailed programmes of study, for example, in Maths, Science, Technology and Music.

But, for children in the two study areas (see below) the first year of Key Stage 2 had taken place in the first school and the rest in the middle school; the first year of Key Stage 3 had taken place in the middle school and the rest in secondary school. So changing the age of transfer to 7 and 11 enabled transfer to match the beginning of a new key stage. It would, it was claimed, make it clearer to parents which school was responsible for their children's progress during each key stage. It would enable 11 year olds to start Key Stage 3 in secondary schools, which, it is said, are more likely to have the specialist teachers, accommodation and equipment that the programmes of study require. It would also give children a greater opportunity to learn a first foreign language other than French. This refers to the fact that most children enter secondary school after doing French for the first year of Key Stage 3 in their middle school.

A further consideration is the confused picture of different ages of transfer between neighbouring counties. The DEO of *Oak* LEA refers in Chapter 5, below, to parental manoeuvres on the county borders because they preferred the quality of education in *Oak* secondary schools. Warwickshire, for example, experienced problems for parents and their children moving in and out of the county, 'losing' more 11-18 year olds than gaining them, because transfer ages differed. The secondary schools in Warwickshire believed that a transfer age change to 11 would reduce the number of pupils going elsewhere and give them a better chance of educating local Warwickshire pupils. This, they said, would benefit all schools educationally as well as financially.

Creating all-through primaries by amalgamating separate infant and junior schools, or first and middle schools, saves on staffing costs - say, one head, one deputy and probably one secretary - to the tune of *'about £40 to £50,000 annually per school'* (Haigh, op. cit.). In the London Borough of Ealing they set themselves the task of changing first and middle schools into infants and juniors, and to amalgamate as many of these as possible into all-through primaries. The CEO, Michael Herman, pointed out that, simple as it sounds, the process, completed in the summer of 1994, took five years. He emphasises that there were educational as well as financial and demographic reasons. *'Middle schools didn't fit the key stages, and time is lost on transfer from first to middle. We also wanted to get the broadest range of options at sixth-form level. By putting primary and middle together we get the best use of resources - an empty classroom costs £1,500 a year'* (ibid).

Staffing
It all sounds convincing. However, these are major structural changes involving hundreds of schools in any local authority area, and thousands of teachers. Careers are being abruptly curtailed as schools amalgamate or close, simply because jobs are in danger through reorganisation. It could not be assumed, for instance, that middle school teachers might want to transfer to secondary schools (C/1-44). The timing is difficult. An accumulation of evidence indicates high levels of occupational stress in the teaching profession (Kyriacou, 1986). Teacher anxiety, particularly during the change, can result in an ineffective school and staff may find it difficult to establish a positive teaching atmosphere. They may even feel isolated from curriculum initiatives. How then will they react to more fundamental changes ?

Teachers generally feel less respected by the general public who perceive them as less dedicated and less professional (Social Trends 18, 1988). Further, teachers are aware of the persistent erosion of their authority over children, diminishing salary and promotion prospects and the continuous demands upon them to implement a succession of national initiatives with little training and restricted resources (Wilcockson, 1995:16).

There are few options available for teachers when their schools are affected by changes. Fewer pupil numbers, amalgamation and, consequently, reduced staffing entitlements, mean changes in personnel. Teachers have found themselves either confirmed on their own staff complement or forced to move to another school with vacancies; or, in the extreme, redundant (Rogers, 1981). All grades have been affected. Heads and deputies have had the galling experience of first seeing their own jobs advertised in the national press, and then having to apply for them ! *'It's hell. It's very disconcerting when you pick up The TES and see your own post advertised. You must still keep the school going and think of the staff, the children and parents'* (Rogers, 1994). Teacher unions and professional associations have been busy.

Changing demands in staffing needs are nothing new. Employers, the LEAs, have sought to come to terms with these changes over many years. Recently, however, the system itself has altered and the responsibilities for various parts of the employers' functions have shifted. In the past most teachers (apart from those in Voluntary Aided Schools) were employed and paid by LEAs. In the 1970s many of those LEAs extended the use of 'County' contracts to allow and enable greater use of redeployment. Redeployment from one school to another was seen as a method of redistributing 'surplus' staff in one school to fill the shortages that existed elsewhere. A workable system of redeployment (although potentially traumatic for individual teachers) did, at least, seek to come to terms with the changing demands in schools, and was better than one of the other choices : the redundancy of staff (D/NUT/3).

The powers of governors increased in the 1980s. The Education Reform Act, 1988, placed in their hands the responsibility of deciding the number of staff needed at schools under local management schemes (LMS). The situation was complicated, however, by the fact that, for County schools, the employer remained the LEA. A much more complex relationship therefore now exists between LEA and the governors of an 'LEA' school. This relationship obviously has an effect upon decisions on, amongst other things, staffing, discipline and grievance procedures. The Education Reform Act, however, does not exist in isolation from other, sometimes crosscutting, i.e. conflicting,

pieces of legislation. Both LEA and governors have to abide by demands of, for example, Employment Law, including the Employment Protection Act; Equal Opportunities legislation and Race Relations legislation. Decisions on staffing have to take into account other aspects of legislation and, whilst almost anyone in the LEA is potentially vulnerable to redundancy, it is not an easy option unless it is on a voluntary basis.

It is not, as one would imagine, the young teacher who is moving in or out. The older, the middle-aged, the more experienced and the more expensive teacher is often identified as a candidate for premature retirement and/or redundancy. Such packages have become commonplace. Change, however, is also associated with survival. In this 'turbulent environment' a teacher may underwrite their future security by being successful at change (Ball, 1987). Enthusiasm for, and commitment to, the innovation may ensure the teacher's continued association with the school.

To change or not to change?
If one accepts that changing the age of transfer in itself recognises the changed context of education, the economic and political pressure that constrains all public services and the pressure on available, scarce resources, does it mean that the change is inevitable ? One would think so. In some local authorities it is 'open season' on first schools and middle schools.

It is possibly helpful to bring together two statements which provide a national context. The first is from an 'illustrative survey' of middle schools by the HMI in 1983, and the second from the OFSTED database in 1996. The former survey refers to eleven-year-olds, whilst the latter relates to ten-year-olds, but the overall picture presented remains valid. The OFSTED database figures were kindly provided by their Research Department and appear also in Appendix C.

The illustrative survey of 1983 described the rapid expansion of middle schools. The first one opened in 1968 and by January 1983 there were 1,810, including 405 combined 5-12 schools. It explained the various age ranges of middle schools found in different LEAs, and that the 1964 Education Act decided that all schools from which children transferred at 12 were deemed primary, while most schools from which children transferred at 13 were deemed secondary. It then made the following statement:

*In January 1983 the total number of full-time pupils in 9-13 schools was
242,474 and those in 8-12 schools 210,051; approximately 22 per cent of
eleven-year-olds in English maintained schools were in some form of middle
school. At the beginning of 1983, middle schools of one age range or
another were found in 49 local education authorities* (DES, 1983:1).

To show how far this national picture has been eroded by changes in the age of
transfer, it was suggested that figures from the OFSTED database be written in
similar format. Thus:

*In January 1996 the total number of full-time pupils in 9-13 schools
was 133,197 and those in 8-12 schools 72,857; approximately 10.5
per cent of ten-year-olds in English maintained schools were in some form
of middle school. At the beginning of 1996, middle schools of one range or
another were found in 32 local education authorities* (OFSTED, 1996).

The change in the age of transfer was clearly of major significance in that some
seventeen LEAs transformed their three-tier system to the two-tier, primary
system. The pupil population of middle schools was halved over this thirteen
year period. The greatest reduction probably occurred in the 1990s, following
the introduction of the National Curriculum.

Contrarily, other local authorities also with first and middle school systems
have affirmed their commitment to the system and resolved to continue with a
pattern that has served them well. There is such strong pressure to change the
age of transfer, that only a handful of committed authorities may remain with
middle schools, notably Northumberland and the Isle of Wight. Such
authorities had reorganised their educational provision into a comprehensive
three-tier system after Plowden (DES, 1967). Northumberland has a county
council and six district councils. Its administrative structure was unchanged by
the Local Government Commission, which in 1992-94 reviewed the structure
of local government in England. It should not therefore be surprising that the
Education Committee in 1995 set its face against upheaval and change in the
county's schools.

Northumberland's reorganisation had taken place between 1969 and 1983.
They found that in many areas, being a rural county, existing capital stock
could be easily adapted to the new system. In other areas appropriate capital
expenditure was undertaken. The LEA believed that Plowden's arguments
were educationally sound, including:

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The framework for education

Since that time the framework for education has changed dramatically, particularly as a result of the 1988 Education Reform Act and the introduction of the National Curriculum, already referred to above, and its associated key stage testing arrangements. Advocates of the middle school system argue that their system is probably better placed to meet children's needs in these new circumstances than the traditional two-tier system for a number of important reasons. Their reasoning and closely worked principles find expression in the committee papers of local authorities that are organised on the middle school system and are ready to defend it in the face of enormous pressure from central government. Their arguments run along the following lines.

Firstly, a middle school system ensures that, since national curriculum testing will not occur at the end of an organisational phase of education, it cannot be misused as a selection device. With the government intent on introducing league tables at the end of Key Stage 2, when they judge the tests to be satisfactory, this must be a very real possibility. At whatever point in a school's life league tables appear they are naturally likely to influence parental choice but the edge will certainly be taken off the situation when the testing is one or two years away from the point of transfer. Given that the ostensible purpose of testing is diagnostic in relation to the needs of individual children, anything that mitigates the misuse of results must be an advantage.

Secondly, because pupils will remain with their teachers for at least one year after the end of Key Stage 2, the diagnostic purpose of national curriculum

assessment can be fully developed. The chasm that has traditionally existed between primary and secondary schools in the two-tier system can only be deepened once it coincides with the move from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. The individual pupils' needs are much more likely to be addressed when they continue to attend the same school with the same staff before and after key stage testing.

Thirdly, because either one third or two thirds of the preparation for key stage 3 assessment will take place in the middle school there is a powerful built-in incentive for liaison between tiers. This is vital in any educational system, given that any organisational device is just a way of making a continuous process more manageable. But in the traditional two-tier system the potential finality of assessment at the end of Key Stage 2 is likely to reduce liaison. Accordingly, SCAA (1996:17) has issued advice for promoting continuity between key stages. It places particular emphasis on concerns about the loss of momentum in pupils' progress between key stages. However, it acknowledges that where there are first, middle and high school arrangements in place, then pupils have benefited in terms of progress from local agreements on curriculum coverage.

Lastly, there is the intriguing question of children's attainment in years 5 and 6. Early results from the work of HMI, and OFSTED, seem to indicate that there is nationally something of a dip in pupils' performance at this crucial stage and it has fuelled suggestions that there should be increased specialisation for teachers in the upper end of traditional junior schools. In the middle school systems, of course, such pupils are in schools with more specialist facilities and more specialist staff than would otherwise be the case. Early evidence that this dip in pupil performance does not occur in middle school systems gives strength to the view that this is, educationally, the sounder approach to the education of these age groups (Northumberland, 1995).

Defending the middle school
In a second Local Authority with middle schools the educational arguments surrounding the debate about change or the retention of the three-tier system has produced broadsheets that are of uncertain authorship (Leeds, 1986). Nevertheless, the strength of the argument is as good in favour of retaining middle schools as the earlier reasoning for changing. The paper is undated, but probably written in 1986. The writers say that, *'To liken a middle school to a "bridge" between the primary school and the high school is a gross*

oversimplification of its role, and reduces the concept to merely buildings'.
The metaphor is likely to have more applicability to the debate over the age of
transfer, and the social and managerial phenomenon that signifies its change
(see below, pp 80-81). The writers describe the middle school as part of the
continuous process of education, catering for the clearly defined academic,
physical and social needs of children in the middle years. They draw evidence
from the HMI Report on 9-13 Middle Schools (1983), referred to above, to
support their view that arguments, for at least a four-form entry to produce
sufficient teachers to deliver a full curricular diet, are erroneous. The report
clearly states in Chapter 8:12 that it is only those schools with less than a
three-form entry that are unlikely to be able to cover the curriculum
adequately.

The authors also look at the suggested desirability of specialist teaching and
curriculum influence for children in the lower age ranges - 8+. They respond by
claiming that the 4-11 school would not facilitate this because the question has
far reaching implications for the size of schools. The small primary school, the
majority of which would be less than two-form entry and some even less than
one-form entry, would not generate the structure or promotional points to
attract specialist teachers. Consequently the very subjects that it is claimed are
at risk in the middle schools, i.e. Modern Languages, Craft, Design and
Technology, Home Economics, Computer Studies and Science would be in
very real danger of disappearing completely from the primary school
curriculum. The writers demand to know what evidence there is that pupils of
smaller middle schools are at an educational disadvantage in these subjects. On
the contrary, they say, the evidence of exam results at 16+, does not indicate
any falling educational standards. One of the major strengths of the middle
school, they claim, is that it successfully facilitates the smooth and almost
imperceptible transition from primary school theory and methodology, and
above all ethos, to those of the high school. The HMI Report (ibid) states that
they '.....*have the task of providing for their pupils a gradual phased
transition from primary to secondary schooling. Such a phased transition has
real and potential benefit for all pupils'* (Chapter 8:20). This could only be
achieved, and my own experience confirms this, by a vast amount of work on
curriculum and pastoral liaison.

A change of school often provides a stimulus to many children and gives a
fresh start to a child who is experiencing problems in a school in any tier.

Where children change school at 11+ there is a sudden and dramatic change in size of school, teaching style and ethos, which is potentially more likely to affect children adversely. There are also disadvantages inherent in the differing maturity and attitudes between children of 4 and 11 and 16+; they are not homogeneous groups. The writers point out that much of the work done in primary schools is of an integrated nature. Where children transfer at 8 or 9 it would seem, to them, that there is more chance of this being maintained to an age beyond 11+, since teaching methods are geared to dovetail into primary school and then evolve towards high school. Where transfer is at 11+, bearing in mind the subject/exam oriented curriculum of the high school, there is less chance of this approach being maintained.

The quality of pastoral care in middle schools is well documented in the HMI Report. Good pastoral care was found in schools of varying sizes and settings, varying from affluent neighbourhoods to areas of considerable social disadvantage (Chapter 4:8). *'In almost all the schools visited, children's behaviour was judged to be good or very good. The general picture that emerged from the survey was of relaxed and orderly communities ... where children responded with friendliness and respect towards their fellow pupils, members of staff and other adults'* (Chapter 4:2). Much of this glowing picture is a result of the ability of the middle school to provide continuous pastoral care for its pupils on a class basis, as well as at Year Group Tutor level and above. Children feel at home and responsible - their *'positive response was illustrated by the way they used the schools' shared facilities; their observation of safety procedures, handling of equipment and the degree to which they were able to work independently'* (Chapter 4:4). The writers finish their paper with phrases such as *' doubt-ridden time'*, and *'stagnation if not atrophy'* in describing the process of consultation and deliberation over the question of reorganisation (Leeds, op. cit.).

The Multi-Level Study

The issues raised by the process of changing the age of transfer were considered for the present research in relation to two local education authorities, *Pharaoh* and *Oak* , which were used as case studies. *Pharaoh* is a Northern Metropolitan District, and a major market and commercial centre. It was the site of a Roman station with extensive iron and pottery works on the banks of a strong river. Thus it has had a long industrial history. The modern town is surrounded by a ring of villages that were once the basis of its

industrial economy, and now serve as dormitories for the workers in the newer occupations. *Pharaoh* is not quite a sprawling conurbation. It has organised its schools into pyramids - that is, in each area a number of primary schools clustered around the secondary school that forms the 'apex' of the pyramid. *Thebes* CE Primary School is in the south-west of the Metropolitan District. It stands on the site of a mediaeval chantry school which later became a Grammar School. Even later it was a charity school. The establishment changed through the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, firstly as a National School in the Church yard, then as an Infant School in 1840. The Junior School first appeared on the present site in 1864. The modern buildings now in evidence date from 1967 and were purpose built to accommodate the First and Middle School system then being introduced. Minimal structural work has been necessary to achieve an amalgamation of the two schools into what is now, after changing the age of transfer, the Primary School. The second study school in *Pharaoh* is *Luxor* Middle School in the north-east. This is a two-storey, purpose built Middle School dating from 1966/67. It has sixteen classrooms, a library, hall and a gymnasium. It has the usual offices and services. It is built on the same site as the High School to which its pupils mostly transfer.

Oak is an English county. It has often been called a county of contrasts providing easy access to Greater London and a quick escape route into rural tranquillity. In contrast to the Metropolitan District, it has a looser system of primary schools that may send their pupils to one, two or more secondary schools. The first study school is in the north-east of *Oak* and is *St. Tree* CE Primary School. This is of ancient origin. It is now a single storey building dating from 1966 which replaced an earlier school that was first opened in 1871 and enlarged in 1903. The church has been connected with the provision of a school in the village since at least 1725 and possibly as early as 1684. The modern building is a Voluntary Aided CE Primary school for pupils aged 4 to 7. Two other study schools in *Oak* are Grant Maintained. They are *Apple* Primary School (GM) also in the north-east, and *Leaf* Junior School (GM) in the south-west of the county. *Leaf* Junior school opened in 1968 and was reorganised in the 1970s as a Middle school with some building extension and adaptation work done then. It has now reverted to a Junior school but with Grant Maintained status.

So we come full circle. Even as this research is written up, two local authorities have run into problems with either the Education Secretary or the FAS (The Funding Agency for Schools). Firstly, *Oak,* one of the study areas, is competing with the FAS to win the contract to build a new secondary school in the centre of the County. It is the view of the FAS that there is a growing demand for places. The FAS is proposing a grant-maintained school, like the other secondary schools in this part of *Oak.* The County Council being the LEA has put forward proposals for a County school. The Secretary of State is now considering which proposal to approve. The FAS gave a broad outline of its plans for the new GM school in a leaflet distributed locally in late 1995. Of the 680 replies, 559 supported the establishment of the new GM school. The Funding Agency therefore believes the development to be in the best interests of the community. At least 7 of its 15 governors will be parents. The rest will be teachers and members of the local community, including business representatives. Although the Agency is involved with the initial development of the school plans, it will, it explains, 'fade into the background' once the governing body and headteacher are appointed.

Secondly, Buckinghamshire has made great efforts to fit the new post-Dearing National Curriculum into the middle school system. Advisors and teachers set about planning a curriculum for Years 3 and 7. 'They wanted the curriculum to be transferable to other years and avoided writing detailed schemes of work for every subject because this would be going over the top and take away flexibility. They agreed with SCAA that *'they must have a separate plan for each subject to chart its progress across the key stages'* (Frost, 1995). Buckinghamshire has gone a long way towards showing how this trick can be brought off. Ironically, it is likely that the county will revert to an 11-plus transfer system in the near future. The immediate issue is the position of grant maintained secondary schools within LEAs contemplating changing the age of transfer, and the attitude of the Secretary of State to requests by those GM schools to unilaterally lower the age of transfer from 12 to 11. For example, the Education Secretary has received applications from two GM secondary schools in Warwickshire. The county believes,

> *... it is vital that the Local Education Authority should take the lead in co-ordinating and managing a change in the school system, rather than have change forced on neighbouring primary and secondary schools by*

unilateral action from some grant maintained schools (Warwickshire, 1993a:10).

The Secretary of State has just ruled (September 1995) that a Buckinghamshire Grant-Maintained school can lower its entry age from 12 to 11+ from September 1997. This ruling follows closely a similar statement by the Secretary of State, that some schools in Slough in the neighbouring county of Berkshire could lower their transfer age to 11 from September 1996. Both Slough and Buckinghamshire, which were in the same local education authority until the last local government reorganisation in 1974, have a middle school system with transfers at 12. In the opinion of the County's education chairman, this decision will cause *'a domino effect across the county'*.

An education committee agenda paper says, *'The real prospect emerges, unless the authority takes the lead with its schools, governing bodies, the Funding Agency for Schools and GM schools in planning and implementing a* planned and orderly *change, then there will be unplanned and disorderly change to the detriment of the coherence of the Buckinghamshire system and present patterns of parental choice'*. David Whitehead, under-secretary for education at the Association of County Councils, said Buckinghamshire's situation *'demonstrates what we've argued; if you fragment the responsibility for the education system between LEAs, the FAS, GM schools and so on, you create chaos'* (Spencer, 1995). Buckinghamshire's hand has been forced - it has announced a change in the age of transfer (September 1997). Bradford and Oxford are considering reorganisation (November 1997). Similarly, Northampton, Newcastle and West Sussex are all reviewing their middle school structure (January, 1998).

Summary and Comment
This research is concerned with the culture and management of educational change. It is almost entirely focused on the interface between the Local Authority and the schools, and draws upon the perceptions of the principal actors. There are three key questions; 'What do those actors in this major reorganisation called 'Age of Transfer' think, feel and know of the reasons given for the change ? What sort of 'fit' do their perceptions make with the organisational agenda and rationale of LEAs for change ? What do they tell us about the management of change ? The methodology is a qualitative multi-level study of change. It draws on evidence from multiple sources, ranging from LEA documents couched in simple, sometimes iconic language, to the

testimony of headteachers, sometimes in support and sometimes in opposition to County plans for reorganisation, but always using more subtly eloquent arguments. Within the overarching theme of the management of educational change, three sub-themes were considered. The first two are ideology and legitimacy, both 'precarious' (Hargreaves 1980:83) and 'critical' (Lynch, 1980) for middle schools. The third is rationality, especially in relation to educational, economic and political forces which, as described above, are the three sets of forces which affect policy processes. The sub-themes are not of equal weight, either in data or analysis, but their interaction will shed light on issues such as leadership, the allocation of resources on the one hand, and inevitability, inequity and pragmatism on the other.

The next chapter is a review of the literature surrounding the development of the middle school and its contemporary influences, especially Plowden. The Plowden Report (DES, 1967) was the cradle of middle schools. It was the progenitor of the 8-12 model, while the 9-13 version was called the West Riding or Clegg model. Clearly, LEAs were prime movers in the development of middle schools, to the extent of 'pushing' government to make any necessary changes to the law. Because LEAs are now dismantling middle schools, it is necessary to show either that some of the same conditions exist today, or that there have been fundamental changes which necessitate changing the age of transfer. This dilemma is at the heart of the next chapter which reviews the enormous influence of Plowden.

Because this research may represent, for some at least, the rise and fall of the middle school, the literature base covers its origins amid the clamour for comprehensive education, and the latest reforms of local management and the National Curriculum which may have had some influence on its partial demise.

Chapter 2

The Rise of the Middle School

The edge of chaos is a good place to be in a constantly changing world
because from there you can always explore the patterns of order
that are available ... What you do not want is to get stuck
in one particular state of order.
(Barber, 1994)

Chapter 2 unwraps part of the literature base of the research, by charting the origins and development of the middle school and examining the contemporary influences. These include the Education Acts from 1902 and the various State papers and Reports, such as Hadow (1926), and Plowden (DES, 1967). The relationship between LEAs and the government of the day was clearly ambiguous. How, otherwise, could they so successfully influence central powers to allow the development of an educational 'experiment'? Or were they, in fact, unknowing partners in an 'administrative convenience'? For either reason, or both, the middle school was born.

Introduction

The objectives of Chapter 2 include looking back to Plowden as a prime influence on the creation of middle schools. There is a review of the legislation that both preceded and followed Plowden. The Plowden principles are identified and compared with the issues of today, seeking to show their continued relevance. The contribution of educational psychologists such as Piaget and Vygotsky are discussed. The influence and methods of the primary school as a major justifying theme for the middle school are discussed, as are the arguments over the 'correct' age of transfer, and the problems associated with adjusting to secondary school. Larger classes and larger schools are identified as a modern problem that dates back to a Plowden principle; then it was secondary, now it's primary schools. Lastly, there is a review of the literature on middle schools, which is bound up with discussion of transition between one phase of schooling and the next. The educational arguments found in various LEA papers have provided an additional perspective on the ideology of the middle school. Overall, this chapter provides background material for this study.

Looking back to Plowden

As middle schools close in many areas for whatever reasons, there is no talk of

a 'failed experiment'. Reese Edwards (1972) was able to describe the fledgling middle school as an experiment. Moreover, he asserted that it was very much the outcome of 'administrative convenience'. Burrows (1978) described factors accounting for the emergence of middle schools which were remarkably diverse in response to local needs rather than, for instance, the constraints of buildings and catchment areas as they differ between LEAs. Brian Gorwood (1973) made a spirited defence of middle schools in his commentary on Reese Edwards' (op.cit.) claim that middle schools were experimental. Gorwood describes the curriculum as more rational and workable, the flexibility of organisation and the gentler approach towards rigorous, disciplined study. The headteacher of *Leaf* Middle in *Oak* made a career move (as described above, Chapter 6, p130) to the middle school system because he thought the Junior school approach was wrong and its curriculum was weak and lacked direction. He agreed that he had modified his concerns with the advent of the National Curriculum. There is unanimity in the view that the middle school was, as Boscobel, the adviser/inspector in *Oak*, puts it, *'a reaction to Plowden'*. Some governors in Warwickshire sent in written responses to the LEA during the consultation period.

> *Those against changing the age of transfer: some first, middle and combined communities argue that the Plowden-inspired principles, which were a factor in their establishment, are still relevant today. They point to the achievement of the system since its creation in the 1970s. Some point to a heightened awareness of the need for good liaison between phases of school and better practice, encouraged by transfer across the key stages* (Warwickshire, 1994, 1 4.2.1).

Freeland (1973), in a discussion about the origins of the middle schools in Southampton, states they *'can be seen as a direct implementation of the Plowden proposals'*.

The Legislative Origins of the Middle School

The Education Committee of Northumberland considered a paper (1995) indicating that the origins of the middle school can be traced in a number of disparate strands. The Education Acts of 1902 and 1918, and the Hadow Reports of 1926 and 1931 together provided a seed-bed of ideas about the appropriate age of transfer. Firstly, the Education Act of 1902 provided for the transfer of pupils at 11 and 12+ between primary and the new forms of secondary school that it had created. Secondary schools were required to provide a four-year course. It set the school leaving age at fourteen. Galton *et*

al. (1980) believed that this Act forshadowed the proposals which followed in the Hadow Report, (see below). Blyth (1980:21-22) summarises some of the main interpretations. Secondly, *'... the establishment of systematic transfer from elementary schools to aided grammar schools and rate-supported secondary schools,'* and thirdly, *'the definitive raising of the school leaving age to fourteen in the Education Act, 1918.'* It was in the 1926 Hadow Report that the oft-quoted hyperbole appeared which claimed that there was *'a tide in the veins of youth. It is called adolescence'.* The Report gave official approval to the transfer arrangements which had settled on the age of eleven. Hadow advocated transfer to secondary schools for all, based on the premise that children attend an infant school, followed by a four year junior school. It also approved the setting up of a four year modern school with a leaving age of fifteen, for those whose transfer did not take them to one of the grammar or secondary schools. These proposals were accepted but the transfer ages suggested by them were not universally adopted. Galton *et al.* (op. cit:32) believed that *'... here was the real origin of the junior school, or of the division between primary and post-primary education'.* But this distinction was not drawn, in any legal sense, until the Education Act of 1944. Even when the Act made a clear distinction between primary pupils and secondary pupils, the debate on age of transfer continued. Examples of transfer at other ages quoted then included: technical schools, which admitted pupils transferred at thirteen until this was rectified by the Spens Report of 1938 and the Education Act of 1944; most boys' independent schools which are fed by eight to thirteen preparatory schools. The latter case is true today. Accelerated promotion for gifted pupils into secondary education was possible after 1948. Some LEAs argued that other countries had different transfer ages. Scotland, among many examples, transferred at age twelve. Whilst LEAs actively debated the age of transfer, the idea of middle schools grew exponentially. Their development reveals that they grew out of the strained relationship between central and local government, especially after 1964. The school leaving age was raised to sixteen years. The pressure of educational theories concerning the most appropriate age of transfer mingled with the need to reorganise on comprehensive lines. On top of that there was an expanding school population. Taylor and Garson (1982:1) observe that,

> *... middle schools are compromise schools born out of the classically English way of inching forward through the gradual ad hoc adjustment to conflicting opinions and pressures.*

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The age of transfer

The Crowther Committee in 1959 had asked if all comprehensive schools must cover the years 11 to 18. Its Report saw the possibility of these years being divided between two schools, thus reducing each by two or three age groups (Clegg, 1980:40). However, no real action on age of transfer was apparent until the Leicestershire Plan. Stewart Mason, the CEO, shaped his plan to avoid the worst drawbacks of selection, without either abolishing grammar schools or establishing monster comprehensive schools. He introduced a two-tier secondary system of eleven-fifteen high schools and fourteen-eighteen grammar schools, with voluntary transfer from the first to the second. For the first time, other LEAs could see that transfer ages were, like Easter, a moveable feast and that middle schools could be an educational possibility for an organisational problem - how, for instance, to go comprehensive.

> *The debate was now being switched to the national level. And while other LEAs such as Worcestershire (Marsh, 1980), Hull, Wallasey, Bradford and Kent, were making similar, if less persistent, representations to the Ministry during this period too, the influence of the West Riding, and in particular of Clegg's emphasis on the economic and administrative advantages of 9-13 schemes even over their 11-14 Leicestershire-like competitors, appears to have been crucial* (Hargreaves, 1986:36).

The Newsom Committee, which had followed Crowther in 1963, had to consider the education between the ages of 13 and 16 of pupils of average and less than average ability. It did not make specific recommendations about the age range of middle schools (Clegg, op.cit:41). But why ages 13 to 16? Was this tacit acknowledgement of a transfer age other than eleven? LEAs began to make the running; began to probe the question in the age of transfer debate, and the most prominent among them was West Riding of Yorkshire. The essence of its prominence was the CEO, Sir Alec Clegg, who aimed to introduce, for carefully chosen areas of the LEA, a five-nine, nine-thirteen, thirteen to eighteen scheme. *'This introduced in England, for the first time officially, the term "middle school" which had until then been an Americanism'.* The Leicestershire Plan, likewise, owed its importance to its architect, the CEO Stewart Mason. John Newsom chaired a committee in 1963 whose report fuelled speculation about a transfer age other than eleven. All of this occurred in the year or more before the advent of a Labour Government committed to the extension of comprehensive schooling. Under LEA pressure the new government looked at the idea of the middle school. To put such a plan into effect, the education acts would need to be amended. William

Alexander opposed the idea of middle schools through the early part of 1964, indeed until the Education Act became law (Kogan, 1971). The Education Act of 1964 secured official blessing to the middle school as a form of educational organisation. The new Labour Government launched its plan to establish comprehensive secondary schools across England in 1965. Local authorities were told to submit reorganisation plans by mid-1966. When Government files were opened this year, under the thirty-year rule, it was discovered that,

> *Mr. Crosland ... in a memo to Cabinet colleagues ... announced that transfer at 11 was no longer going to be insisted upon* (TES, 1997).

It remitted the idea of the three-tier system, and the whole question of ages of transfer to the Central Advisory Council (England) under the chairmanship of Lady Plowden. It was pressure from LEAs that subsequently caused Circular 10/65 to remove the restriction on the number of middle school proposals (Birley, 1970:97).

The Central Advisory Council (England) was asked to consider the age of transfer specifically during its inquiry into primary education, *'in the light of suggestions emanating from the West Riding of Yorkshire for a three-tier organisation, including middle schools taking children from 9 to 13, spanning the traditional break at 11'* (Maclure, 1988). The report, the Plowden Report of 1967, gave every encouragement to the appearance of middle schools, and it was inextricably responsible for both 8-12 and 9-13 forms. The Northumberland Committee paper went on to say that in many places they provided, in terms of existing building stock, a convenient means to the abolition of selection. In a paper composed by Boas and others, it is claimed that theoretically they were underpinned, at least in their 8-12 form, by the Plowden recommendation, supported by the research of such psychologists as Inhelder and Piaget (1958), that a break at 12 years was to be preferred because of children's progression through identifiable developmental stages. The arguments in favour of 12 rather than 13 were not made absolutely clear by the Plowden Committee, but a possible bearing could have been the existence of a Chairman to the 'ages and stages' working party, Harold Tunn, who was ex-CEO of Sheffield, one of the first LEAs to introduce 8-12 middle schools (Bryan, 1980b:64). Unsurprisingly, the Plowden Committee recommended that such a three tier system should be established nationally.

The advent of the middle school owes much to the drive of remarkable educationists leading their local authorities. Bush *et al.* (1983:21), make the judgement that,

> *... some chief education officers have been competent general managers without being demonstrably inspirational; others have been pioneers in educational thought and practice, making a lasting impact both on their LEA and nationally. The establishment of village colleges in Cambridgeshire from the 1930s owed its inspiration to Henry Morris; Alec Clegg pioneered new colleges of education, middle schools and compensatory education of the disadvantaged in the West Riding; in Leicestershire a novel system of introducing the 'comprehensive principle' into secondary education was due to Stewart Mason; John Newsom of Hertfordshire is perhaps best known for the reports of the national committees of which he was chairman.*

Today, it is still the LEAs that debate the age of transfer through their varying responses to government pressure - some determined to keep their three-tier system with its first, middle and secondary schools, and others choosing to revert to a two-tier system and in doing so abolishing their middle schools.

Plowden's principles

It is possibly helpful to react to the original five principles set out in the Report of January, 1967, if only to understand better why the Education Committee in *Oak* on 2 July 1992, said that *'Plowden has been overtaken'*. These cover evidence arising from the study of child development and psychology; the extension of the influence of the methods and attitudes of the junior school; a view that the transfer age of eleven is too early; an attempt to inhibit the readiness of many pupils in the third form who opt out of much for which schooling stands, and, lastly, the need to find some way of moderating the pressure on staff and facilities in larger and larger secondary schools (Schools Council, 1969:5).

Piaget

Firstly, a consideration of evidence arising from the study of child development and psychology must start with Piaget (1896 - 1980). The following 'thumbnail' description of the legacy of Piaget and Vygotsky owes much to an article by Alfrey and David (1996), in which they neatly compare their theories with modern practice. Piaget's work with Inhelder (Inhelder and Piaget, 1958) and (Piaget and Inhelder, 1969) and others, on many aspects of children's cognitive development and logical thought from birth to adulthood, underpins the

intellectual aspects of the Report. As part of his theory of developmental stages, Piaget argued that the child's view of the world is egocentric until about the age of seven.

Today we believe children are trying to 'make sense' of experiences, so education should be rooted in first-hand exploration and activity. Piaget's ideas about the stages of child development perfectly matched the claims being made for the provision of middle schools. What was to be called 'the middle years of childhood' constitute a period when most children move from the concrete stage of operations to formal conceptual and abstract logical thought. If this formal operational stage is complete by about the age of fifteen (Neumark, 1996), does this provide a sufficient justification for a three-tier system of schooling?

> *Piaget himself never tied these stages inflexibly to any age, and in later years also conceded that some individuals might progress unevenly through the stages in different areas - for instance, by becoming visual artists who could not do sums. Piaget did, however, insist that the order of stages never varied and that, as the progress they described was hierarchical, it was impossible to miss out any stage* (Neumark, 1996).

It is because of the influence of contemporaries of Piaget, and later educational psychologists, that we question the rigidity of Piaget's defined stages. Today we feel that children need to explore and manipulate materials as well as being taught, when dealing with new concepts. We believe that, through the teacher's planned intervention, children can be helped towards greater understanding. Piaget likened children's active involvement with the world around them to that of 'lone scientists'. Today we believe that children struggle to make sense of things which may appear contradictory, and in doing so, improve understanding.

Vygotsky
Unlike Piaget, Lev Vygotsky (1896 - 1934) stressed the importance of the transactional context in which learning takes place and the interaction of the learner with his peers and teachers. He was particularly interested in how children use language to turn an external event into an internal process.

> *Our hypothesis has several advantages over Piaget's: It explains the function and development of egocentric speech and, in particular, its*

sudden increase when the child faces difficulties which demand consciousness and reflection (Vygotsky, op. cit:133).

Children often talk themselves through a problem, frequently directing themselves aloud before carrying out an action. Today we value classroom talk and group interaction in problem-solving. He described a *'zone of proximal development'* - the gap between what a child can do by independent problem-solving and the level the child might achieve through problem solving; as Alfrey and David (op. cit.) *'resolving cognitive conflict'*, with the support of an interested adult. This idea underpins our notions of formative assessment and working from 'where the child is'. The teacher, taking a facilitating role, has to present the child with situations and problems that are right on the edge of the child's current understanding. They must be familiar enough to engender confidence, so that the child will feel able to 'talk through' a new problem.

Bruner and Isaacs

Vygotsky and Piaget have increased our understanding of how children learn through active experience, through interaction with other children, and adults, through talk as a catalyst for learning and through the teacher, intervening at the child's learning threshold. Jerome Bruner, born 1915, was influenced by Piaget and Vygotsky. He reasons (Bruner, 1966), that children learn more in a structured environment than unguided discovery alone, leading to the current concept of the teacher's 'scaffolding' learning; that children need to revisit key ideas from time to time, and in increasingly sophisticated ways; and that children can be taught any subject at any age if it is presented in a way which 'makes sense' to them in the light of their earlier experiences. Jerome Bruner points out that both Piaget and Vygotsky were a product of the political and cultural climate in which they lived. Piaget's focus on the 'lone child as experimenter' links with Western individualism. Vygotsky's 'child in a social context' seems to be a product of the collective system of the former USSR. Both were Europeans.

Susan Isaacs (1930 and 1932) is another influential figure who was able to correspond with Piaget and who came to advocate play as the key mode of learning for younger children. Early years teachers today may adopt a Vygotskian style of teaching 'alongside' a child during play. Neumark (op.cit.) asks 'But where does this kind of stage related teaching stand now?' She quotes David Woolf, headteacher of Snape Primary School in Suffolk, who notices

that a student teacher who recently trained at his school knew nothing of Piaget.

Extension of the primary school

Secondly, the great debate, about the educational value likely to accrue from extending the influence of the methods and attitudes of the Junior school, is well documented by Clegg (op. cit.). He observes that at that time primary schools of the informal variety were flourishing (e.g. Prior Weston in London). In his opinion they were very good schools indeed and had received Plowden approval (ibid:41). Nevertheless, the point remained whether, in middle schools, enlightened primary ways were to work upwards, or whether the preparation for examinations so typical of the secondary stage was to work downwards and invade the middle school age range (ibid:43). Clegg reports the view of a grammar school head who *'dealt with the examination problem by the terse statement that one of the great advantages of the break at thirteen would result from the fact that staff, thinking in terms of GCE syllabuses, would not be able to "get at" children of eleven to twelve years of age'* (ibid:42). This virtual ring fencing of the primary ethos but at a later age than generally the case was endorsed by the NUT (1964) and in the Plowden Report itself,

If the middle school is to be a new and progressive force it must develop further the curriculum, methods and attitudes which exist at present in junior schools. It must move forward into what is now regarded as secondary school work, but it must not move so far away that it loses the best of primary education as we know it now (paras 383-384).

The child-centred, progressive ideology of the primary school was a major justifying theme for its extension to the new middle school. Hargreaves (1980) explicates the extension model of the middle school, principally the 8-12 version.

Ages of transfer

Thirdly, there is the view that the age of eleven is too soon to fix educational decisions having considerable personal and social consequences (see above, p34). Boas (op.cit.) states that no matter what age pupils transfer to secondary school, problems of adjustment occur, and that in general there is a decreased level in academic performance accompanied by a decrease in motivation for

many pupils in the first year after transfer. Birley (1970: 98) observes that there was

Incisive and persistent probing of the logic, long assumed but never tested, of transfer at eleven led in the end to a surprising consensus - that a later age, twelve or thirteen, would be better.

Plowden (DES, 1967), justified this by saying *'for many children the changes of curriculum and method associated with a break at eleven cut across a phase in learning and an attitude to it. An un-selfconscious period in art, dramatic movement and writing, for example, may last till twelve or thirteen'*. Many children, too, at the top of the primary school develop confidence in devising experiments and using books in specific situations (often unrelated to 'subject'). The Report argued that children's progress in these areas may be *'slowed down by premature emphasis on class instruction, adult systematisation and precision in secondary schools'* and finds its arguments supported *'by the findings of Piaget and his English followers on the late emergence of the powers of abstract thought'* (see above). Transfer at 11 was seen by many as a process of early selection with the 11+ examination (although it was a crude measure of ability) and early specialisation.

Nisbet and Entwistle (1969), after a major study in Aberdeen, Scotland, concluded that the rate of children's physical, emotional, intellectual and social development was so varied that there was no 'correct' age of transfer. They recommended that the years 9 to 13 should encounter a gradual change in the style of teaching because of the after effects of transfer. Such were their findings that Aberdeen decided to continue with their existing pattern of transfer at 12. They were influenced, for example, by the work of Bruner (op.cit.) on the differential effects of subject matter and teaching methods on conceptual development. In the same year, Taylor (1969) looked at the 'first principles' of Plowden and argued that the main evidence from child development and psychology suggests that,

individual differences persist at all ages of schooling, not only at the primary stage, and the continuity of physical and psychological development, at least in normal circumstances, is a sine qua non of life in general. So there is nothing here that provides a basic justification for extending the junior stage by one or two years.

Nevertheless, *'of those LEAs whose middle schools were expected to open in September 1970, for example, Southampton planned 8-12 schools and Rochdale 10-13. West Sussex planned 9-13'* (DES, 1970).

Problems of adjustment

Spelman (1979) , concluded that *'independently of how the transition between systems is justified, the organisational and educational discontinuities associated with transfer may cause problems of adjustment among certain types of children entering secondary education.'* It is his concern that studies by Nisbet and Entwistle (op. cit.) and Youngman and Lunzer (1977) indicate,

> *... that younger, less mature children, those from working-class backgounds, and those of timid, anxious, withdrawing or non-academic dispositions may be most at risk; that difficulties in coming to terms with the physical and academic organisation of secondary schools, apprehension about the standards of schoolwork expected, disruptions in primary peer-group relationships and lack of stability in relationships with teachers are among the problems most commonly mentioned by pupils; and that increased neuroticism together with a diminished self-concept and a decrease in motivation and attainment may be among the most likely consequences for those who fail to adjust.* (Spelman, op. cit:35)

Spelman draws the alternative picture;

> *... that pupils who are academically able, non-anxious, socially mature and ambitious, those who are given most encouragement by their parents, those who have 'naturally outgrown their primary school environments' and those who have favourable relationships with their teachers are among the most likely to make a successful adjustment to secondary school.* (ibid., loc. cit.)

Problems of pupil adjustment to secondary school overlap with, and lead us naturally to consider the fourth principle.

Fourthly, the worry is expressed that many secondary pupils are ready to opt out of their third form; ready to opt out of much for which schooling stands. Ginsburg and Meyenn (1980), explore the nature and continuity of pupils' school experiences from age five to sixteen plus. They discuss the most appropriate age of transfer (the third principle, above) and the perceived effect of the three tier system in ameliorating adjustment difficulties. They note how little agreement exists among teachers. For many, transfer occurs ideally when individual pupils have acquired the skills and knowledge provided by one

school and have developed physically, cognitively and socially to the point where they are ready to cope with the demands of the next school. An upper school teacher observes,

I think it (twelve) might be better for transfer, because at the present stage I think the trend, as I say, physical and mental maturity, the third year is the problem. We would have a year of settling and then the problems would come to light (Ginsburg and Meyenn, op. cit:292).

Another upper school teacher is of the opinion that,

... thirteen is most probably a very good year for change ... Problems in schools that used to run from eleven to sixteen; the majority of your problems start at this age (i.e. thirteen). I think that is why the age of thirteen was decided upon in the first place, in the idea of the three-tier system ... I'm not saying it overcomes all of them but it does tend to ... They haven't had, you see, the two years in a known environment. So that when they start to become adolescent, they ... know what the establishment is like to become awkward against. (With transfer at thirteen) they've got to find out (about a new school) and by that time they're getting over that problem. (ibid., loc. cit.)

In 1962, Clegg, as reported above (Chapter 2, pp32-33), was facing the problem of introducing comprehensive education to the West Riding. This was five years before Plowden, but he wondered if it could be achieved by creating middle schools. He thought it appropriate to consult with fifteen leading headteachers, 'the most notably gifted educationists';

They pointed out that thirteen was the age of transfer in the private sector of education, and emphasised their conviction that in any secondary school the first and second year are easy to teach and 'playing up' does not start until the third year. They affirmed that much of the energy which youngsters display at about thirteen might be turned to good account if there was a change of school at that time. (Clegg, op. cit:41-42)

Pupil disaffection

Today, it is a matter of public concern still that many secondary pupils are disaffected. The chief inspector of schools, Chris Woodhead, (*The Times*, 6.3.96), recently highlighted the poor school performance of boys, particularly white working-class boys. He was echoing the findings of an Equal Opportunities Commission report, (Arnot *et al.*, 1996), that shows that by the age of seven girls perform better than boys in reading, writing and spelling. It also shows that the disparity widens at 11 and 14. Evans (1996) believes the

report to be *'complacent'* and points to a survey carried out at the University of Keele (1994) in which it is revealed that the motivation for boys falls from Year 8 onwards; that by Years 10 and 11 some forty per cent of pupils belong to three school groups:

> *known as the disappointed, the disaffected and the disappeared, and schools have little or nothing to contribute to the development of these pupils' self-esteem and self-respect. These three groups are comprised predominantly of boys.*

Sir Ron Dearing, the government's chief curriculum adviser, has recommended to the Education and Employment Secretary, that some young people would be better motivated by vocational courses and work experience than mainstream schooling. Legally, they cannot leave school before the age of 16, but Dearing has concluded they could be *'semi-detached'* from school, attending a further education college and taking part in work experience from the age of 14. Labour-led local authorities see this as undermining comprehensive education (MacLeod, 1996:8). Sir Alfred Sherman (1996:4-5) has forthright views of this problem and is unequivocal in laying blame;

> *When the school leaving age was... raised, educational differentials by sex and class were intensified. Girls [and, for that matter, boys with modest aspirations] set their sights... higher. By contrast, boys who would have made good apprentices or juniors at 14 resented being kept on at school for two more years for lessons which were irrelevant and above their heads.*

He points to the enormous harm being done in addition to the waste of resources and distortion of statistics;

> *After two years of rebelliousness, kicking their heels and getting into trouble, these young adolescents are correspondingly more difficult to absorb and socialise into the working environment, for the overriding reason that early training in literacy and numeracy had earlier been sacrificed on the altar of Plowdenism and faddism* (Sherman, 1996:4).

Sir Ron Dearing's recommendations (above) are based on his major survey of pupils' attitudes. His snapshot of opinion among 11-16 year olds reveals a crisis of confidence in classrooms. The pattern emerges of many young pupils steadily losing interest in their education as they go through secondary school. By the time they reach their crucial GCSE year, many are apparently bored by their work and disenchanted with their teachers, and do not want to stay on

(Whitehead, 1996). A Guardian leader (2 March, 1996) describes the two most serious educational challenges, in its view: disaffected 14-year-olds, and meeting the needs of the increasing number of non-academic children who now stay on beyond sixteen.

Large classes, large schools

The fifth area of concern for Plowden was the pressure on staff and facilities in larger and larger secondary schools. The Report expresses the need to find some way of moderating such pressure. The creation of a middle school, either 8-12 or 9-13, would neatly remove a large section of the secondary schools' population, and thus reduce the apparent tensions.

> *Elsewhere, Marsh (1980) has recorded how middle schools were established in rural Worcestershire to avoid the problems of very large comprehensive schools (with the high costs of building and transportation these would involve) and very small ones too (given their inevitably restricted range of curricular choice)* (Hargreaves, 1986:41).

Hence the charge that the middle school was born out of administrative convenience. Today, our concern is with rising class sizes in primary schools and, therefore, larger and larger primaries.

> *More than a million primary pupils are being taught in classes of more than 30 - an increase of more than 90,000 on the previous year ... Of a total 3,813,472 primary pupils, 1,076,469 were taught in classes of more than 30* (*The Guardian*, 1994:4).

At the beginning of 1995 there were 1.15 million pupils in classes that exceeded 30 (Dean, 1995). The advice of Duncan Graham, former chairman and chief executive of the National Curriculum Council, speaking generally rather than specifically about middle schools, is that class sizes are getting too big for teachers to deliver the National Curriculum. '*The further you go beyond 30, the greater the difficulties become.Beyond 35 I would question whether you really are getting any kind of value for money'*. (Personal communication, 16 February 1998). He coupled this with the observation that if class numbers fall below 15, the same is true.

The headteacher of *Apple* GM Primary School, in *Oak LEA*, admitted to being alarmed that admissions had to rise from 40 to 60 five-year-olds in the Age of Transfer year. He explained that they had always been oversubscribed at the

40 level; say, 46, 47. They had always been admitted. When the standard admission number rose to 60, the school received 70 applications. Two were successful on appeal, so actual admissions totalled 62.

The following year when we had gone GM, we had an application of 96 pupils and the governors ... decided ... to make an extra classroom. We've taken three reception classes this year. We've promised to go back to 60 next year because people could see that we would be just too big for young children (T/HTi - 1/4).

Parental opinion is clearly important. The head is presumably making promises to parents about class size. There is evidence (Young, 1997), that class sizes and levels of funding to schools are the two most important issues in education amongst teacher groups in the election.

The appearance of middle schools

Classification of Middle Schools, 1971		
Age range		Numbers
8-12	Middle Schools deemed Primary	118
9-13	Middle Schools deemed Secondary	147
10-13		
11-13	Middle Schools deemed Secondary	46
11-14	Middle Schools deemed Secondary	75
	Total	386
Sources: DES Statistics, Vol I, 1971 DES Classification List of Comprehensive Schools, 1971		

Table 1(Benn, 1973).

In January 1968 there were no middle schools in the United Kingdom. Ten years later there were 1690. The great flowering of the middle school system, according to the Northumberland writers (Boas, n.d.), and to Hargreaves and Tickle (op. cit.), occurred therefore in the late 1960s and into the 1970s. The figures in Table 1, above, indicate very little of the groundswell of enthusiasm for the middle school idea. In 1973 alone, as many as 526 middle schools were newly established. However, it was far from a 'national' system. The great majority of pupils in England and Wales still transferred from primary to

secondary school at age eleven. Therein lies the debate. The literature on the age of transfer relates almost entirely to the idea of 'transition', but many writers entwine their arguments with reasons for the development of the middle school. For example, Culling (1973:10) questions, *'Is it merely an administrative convenience or can it be related to phases of development in childhood?'*.

What of administrative convenience? A raft of authors, including Culling (op.cit.), Marsh (1973), Edwards (1972), Bryan and Hardcastle (1977 and 1978), and Blyth and Derricott (1977), generally agreed that middle schools were established as an administratively convenient way of going comprehensive. Burrows (1978) describes factors relating to local needs. Edwards (op.cit.) and Gorwood (1973) argue the former's claim that middle schools were experimental. Lynch (1975) was among most of the authors cited above, when he commented on the practicality of converting existing buildings, usually small ex-secondary modern schools, into middle schools. Extending this argument, it was shown that medium-sized grammar schools could become, without great disruption or expansion, thirteen-eighteen comprehensive schools. Hargreaves (1980:85), believes that these arguments are substantially of economic convenience. The husbanding of resources was all the more important when cuts in some form of educational expenditure curtailed the capacity of middle schools to undertake innovations so proudly and optimistically symbolised by Plowden (Blyth, op. cit.).

Secondly, some authors related their reasoning to beliefs about the specific nature of, say, adolescence, as Nisbet and Entwistle (1969), or of the middle years, as Gannon and Whalley (1975) or the Schools' Council (1969). There was argument as to how the middle years could be seen as a separate stage of development. Holness (1973), found it difficult to substantiate a particular phase of childhood between the years eight and thirteen when there is homogeneity in either physical, moral, educational, or intellectual growth, and when this pattern of development differs markedly from other phases of childhood. Hargreaves (op.cit.), observed that the institutional identity of the middle school had been conceptually established by its supporters with the notion that the middle years are a *'zone of transition'*. Gannon and Whalley (op.cit:15) called them the *'decision years'* in which the middle school must encourage *'the unique personality of the child to develop in an all round sense'*. They agreed with Blyth and Derricott (op.cit.) that the middle school, in

its community role, represents a move away from the concept of the school as the one provider for all the educational needs of a growing child. Blyth and Derricott (op.cit.) emphasised that middle schools are, in fact, by-products of social conflict:

an incidental consequence of major movements of the 'tectonic plates' affecting education as a whole, and that their happy school image is deliberately developed in order to counteract this underlying conflict, in the absence of any social group or political party committed to their cause.

Changing circumstances and surplus places

The Northumberland writers (Northumberland, 1995) argued that since the mid-1980s the climate had become a good deal chillier for middle schools. Indeed, the whole educational system was contracting. Severe cutbacks in state expenditure on education affected all schools. The concerns of the time included standards, falling rolls and diminishing budgets. In such circumstances staffs shrink. In middle schools specially this was not a desirable outcome. Bornett (1980:161), explained that promotion opportunities in middle schools had never been great, with few posts available at Scale 3 level and very few indeed beyond that point. Falling rolls and reductions in middle school staffing numbers further restricted the avenues for career advancement. Some regarded the smallness of the middle school as a favourable feature, as compared to the larger comprehensive. There was, however, the contrary concern of Derricott and Richards (1980:182), that it may lead to insufficient depth of specialist treatment in some areas of the curriculum, such as science, modern languages and handicrafts. It was a view confirmed by a major, illustrative survey of middle schools, undertaken by HMI (HMI, op. cit.), and which came to the conclusion that middle schools would be hard pressed to offer appropriate specialist provision as pupil numbers fell.

Contraction apart, there existed a threat to the very existence of middle schools. Not only was there increasing pressure for more specialist curriculum in the 11-13 age range, (which, as noted above, was problematic), but also moves by many policy-makers to rationalise educational provision for the 16+ age group in order to protect curriculum choice at A-level. For example, *Pharaoh's* Reorganisation Sub-Committee, between January and May 1989, was actively consulting about the future provision for the 16-19 age group. It was thought that, where such rationalisation led to the setting up of sixth-form education in separate colleges, 9-13 middle schools would very likely be

phased out as a result, due to the unpopularity and consequent lack of support for 13-16 schools. Bryan and Hardcastle (1978), identified these twin pressures as the reason why the fate of the middle schools already hung in the balance in several LEAs. Ironically, *Pharaoh's* plans for 16+ were terminated in 1993 after the change in control of such provision brought about the Further and Higher Education Act (1992). *Pharaoh* then went on to eliminate its 9-13 middle schools anyway.

The DES issued Circular 3/87, (DES, 1987) which was seminal to the current phase of reorganisation. It was in itself a commentary on aspects of the 1980 Education Act, and, with a broad brush, looked at 'The Pattern of Organisation to Age 19'. The Audit Commission (1989), recognised that LEAs had to exist in a more complex, more volatile environment; that they had *'lost an empire and found a role'*. Then in its report, 'Rationalising Primary School Provision', (Audit Commission, 1990), listed 'five key attractions' of converting to a two-tier system. Only one was educational. The Government's White Paper 'Choice and Diversity - A New Framework for Schools', (HMSO, 1992), was one of a number of pressures brought to bear on LEAs to remove surplus places. These included Audit Commission Reports (described above), the Education Act , 1993 and continuing correspondence between local authorities and the DFE. Central Government, through DFE criteria for annual capital allocations, and through its standard spending assessments (SSA) system, ensures that LEAs that fail to remove surplus places and pro-actively manage their provision of school places are penalised.(Warwickshire, op. cit.)

The response of some LEAs has therefore been to 'tidy up' the inconsistencies created by Local Government reorganisation in 1974 by restoring the traditional two-tier system with transfer at age 11. Ironically, the proposed reorganisation of some English counties in 1996/97, in so far as it restores some of the boundaries that were abolished in 1974, will make this reason for change redundant. (Northumberland, op. cit.)

Deciding not to change
In a number of Local Authorities change is not only seen to be redundant, it is positively unwelcome. Northumberland, in the paper quoted above, considered a spirited defence of the three-tier system at its Education Committee of 15 March 1995. Its reorganisation to the middle school system took place between 1969 and 1983. The geography of the County enabled it to tackle the

question area by area and to ensure that, on the whole, appropriate building alterations were made. The paper presents educational arguments for the retention of middle schools against a background of major legislation such as the Education Act, 1988 and its introduction of the National Curriculum (see below). Even financial implications did not sway the argument. Since the bulk of school funding is now by means of age weighted pupil units and the number of children to be educated would not change, any savings that may arise by changing to a two-tier system would come from premises. In a closely reasoned analysis, the Education Committee came to the conclusion that:

> *The general upheaval and uncertainty associated with such a huge change would extend well into the next century. At a time when the government has promised a measure of stability in relation to the curriculum and its assessment, the Education Committee would need to think very carefully before proposing a change of this magnitude* (Northumberland, op. cit.).

The undated, apparently unpublished paper from Leeds (op. cit:3), puts forward cogent arguments for the status quo. It draws for support on an HMI Report into 9-13 middle schools (HMI, op. cit.), even though that report came to the conclusion that middle schools would be hard pressed to offer appropriate specialist provision as pupil numbers fell. It claims that middle schools have their own identity; are perfectly viable and transfer at 11+ would denude primary schools of curriculum specialist influence. The writer(s) point to the extensive liaison work facilitating transition and the strength of the middle school pastoral care system.

There exists a growing body of newspaper articles on the effects of changing the age of transfer, if only because the local press or the educational weeklies feel the pulse of parental disquiet when schools are threatened. Apart from government reports, as outlined above, the only other source has proved to be the *Times Educational Supplement* (TES), in which Rogers (1981) explored the effects on staff of fundamental changes and the consequent redundancies that flowed from them, 'Pioneers in uncharted territory'. Later (1994) he describes 'Wholesale Changes', which Haigh (op. cit.) before him had summed up as 'Torn up by the grassroots'. Barber (op. cit.) looks for pattern in seeming chaos... Frost (1995) on the other hand has found some sort of order following the revisions of the National Curriculum which he describes as *'Square pegs in round holes - One local authority has made the new curriculum fit its middle school system'*. The age of transfer controversy is

alive and kicking in Buckinghamshire, where Spencer (op. cit.) comments on the Education Secretary's ruling that allows a Grant Maintained school to lower its age of admission from 12 to 11 in 1997 - 'Shephard's ruling upsets Tory Bucks'.

Summary and Comment

Issues that concerned Plowden are very much alive today. Principles of teaching and learning, and their basis in educational psychology, are explicated in teacher-training institutions in each generation (Neumark, op. cit.). The pattern of disaffected youngsters in secondary education continues. Problems with class sizes persist.

Still, today, there are powerful advocates of the middle school system. The arguments put forward by one of them, Northumberland LEA (see Chapter 1) have been reviewed. Two others, Buckinghamshire LEA and the Isle of Wight LEA, have 'tailored' the National Curriculum to their three-tier system. The work of the National Middle Schools Forum, another pressure group, which began in 1987, continues. Its aims include the promotion of good practice in middle schools, the provision of 'inspirational' input to middle school staff, and to influence national education policy. Its secretary, Mr Vince Davies, in conversation, observed;

> *LEAs did not have the time or inclination to get [the Forum] really organised and so asked individual heads to act as LEA/County representatives to the Forum. The heads saw benefit in talking to other Authorities with middle schools - it had hardly been done before - so they put it on a firm footing some 3 - 4 years ago* (Log, pp92-93).

The Forum has a National Steering Committee which organises conferences. In 1994, the conference considered 'Effectiveness in Middle Schools' and was addressed, and apparently challenged, by Mike Tomlinson, the Director of Inspections, OFSTED (Log p93). The Director returned to the 1996 conference held in May in Dorset, with some interesting facts from the OFSTED database. The following account is drawn from the conference notes (Davies, 1996).

As of the date of the conference, there were emerging trends but no firm conclusions. Overall, 9-13 schools were performing better than all other

sectors (primary, comprehensive). The 8-12 schools were performing overall similarly to primary schools. One clear factor had emerged. It was that schools with narrow age ranges performed better. The conference was told that this gave middle schools an advantage over other sectors. Within the major areas inspected by OFSTED, 9-13 schools had standards of achievement at a similar level to comprehensives, whilst 8-12 schools had no areas of weakness. The quality of education, with its important links to teachers' subject knowledge, revealed problems at Key Stage 2, but middle schools fared better than primaries. The element of efficiency includes spending, deployment and planning. This produced weaknesses in 9-13 schools compared to other sectors. Quality of teaching showed Years 5 and 6 in Key Stage 2 to be problematic. Teachers' command of their subject in 9-13 schools was not as secure as their colleagues in comprehensives at Key Stage 3. Both 8-12 and 9-13 schools came out best in the area of challenge, that is pace and motivation.

Assessment, particularly its use to inform subsequent work, was poor in all sectors. The poorest sector was middle schools.

The data on management and administration produced a list of weaknesses. Middle schools, by comparison with primary and comprehensives, were weak at reviewing their work, planning, setting priorities and implementing plans and policies. Their strengths are the working relationships amongst staff, routine administration and organisation, leadership, ethos and sense of purpose, internal and external communications.

Ethos is defined as behaviour, the moral and spiritual ethos and out of school activities. In this aspect of school effectiveness, 9-13 schools were way ahead of all other sectors. Primary schools were next and the 8-12 schools were ahead of comprehensives.

The survey of literature continues in the next chapter by reviewing the processes and management of educational change.

Chapter 3

Dealing with Educational Change

*I'm always being told that educational change merely reflects
change in society. I was, without realising it for a long time, brought
up to think differently, and I still work on the principle that education
can, and does in fact, improve society.*
(Dan Cook, CEO Devon
in: Kogan, and Van Der Eyken, 1973)

This chapter completes the literature review by looking at the images of
educational change, the management of educational change, and the policy
processes within educational change.

Introduction

The objectives of Chapter 3 may be summarised as a review of the images of,
and the policy processes of, educational change. The literature on managing
educational change highlights issues of ideology, legitimation and leadership. It
also reveals the process of change in intensely personal terms for professionals,
in the view of Burgess (1984) who sees people reacting to the structured
situations in which they are located; but especially in the work of Marris
(1986) on personal adjustments to loss and change. Because the research
concerns the role of Education Officers and their Deputies, the literature
review includes earlier studies of their role. This, in turn, discloses aspects of
the relationship between central and local control of education. It addresses the
latest reforms, of local management and the National Curriculum, which have
illuminated the critical review of change as it affects schools. The survey
includes the seminal text by Ball (op.cit.) which looks at the interface of the
school and its external environment. Lastly, it explicates the personal
adjustments necessary to cope with loss and change. Overall, this chapter
amplifies the evidence on the management of change.

Images of educational change

Several writers have tried to classify the different 'perspectives' on or 'images'
of educational change (Chin, 1970; Havelock, 1968; Zaltman *et al.*, 1977;
Havelock and Huberman, 1977). For instance, Chin (1970) refers to the
empirical/rational, normative/re-educative and power/coercive perspectives,
while Havelock (1968) also identifies three images of educational change:
research, development and diffusion; social interaction and problem solving.

Zaltman et al. (1977) described three broad classifications: empirical/rational, manipulative and power strategies. For Chin, empirical/rational approaches involve convincing people by rational means; appealing to reason and logic and disseminating information from basic and applied research. Through normative/re-educative strategies, the habits and values of individuals and groups are changed. It supposes that the norms and values which are prevalent within an organisation or group can be changed. The ways in which people react to each other in the course of their work may also change. Those who use power/coercive strategies attempt to bring about change through the use of political, economic, legal or moral sanctions.

The first strategy described by Havelock (1968) is referred to as research, development and diffusion. This has much in common with Chin's empirical/rational approach. A product (which, in the context of this case study, could be the results of a pilot study by Warwickshire) is developed after research connected with a particular problem. The product, embodying a solution, is then presented to those assumed to have the problem and it is expected they will see for themselves the value of adoption. The second strategy is called social interaction. It relies upon a loose association of individuals involved in the change process. The strategist uses informal networks to encourage the flow of information about the change. This is a process that resonates well with the LEA inspectors sharing confidences with headteachers; or the headteachers' own informal networks. The third strategy is problem solving, and has much in common with Chin's normative/re-educative approach. The change agent works with a client group within an organisation, helping them to identify and diagnose problems and to seek out and implement solutions. To these, Zaltman *et al.* (1977) add a power strategy.

Hewton (1982) classifies these into three broad alternatives: treat people as rational beings who will act in their own self-interests if properly convinced; engage in a form of social engineering in order to create new attitudes and perspectives; or use power to force people to change. They are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, they may become intermixed (Havelock and Huberman, 1977). *'The same person may view innovation from one perspective, than from another for another purpose'* (House, 1981).

The management of educational change

The theory and practice of educational change is recounted in a reader by Hargreaves and Tickle (op. cit.), highlighting issues of ideology (Hargreaves, 1980) and its legitimation (Lynch, 1980) , and leadership (Nias, 1980). Hargreaves calls ideologies 'justifying themes' and maintains that they change as circumstances change. It was shown above (page 37) that the emerging middle schools were essentially justified by the child-centred progressive ideology of the primary sector. Hargreaves recognised that there was an element of safety in referring to eight-twelve middle schools as 'primary'.

It was clearly preferable to extend established favourable identities rather than to create precarious new ones (Hargreaves, 1980:83-4).

But circumstances, and hence their justification, changed. Although the eight-twelve middle school could claim to be founded on educational, that is, primary, grounds, local factors often carried a different import. As explained in Chapter 2, building costs involved in catering for different ages of transfer were to influence LEAs in deciding to reorganise on nine-thirteen grounds because of material constraints. Thus, the ideology as at first adumbrated, was clearly ill-fitting. The nine-thirteen school is less easily legitimated as an extension of primary schooling. Additionally, the legacy of primary teachers and secondary teachers, forming a divided teaching force in a reorganised middle school, meant that a specific ideology had to take into account all these diverse factors. It was for these reasons *'that there was an overall transition from an extension to an invention model of middle schooling'* (Hargreaves, 1980:84). Lynch believes that ideologies, transient and changing as they are, *'nonetheless provide a climate which serves an important legitimating function in modern society'* (Lynch, 1980:115). He describes schools as having an important conserving and integrating function, directly related to the effectiveness of social control. They are therefore the first to feel the draught of a change in ideology and first to suffer criticism when it is felt that the social relations of production are being inadequately reproduced. Nias, in discussing the ideal middle school, is surprised by the powerfully consistent image of leadership she finds in a wide literature. She finds that from the start, official policy urged headteachers to involve staff in discussion, and advocated substantial delegation of responsibility to holders of 'major coordinating roles'. Communication and consultation soon came to be viewed as crucial aspects of the headteacher's role. Leadership is defined by competence rather than formal

role, and may pass from one member of a school team to another as circumstances dictate (Nias, 1980:72). Aspects of the leadership of Chief Education Officers are touched upon in the section on their role (below, page 56).

The nature of the processes of change, both personal and organisational, are delineated by Peter Marris (op. cit.), in a text originally published in 1974 but now brought up to date in a reissue. He sees grieving as the working out of a psychological reintegration, whose principles are essentially similar whether the *'structures of meaning'* of our life fall apart from the loss of a personal relationship, of a predictable social context (education?) or of an interpretable world. The management of educational change is represented in a wide ranging body of literature which is almost exclusively contextualised within the school. Pre-eminent among the authors is Fullan (1991, 1993). He writes handbooks for managing change within an educational institution. Bennett, Crawford and Riches (1992), explore some of the main theories and processes of educational management focusing on change. They argue that it is not just about the creation of new policies and procedures to implement external mandates. It is also about the strategies by which individuals respond to the impact of structural and cultural change: about personal change as much as organisational change: about the place of values in framing organisational policy and shaping individual actions. Fullan is one of their contributors. Plunkett (1987), defines the role of values in organisational and cultural change. Dalin (1978) also explores the limits that values place on the extent of educational change from the point of view of both the policy maker and the practitioners who put it into operation. More recently, Mortimore (1997) has also tried to prescribe strategies for managing educational change. Dalin (1986:300) advises caution on the part of educational managers facing demands for change, for they will experience,

1. *Conflicts over control and influence*
2. *Institutional and personal rivalries*
3. *Manipulations and backroom politics*
4. *Discrepancies between project aspirations and project resources.*

This resonates closely with the findings of Kelly (1969: 69) who observes that change in schools is rarely politically neutral, and that interests are enhanced or threatened by change:

*Conflict and change are inextricably interlocked as any distribution of
power and privelege will be sought by some and resisted by others.*

This is a major theme of Ball's. His *Micropolitics of the School* (1987) is an
important text. He *'takes schools, in common with virtually all other social
organisations, to be arenas of struggle; to be riven with actual or potential
conflict between members; to be poorly coordinated; to be ideologically
diverse.'* He addresses the interests and concerns of heads, teachers and pupils.
His comprehensive chapter on the school's management of its external
environment is pertinent to a study of the current problems of change facing
schools.

Fullan's recipes for managing internal and external change are overly
prescriptive, but his views on the non-linearity and chaotic nature of the forces
of change are illuminating. They echo, among others, Whiteside (1978), and
Barber's views on chaos (op.cit.). Fullan seeks to reconcile the forces of chaos
and order as they interact in dynamically complex ways. Coulby and Bash
(1991) explain that any social policy initiative of this extent and magnitude is
likely to generate conflict, and have its unintended as well as its intended
outcomes. Much of the evidence in this case study shows the interaction of
these forces. Acker (1990:257-273) draws on the literature of educational
innovation, exploring the three perspectives deliniated by House (1979:1-15),
the technological, the political and the cultural. Choosing the last one as her
working model, Acker explores the teacher cultures that predate and mediate
any government initiatives, in particular the National Curriculum. However,
she concludes that whilst primary teachers do perceive a threat in governmental
initiatives and are anxious about their ramifications, they do not feel deskilled
or destroyed. It does illuminate teacher reactions to change, but such a
conclusion does not fit comfortably with the findings of this case study, which
deals with rather more than a simple curriculum change.

Policy processes in educational change
This study is describing 'policy process' in education. It is a term used by
Glatter (1979) to distinguish three broad sets of forces that interact with each
other during the course of a policy process.

*These are political forces, educational forces and a third set, which
relates to questions of logistics and the use of resources and which, for want
of a more accurate term, I call economic forces.*

Political forces *are those that arise from the operation of political parties and of interest and pressure groups (whether or not they are formally constituted as such).*

Educational forces *are those that arise from prevalent views of what constitutes 'good' education, whether held by professionals or the public.*

Economic forces *are those that arise from the need to use scarce resources efficiently.*

(Glatter, 1979:34)

Within this study of the change in the age of transfer, these three sets of forces clearly overlap with one another. The political forces would include the resistance of parents and community groups, and some heads and teachers, to any proposals for the closure of a neighbourhood school. Educational forces would include the expectation that a newly amalgamated school would be at least as 'good' as its constituent parts. Economic forces would operate through pressures to reorganise the provision in such a way that there was at least a rough relationship between the reduction in pupil numbers and in expenditure.

Glatter (op.cit:36) takes the view that politics is a 'rational' activity and that one can speak of political rationality no less than of economic rationality, but the criteria of rationality are different in the two cases. Economic rationality dictates that the 'best' proposal as determined by objective analysis should always be accepted without compromise. Under political rationality, on the other hand, compromise, the use of power and influence, the protection of self-interest even when it conflicts with a broader good, become rational activities. In this case study of the change in the age of transfer, indeed in the wider field of education, one can identify a multiplicity of purposes, a high component of values and the severe difficulty of assessing output. Here, it is suggested, the exercise of political rationality is always likely to be as significant as that of economic or educational rationality.

An initial assessment of the reorganisation is that it shows how the economic objectives which resulted from targets for financial savings, set by, first, central government, and secondly, the local authorities, were subsequently modified by political factors (e.g. pressure from governors, teachers, parents to change local proposals) and educational considerations (e.g. the need to ensure continuity of teaching and learning following reorganisation).

The role of Education Officers

Because this study began with Chief Education Officers in two local authorities, earlier studies of their role were examined. There can be no such thing as a 'typical' local authority. Neither *Oak* or *Pharaoh* is intended to be typical of local authorities generally, or of LEAs with middle schools in particular, but simply representative of those LEAs which have decided to change the age of transfer. Such LEAs, of course, experienced the considerable consequences of central government's demands for economies, and the impact of demographic changes which resulted in spare capacity.

Bush and Kogan collaborated in their book, *Directors of Education*, (1982) which was a follow up after ten years of an original by the latter, *County Hall*, (Kogan and van der Eyken, 1973). This throws light upon the relationship between central and local government and how much it has changed in the decade (Log, p278/279). The relationship between central and local control of education is well-drawn in the Open University course, No. 222. The notes by Glatter (1979) and Ozga (1982), have illuminated the discussion on the effects of central government decisions on local policy-making in general, and on the political influences affecting LEAs in particular. This helps to place the impact of surplus places in perspective and emphasises how complex LEA decision-making really is. The reticence of education officers is commented upon by Birley (1970:xi). He finds it curious as so many came from an articulate teaching background. It is Birley's view that the relationship between central and local government, in the sphere of education, is at best ambivalent; that LEA objectives are often obscured by tensions between local and central government. It is a central theme in this case study. Directors of education have been very much affected by changes in local government reorganisation, corporate management, falling school rolls and expenditure cuts. Directors, or CEOs, have today been wrestling with fundamental changes in an attempt to eradicate surplus places, to deal fairly with staff in schools affected by these moves and to ensure the rationality and sense of purpose of their education services. The question of surplus places and how to deal with them has a political dimension and is also wrapped up in the way LEAs respond to central government's economic pressures. *'The political, economic and demographic aspects of LEA provision cannot be treated in isolation from one another'* (Ozga, op.cit:8). The response of *Oak* and *Pharaoh* might be said to depend on the specific characteristics of each LEA. However, each Council had an entrenched political majority, one Conservative and one Labour. Each

demonstrated general willingness to accept policy guidance from the centre in terms of local educational expenditure. Of course, the major change of the age of transfer attracted central grant in aid. Moreover, any resistance to central initiatives could incur monetary penalties.

Bush and Kogan joined with Lenney in a follow-up book, the third in the series, *Directors of Education - Facing Reform* (1989), which is a detailed commentary on the nature of the Directors' work discussed in the context of the momentous changes affecting education, local government and politics in the 1970s and 1980s. The 'partnership' of local-central relationships which typified the early 1970s was eroded throughout the 1980s by increased intervention by the DES in the affairs of LEAs. The curriculum was centralised by the introduction of a National Curriculum in 1988.

The Role of the Headteacher
The management of change by headteachers has a recent history in the literature. Most of the research has taken the form of case studies of individual secondary schools, and the part played by headteachers has only been one aspect of the work. More importantly, the majority of the work described relates to changes internally and not to changes imposed by any external source (e.g. Bell, 1979:1-8; Waddilove, 1981:139-148; Gilbert, 1981:41-61; Bailey, 1982; Nicholls, 1983; and Burgess, 1983). Together with the work of Fullan (op. cit.), it is clear that headteachers play a major role in change within their institutions.

However, Huberman and Miles (1984) found that the prime advocates for change in 10 of their 12 case studies, were central-office administrators, who often reached directly into the schools to implement the innovation, thereby effectively reducing principals to a secondary role. This, in essence, describes the innovation of changing the age of transfer, especially where *'principals had to get into line'*. The relationship between LEAs and their middle schools is ill-defined in the literature. However, Nias (1980:81), concerned about the absence of evidence to support or challenge what she calls the 'ideal' model of a middle school says, *'It offers those outside the school, ...administrators, a platform for impassioned advocacy or dogmatic attack, both equally uninformed'*.

Both Thomas (1978) and Hall *et al.* (1984:22-27) identified types of change-facilitator amongst principals. Their 'manager' type demonstrated responsive behaviour to situations but also initiated actions to support changes suggested by central office. They defended staff from what they felt were excessive demands and provided support to facilitate teachers' use of an innovation, but did not move beyond the basics of what was imposed by the district administrators. In this case study, headteachers can be seen to be providing support to their staff, even defending them from excess. But headteachers were themselves as much the target of the age of transfer project as were the teachers.

Research in England and Wales during 1982-83 by the NFER, focused on newly-appointed secondary heads and involved all 250 first appointees amongst the cohort. Several hundred changes, both major and minor, were introduced or planned in the 16 schools that were 'shadowed' over two years of research. Weindling and Earley (1986:327-338, 1987) reviewed the NFER research and found it noticable that only a handful of the changes did not originate from the new heads, but were responses by the LEA to national schemes (e.g. TVEI and the Lower Attainers Project), or to local schemes, such as profiling. It may not be proper to call changes to the age of transfer a 'national scheme', but they were certainly a national initiative aggressively marketed by, among others, the Audit Commission (Chapter 8, p146).

The National Curriculum
One such change, imposed from an external source, was the introduction of the National Curriculum in an Act of 1988. Of the numerous books on managing the National Curriculum, that of Brighouse and Moon (1990) is notable for its critical perspectives including the management of the school's external boundary. Reference was made to MacClure's, *Education Reformed: A Guide to the Education Reform Act* (1988), in which he examined the relationship between central government and the local authorities. The latter were already under intense pressure to support schools in the implementation of Circular 8/86, which adumbrated the terms of the Education (No.2) Act 1986. This was the culmination of a decade of debate about the composition and powers of governing bodies, and their relationship with the local education authority. The National Curriculum followed on closely to present LEAs with a diminished role not of their choosing. They did not want to allow themselves to be marginalised as the centre of gravity of local decisions shifted to the

consumers. In many ways the 1988 Act made that choice for them. In the cause of equity, efficiency, liberty and choice, the Act decentralised budgets, increased access, fostered diversity and allowed state schools to be independent of LEA control. The relevance and importance of this Act to this case study is both the idea of open enrolment and its effect on prudent local authorities that had managed a service facing falling rolls by reducing school places through mergers and closures.

Summary and Comment

It is impossible to ignore the fact that changing the age of transfer is an organisational change. Managing change in organisations has a wide literature and has given birth to a myriad of prescriptive and academic models. It seems to me that the 'learning' organisation is, or should be, the description most closely associated with schools. Businesses and their management may be 'flexible' organisations, 'empowered' organisations or 'open' companies. Buzzwords such as these, however, neglect the dimension of change that is about people, either individually or team members.

Demographic changes, which in the early 1980s meant falling numbers of primary children, in the early 1990s saw a significant drop in numbers of secondary pupils. In the face of central directives to economise, prudent LEAs did not hesitate to bring forward proposals for a rationalisation of schooling which could mean mergers, or indeed closures. These proposals, in some LEAs, included changing the age of transfer. This research is focused on such LEAs, where changing the age of transfer involved the revision of three-tier schooling, that is, first, middle and secondary schools; and its replacement by two-tier schooling, primary and secondary. LEAs expressed a preference, where possible, for all-through primary schools rather than separate infant and junior schools. The significant loss, therefore, was of the middle schools.

The dismantling of middle schools was presaged many times, most notably by Doe in the TES in 1976, in an article entitled 'The End of the Middle'; by Burrows in 1978, 'Middle Schools: High road or dead end?'; and by the NUT in 1979, 'Middle Schools: Deemed or doomed?' In total, this is what Lynch (op. cit.) calls a legitimation crisis for the English Middle School. Was there not legitimacy enough, in that the middle school received recognition in the sixties because it offered a practical solution to two interrelated and urgent problems?

*There was a growing concern about the mechanisms of selection
for secondary education allied with a critical interest in a search
for an appropriate age of transfer. There was a mounting party
political pressure towards a national pattern of compulsory
comprehensive secondary education and a desire to raise the
school leaving age* (Bryan and Hardcastle, 1978:5).

There are many such instances in this study where political questions are
translated into educational ones (Hargreaves, 1986:204-5). One obvious
example is Plowden, and the apparent identity crisis of the middle school in
the years following Plowden, led to a revisit the five main principles on which
that Report was based (see Chapter 2, p34). This included a re-examination of
the arguments surrounding transition, specially the contribution of Piaget and
Inhelder, Vygotsky and others. At issue is the leadership of County Hall
(Chapter 5, p78), particularly the role of LEA officers like the Deputies, and,
at local level, of heads and governors (Chapter 6, p106).
The management of change as momentous as that associated with changing the
age of transfer from primary to secondary school is open to accusations of
inequity and pragmatism replacing rational strategic planning (Chapters 8 and
10).

The next chapter is a consideration of methodology which, in seeking to
understand the phenomenon of educational change affecting school provision
and the age of transfer of pupils to secondary schools, becomes a critical
exercise to find the most appropriate way of presenting the accounts of those
involved. This research is clearly placed in the qualitative paradigm and a
positive choice of case study methodology is made.

Chapter 4

A Study of Educational Change
To start change is to kick a pebble down a mountain.
We may not know where it is going to end up. It may end
up creating something better, but we do not know.
(Lord Bancroft, former Head of Home Civil Service, speaking
on Reform of the House of Lords, August 1995).

As indicated in Chapters 1-3, this study is about changes to middle schools and
the processes that caused them. The emphasis is on the processes rather than
middle schools *per se*. This chapter contains a discussion of the relative merits
between case study and survey, and includes a rationale for the rejection of a
survey element within this research. It explains that the methodology used is a
qualitative multi-level study of change, within which, *inter alia*, a case study
approach was used to examine two LEAs and five schools. At each level, it
seeks to demonstrate how their strategies, cultures, actions and perspectives
illuminate both the processes of the change in the age of transfer, and the
relationships between each level, as, for example, between LEAs and the
schools. The methodology is developmental in the sense that it is data led. The
implications of this on the general research design is elaborated with a
justification of the use of the multi-level structure for writing up the analysis
rather than the use of the case study structure to write up the analysis. The
analysis was developed by the use of a technique from Nordenbo, a
Scandinavian researcher, which seems to have relevance and significance for a
wider audience.

Introduction
The objectives of this chapter include placing this multi-level study clearly into
the qualitative paradigm. It begins with a debate between two researchers, one
inclined to the qualitative posture and the other to the quantitative posture.
They question the decision to use a case study strategy making comparisons
with survey methods of research, addressing the issues of quality, reliability
and validity. A discussion follows of the risk of bias and an explanation of the
strategies employed to check for and reduce the risk of bias. Another objective
is to explain the sampling strategy by reference to those LEAs, some seventeen
nationally, who have abolished middle schools. Notes on the general research
design explain the decision to use the multi-level structure for writing up the
analysis rather than the case study structure to write up the analysis; and that

the principal access was at Deputy Education Officer level, with headteachers, governors and parents also targeted. Some pupil interviews were possible. Research data was collected in these interviews and through documentary evidence gathered from both study areas, and from any LEA which had formally considered change. Most data was recorded on tape and a field log book was kept. Analysis was achieved by the constant comparative method. Additionally, reference was made to an analysis tool of Nordenbo (1990) which was applied to transcripts of interviews. Lastly, there is discussion of the ethical issues raised by case study strategy; particularly the need for contributions to be coded for anonymity.

Why qualitative and not quantitative?
This qualitative research project emphasises the subjects' words, actions and records.

> *This location [of this research project] means that any piece of research always carries within itself an epistemology – a theory about knowledge and truth and their relationship to the world or 'reality'* (Usher and Edwards, 1994:149).

The epistemological explanation for this is anti-positivist and phenomenological (Burrell and Morgan, 1979) and (Cohen and Mannion , 1994). This has important relevance to the conduct of the research. It is through language that most people come to understand their situations. We create our world with words. We explain ourselves with words. Prominence is given to the subjects' words because they better reflect the set of imperatives of the qualitative paradigm.

The set of imperatives, or postulates, answer six basic questions about the nature of reality and the conduct of research. They affect the planning of the project; the careful matching of research questions with the methods of collecting and analysing the data, and the writing up of the study. In describing the six postulates, it is important to make explicit the positivist, or quantitative, view, side by side with a qualitative choice. For example, we rarely think about the nature of reality because in our day-to-day activities reality is a given. 'How does the world work?' is the first philosophic question (Postulate I). The way we understand the nature of reality affects the way we see ourselves in relation to knowledge. The quantitative researcher believes knowledge can be separated into parts and examined individually, so it follows that the researcher

can stand apart from who or what he or she is examining. On the other hand, the qualitative view is that knowledge is constructed, and that, therefore, the knower cannot be totally separated from what is known; the world is co-constituted (Postulate II).

Values (Postulate III) can be understood from the first two postulates. Values are embedded in the research; in the topic chosen for examination; in the way the topic is examined, and within one's self. If the world can be divided into parts and if the knower can stand outside of what is to be known, then research can be value free. Alternatively, if reality is constructed and the knower and known are inseparable, then values are part of the bag and baggage.

Postulate IV asks about causal links. The researcher's understanding of causal links stems from the first three postulates. The quantitative researcher makes a guess or forms a hypothesis which is then used to test the data. If, however, reality is multiple and constructed, it follows that causal links will be mutual (or, constructed) and that in terms of what an action means, the event is not unidirectional but multidirectional. In looking at data which is gathered in the process of research, the qualitative researcher seeks patterns which emerge from the data. The perspective of the qualitative enquirer is open-ended and not clearly focused in its initial stages.

In this debate between two researchers from opposing paradigms, it becomes clear that each would, for example, look at the generalisations of their findings (Postulate V) very differently. Qualitative research values context sensitivity. This study seeks to understand the social phenomenon called 'changing the age of transfer' in all its complexity and within its particular educational situation and environment. Quantitative research works to eliminate all of the unique aspects of the environment in order to apply the results to the largest possible number of subjects and experiments.

One would expect different contributions to a body of knowledge (Postulate VI) given the intricate connection between and among the preceding postulates. The positivist, or quantitative, position on research is unclear about how new knowledge is discovered. The positivist approach is to try to verify what has already been discovered by other methods. The qualitative paradigm and the phenomenological position within it, is oriented towards discovery of salient propositions. One does not know, for example, what will be uncovered,

revealed or learnt, but yet may feel some growing sense of the situation through people's words and actions. The research perspective, as explained above, is emergent, understanding the data as it unfolds; being prepared to constantly look for patterns as they emerge from the study. Discovery of propositions by observation and the careful inspection of patterns which emerge from the data are the hallmark of the phenomenological approach. The qualitative enquirer follows the contours of the study as they emerge, that is, not as a pre-set research script to follow in detail. This is the 'naturalistic research' described by Bogdan and Taylor (1975). Bakhtin (1986) explains his understanding of human subjectivity as it applies to qualitative research by pointing to the connectedness and the interaction between knower and known within a rich, detailed narrative.

Why select a case study strategy?
The two researchers discuss the relative merits of case study and survey analysis. These are two different methodologies generating different types of data. Survey methodology is designated as quantitative, case study as qualitative. Similarly, some methods such as structured interviews and questionnaires, standardised tests of performance and attitude inventories are categorised as quantitative; whilst others, like unstructured interviews, participant observations and diary-keeping, are categorised as qualitative. When considering how to *use* data to develop an analysis, there are at least two basic epistemological questions. These are:

1. *Data on what?* What *do these data tell me about and, crucially, what can they not tell me about?* and

2. *Strength of claim.* How well *do these data tell me this? How convincing are claims I want to make on the basis of the data? How can I make the strongest claims possible, without pushing the data 'too far' by making claims which are beyond their capacity?* (Bryman and Burgess, 1994:99).

Addressing the first (*Data on what?* What *do these data tell me about and, crucially, what can they not tell me about?*) can be answered by considering the relative values of survey analysis and case study. This research, conventially, could have used a survey with a structured questionnaire which would have been analysed using statistical techniques. This would have

provided a broad picture of the phenomenon. A qualitative study could then have covered a more limited area of the same ground but in more depth. Survey analysis could have identified important determining factors within the overall problem of changing the age of transfer, say, both for LEAs and for their schools. Perhaps headteachers in general would have agreed on a set of appropriate LEA responsibilities. Such data, however, would not support an understanding of what headteachers actually do or feel within their own relationships with their LEA. It would not reveal the (probably) complex processes through which they decide what to do in the midst of change, nor the role of the concept of obligations in their own actions and feelings. Thus the survey is less interested in the reasoning process, and rather more in whether people were giving replies which could be taken to represent their sense of *appropriate* answers (however they reached that conclusion). The documentation of what percentage of a survey population said that a particular line of action or duty, vis a vis LEA and school, was appropriate is only one facet of understanding the normative elements of LEA responsibilities.

To establish how such determining factors relate to each other, it was necessary to examine two specific cases systematically and in detail. A case study methodology, concerned essentially with the interaction of factors and events, was strongly indicated by the data. It is only by taking a practical instance that we can obtain a full picture of this interaction at and between each appropriate level. Case study, moreover, can sometimes penetrate aspects, like *The Catkins School* vignette (Chapter 7, p136), or the teacher moved from Year 6 to Year 2 (Chapter 6, p126), which are not readily accessible by methods which rely on large numbers. Whilst the survey allows information from large samples to be collected quickly and relatively cheaply, and allows comparisons between individuals because answers to questions are comparable, it may be superficial in measuring sensitive or difficult aspects of behaviour.

The philosophical underpinnings of case study include the work of Polanyi on 'indwelling'. In *Knowing and Being* he states,

> *To this extent knowledge is an indwelling; that is a utilisation of the framework for unfolding our understanding in accordance with the indications and standards imposed by the framework ... If an act of knowing affects our choice between alternate frameworks, or modifies the framework in which we dwell, it involves a change in our way of being* (quoted in Grene, 1969:84).

Indwelling is also reflective, where reflection means to pause and think or to process what has gone before. Polanyi's work on tacit knowledge, and its distinction from explicit knowledge, has relevance to the conduct of qualitative enquiry. In practice one begins by relying on one's tacit knowledge as well as explicit knowledge in order to understand the situation in the study areas. Tacit knowledge is gained by indwelling. Tacit knowledge results from the increasing focus on meanings. How do we understand problems, the actions of persons, or the meaning of institutions or rituals? Polanyi's answer is by indwelling. What becomes known by indwelling is not just the pieces, but the whole - what Polanyi calls *joint meaning*. It is *'not by looking at things, but by indwelling in them, that we understand their joint meaning '* (Polanyi,1967:18). Thus, the qualitative researcher's perspective is perhaps a paradoxical one: it is to be acutely tuned-in to the experience and meanings systems of others - to indwell - and at the same time to be aware of how one's own biases and perceptions may be influencing what one is trying to understand.

Quality, reliability and validity

Thus, the second of the two epistemological questions (How well *do these data tell me this? How convincing are claims I want to make on the basis of the data? How can I make the strongest claims possible, without pushing the data 'too far' by making claims which are beyond their capacity?*) refers to the crucial issue of the validity of data. This study attempts to look at the totality of a phenomenon in greater depth and in its natural setting, to *understand* it from the point of view of those involved in it; it deals more in 'reasons', 'motives' and 'perspectives' than in statistical associations between aspects of behaviour or causal factors producing them. In terms of quality, the data produced relate 'to "real life" - that is not a laboratory artefact - and the behaviours used as a sign of it are indeed an example of it' (Sapsford & Evans, 1984:261). Moreover, the account reconstructs the data into a 'recognisable reality' for the people who have participated in the study. To do this, some interpretation is necessarily involved in the data analysis process and in selecting the research outcomes that are eventually reported. Therein lie the twin issues of reliability and validity.

Any piece of research, from artificial experiment to naturalistic field study, involves an interaction between research subject, the research and research circumstances. One can never be totally sure that the observed results would be the same as if there were no observer. One of the Education Officers argues

that a researcher with teaching experience, and closeness to schools, could not obtain the necessary distance and therefore objectivity to make a study. Such an argument seems unsatisfactory. An observer may be handicapped by being completely 'outside'. A working knowledge of the educational culture may give value to the findings. Even in the first imaginings of the study one felt disinclined to accept the notion of 'objectivity'. Reactivity can never be totally eliminated: the knower and known are interdependent (Postulate II) and events are mutually shaped (Postulate IV). The validity of the report may be subject to systematic errors, or biases, which thus threaten reliability. The main concern, therefore, must lie with examining the possible sources of bias which inhibit the study, and employing techniques to reduce them.

The first possible source of bias is the research subject. This 'actor' may lie, cheat, present a false front or try to impress the interviewer in some way. Burgess (1984) reminds us that *'people respond to the structured situations in which they are located'*. As far as practicable, each respondent was involved in commenting upon and checking their interview contributions. Their replies became an integral part of the data. Further, both Education Officers and headteachers were given the opportunity to read and comment upon the draft chapters which encompassed the analysis of their own experiences. Another strategy for ensuring validity is a comparison of the actors' accounts with official records. In this way, for example, looking at dates of meetings of the Education Committee, the consultation documents, it was possible to check up on the accuracy of their stories. In both study areas, official records of the deliberations were comprehensively recorded and readily accessible. Nevertheless, Plummer (1983:104) draws a telling caveat,

> *...given the problematic nature of official records - it (is) possible that official records are little more than sedimentation of the tacit assumptions and prejudices of statistic and record-keeping agencies.*

A further technique of validation is to make comparisons with other informants, either those in similar roles or else those who know the subject well. For this reason, the views of Boscobel and the writings of Herne were sought in *Oak*. The story of *The Catkins* School only came to light by a chance message overheard at County Hall and the information checked in a subsequent interview with the headteacher at *Apple* Primary School (GM). In fact, in both study areas, the perceptions of DEOs, headteachers and governors were

compared and contrasted through triangulation to produce a rounded view of the phenomenon of educational change.

To construct understandings of human actions one must seek the meanings situations have for the actors. To understand human phenomena, the inquirer must attempt to see through the eyes of the participants, as well as his/her own (McLean, 1991).

This is at the heart of this research - to respond to the multiplicity of perspectives present in two study areas and several schools.

The second source of possible bias is concerned with the researcher. Most blatantly, the researcher/interviewer may hold prejudices and assumptions which structure the questionning. The researcher will also bring biases into the situation by virtue of his or her age, class, gender and general background - even mood (Plummer, 1983:102). Such variables cannot be entirely nullified. The values embedded in this research present a constructed reality in which knower and known are inseparable (Postulate III, see above p63). This researcher, once head of a middle school that disappeared in the reorganisation due to a change in the age of transfer, inevitably brought assumptions to this research, or 'hunches' about what may be discovered. Even if, in the circumstances, they represented some ambivalence towards the changes proposed, they were not part of the driving questions of this study. Such hunches were not embodied in hypotheses which had to be proved or disproved. As Marris (op.cit:149) describes, one can work out one's own sense of such a change. Within this study, keeping a low profile and impinging as little and as naturally as possible is a tactic to reduce the incidence of bias. The results of analysis, for example, were 'tested' at intervals with fellow researchers who formed a mutual support group. It is to be hoped that such peer-debriefing kept each other honest (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Lastly, bias may creep in through the very interactional encounter itself. Plummer (1983:103) says the setting may be too formal to encourage intimacy or too informal to encourage an adequate response. In contrast, Kitwood (1977) argues, *'the distinctively human element in the interview is necessary to its "validity"'*. He also says,

Every interpersonal situation may be said to be valid, as such, whether or not it conforms to expectations, whether or not it involves a high degree of

communication, and whether or not the participants emerged exhilarated or depressed.

The strategy to reduce this kind of bias is closely allied to that associated with the researcher. The evidence collected is also compared with other sources of evidence. The constructs of the semi-structured interview schedule are meaningful and contribute to a 'truthful' picture, which can in this way be verified. Inevitably, none of these approaches is *guaranteed* to succeed.

Sampling strategy

The change in the age of transfer has meant in each case abolishing middle schools and, in effect, moving from a three-tier system to a two-tier system of schooling. These local authorities, some seventeen nationally, were targeted. A sampling decision was taken early in the planning of the research, governed by the adopted methodology. Using the case study approach, there was no intention to generalise beyond the context of each individual LEA. It was therefore appropriate to determine the target LEAs by reference to their proximity - within a half-day's motoring - to home address in the south, or maternal home in the East Midlands. This description resonates with that of 'convenience' or 'accidental' sampling described by Cohen and Mannion (op.cit:88). Direct approaches were made to the CEOs of four LEAs considering change or actively changing, two in the South, one in the Midlands and one in the North. The one in the North immediately responded with an invitation to visit. Of the others, the LEA in the Midlands at first accepted and then rejected saying that another researcher was working in the County. The two in the South refused. The CEO of one of the latter group resigned within three months, so a second request - this time to one of the DEOs - was more favourably received. Fortunately, a clear difference in location, one LEA in the south and one in the north of England, was achieved. There were differences too, in size and organisation, and in county, diocesan and grant-maintained schools.

Contact in both study areas was, in fact, with a DEO. Each was courteous and helpful, offering documentation and access to records, but suggested one should make one's own approaches to schools. Using LEA directories, a geographical spread across each study area was attempted. Within each LEA two schools were identified as exemplars of many others affected by changes in structure due to the change in the age of transfer. Initial contact with headteachers was by telephone. Fellow members of the College of Preceptors

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suggested themselves within the pages and pages of names. Such approaches were rejected a number of times, usually on grounds of 'busy term', 'inconvenient' or 'badly clashing with other activities'.

The head of *Luxor* Middle spoke about his school's demise and clearly wanted to tell his story. The head at *Thebes* CE Primary welcomed the opportunity to talk of developments there and the benefits of the change. The heads of GM schools, *Apple* and *Leaf*, exhibited similar messianic fervour in talking of their solutions to the problems associated with changing the age of transfer. At *St. Tree* CE Primary, the head was relatively new in post, but is a product of the LEA. She welcomed the change.

Boscobel, is an inspector/adviser in *Oak*. Contact was established through an inspection colleague, Boscobel's partner. One tries to understand his motives for speaking out. Of the changes in *Oak*, he makes a critical commentary. This is illuminating, but perhaps Boscobel regards administrative motives as culpable evils requiring replacement by more righteous educational justifications. In *Oak* an additional County school was identified because the first two were Grant Maintained. It was hoped that this would correct the imbalance between the study areas. The timetable allowed access to one local authority in the summer and one in the autumn of 1995. Follow-up interviews were conducted in both local authorities in the autumn of 1995 and the spring of 1996.

General research design

As has been noted, this research is interested in how the workings of educational change, and its inherent processes within and between the different levels, are illuminated by the individual cases of five schools and two LEAs. While case studies generally base their findings on a single case, this one is a multi-site study. This allows explicit comparisons to be made, as well as assessments of both differences and similarities in the perspectives of educational change. Within the processes of educational change there is a complex relationship between the roles of Education Officer, headteacher, governors and parents. Action at any level affects all the others. An extreme example, albeit from the time before National Curriculum and the Local Management of Schools, may be the William Tyndale School of 1976 (Auld, 1976). Pupils are not mentioned in this equation even though some pupil interviews were possible. Whilst their parents can and do have an influence on

the process of change, pupils generally do not. This enquiry was designed to ask questions about, amongst other things, different levels of meaning arising from the different levels of roles and responsibilities of the actors.

In adopting a case study strategy for handling the data in the research, for all the reasons given above, the writing up represented a central dilemma during the investigation. The justification for the use of the multi-level structure for writing up the analysis rather than the use of the case study structure to write up the analysis is as follows. The management of the data held two possibilities, of which the first was to write up separately the data on *'Oak'* and the data on *'Pharaoh'*. Each case would be distinct and contextually relevant. The second possibility had regard to what was an inevitably stratified situation, and to the different levels of roles and responsibilities of the actors. An account could be written up to those levels making explicit comparisons and contrasts. When gathering data, the semi-structured interview schedules allowed flexibility of questionning and answering. They produced varied responses, but always at appropriate levels. Writing up separate case studies of the subject areas could not adequately elaborate the information being gathered. For example, changes in the age of transfer in *Pharaoh* were not entirely free of controversy. In Phase 2, the DEO knew that the LEA would have to face up to some difficult decisions and the requirement to recommend some school closures. Politically, the DEO knew that this would be a 'hot potato'. He felt supported however, by the Mayor, the Leader of the Council. Once the Mayor accepted the need for a closure within a ward that was important to his own political interests, the DEO was able to use this as a lever for pursuading other Councillors that it was necessary for them to accept closures in *their* areas (T/DEO-2/2). This political level is not the sort of terrain that most headteachers would find familiar. Similarly, in *Oak*, the headteacher of *The Catkins School* had to handle diplomatically and sensitively a group of parents determined to conduct a house-to-house census of youngsters under five. An Education Officer is most unlikely to be involved at this 'grassroots' level even if the results of such a census were to be remitted to the Education offices. In other words, greater flexibility of explanation was necessary, revealing sharper contrasts pertinent to roles and developing relationships appropriate to the data (Scott, op.cit:78). Accordingly, the second option, to write an account to the different levels of roles, was adopted.

The research demonstrated some of the general problems of negotiating access. Why, for instance, should LEAs or schools cooperate? In this case, however,

the age of transfer debate is of current interest in both local authorities, and amongst their schools. Through the DEO it was made possible to interview headteachers. There were general difficulties associated with access to governors, most being in business. Similarly, the timetable of fieldwork allowed parent and pupil interviews in *Pharaoh* but not in *Oak*. *Pharaoh* was, in fact, in the middle of its programme of change, whereas *Oak* had finished its own scheme two years before. Preliminary, informal questions revealed only hazy, unreliable recollection by parents in *Oak*. It would clearly have been at least as difficult for pupils to remember. Nevertheless, the research report hopefully illuminates the complex organisational, teaching and learning processes at issue. A comprehensive bibliography is included, together with appendices of LEA material, OFSTED data and an example of the interview schedule structure.

Data collection techniques

Data was collected in a school or Education office setting recognising the qualitative posture which states that the knower and the known are interdependent. The interview schedules were drawn from initial consideration of basic, practical aspects of a major educational change. If one wanted to make a structural reorganisation such as the changes to the age of transfer, what would one basically need to do? The questions focused on the management and the processes of educational change; the practicalities of, for example, creating phases to make the change manageable; or setting up consultative mechanisms to foster an inclusive ethos. The interview schedule carried appropriate prompts. The example in Appendix B shows such prompts: a reference to the Mayor because, as already noted, the Mayor's influence on recalcitrant councillors proved invaluable; a reminder that parental interest groups formed important factions in a 'Save Our School' movement. Practical skills in interviewing were acquired or improved by reference to Powney and Watts (1987), which was valuable because its examples were taken from six case studies, and it ensured that interviews, specially with pupils, were made non-threatening. The headteacher of *Thebes* Primary School wrote, *"The children really enjoyed talking to you and were very happy to help"* (Log p 142). Documentary evidence was provided by both local authorities. Documents were also gathered from any other local authority that had either considered change and acted upon it, or rejected the idea which had been formally presented to them.

How were data recorded?

A field log book was kept. By necessity, there is a selective element in logging. Every single instance that was seen, heard or otherwise perceived has not been written down. The bulk of the evidence was recorded, with permission, on tape. While depending largely upon interview and documentary survey material, the perceptions of LEA officers, governors, headteachers, parents and pupils have been recorded. Their views have been given great prominence. This is entirely intentional. The status of oral evidence is different in the two study areas. In *Pharaoh* it is contemporaneous with the reorganisation in general, while in *Oak* the oral evidence is at least two years after the events.

How were data analysed?

The research is an analysis of primary evidence, such as verbatim and summary transcripts, and secondary evidence including documents. It was thus data-led; grounded in those research materials such as interviews and LEA or school documents. The process was inductive. The categories that emerged related in the first instance to the subject - the Education Officer or the headteacher. Unsurprisingly, some categories were common; views of benefits or costs; opinions of the driving force behind the changes. These were supported by the scanning of data and their analysis through insights and interpretative hunches. The constant comparative method described by Maykut and Moorhouse (op. cit.) was used, and a framework of focused questions derived from the interview schedule (Appendix B). The wide spread of enquiry illustrates the multiplicity of perspectives and gave an opportunity to compare and contrast the many viewpoints encountered. By reiteration data was collected, literature searched.

Additionally, reference was made to the work of Nordenbo (op.cit.). Reference was made above to *'insights and interpretative hunches'*, but the methodology of Nordenbo provides an analytical framework to search the data for insights. It was applied to the interviews of Education Officers and headteachers, where the emphasis was on the individual (ideographic approach) and the data collected was personal or opinionated and thus subjective. The first premise was to attempt to understand and recognise the beliefs and values of the subjects. Their own self image and *'global understanding'* (ibid:44), determines their response to their particular professional tasks and to the effects of structural change. Consequently, it is not enough to be clear about our own

view of change, but we ought also to be aware of how these subjects perceive it.

> *It does not matter whether we share (their) beliefs and purposes; whether these are true or false; whether (they) are misled or not ... the beliefs and purposes ... are elements in the real situation which must enter into our account if it is to aid our understanding of (their) actions. Since beliefs and purposes expressible in a natural language can exhibit endless subtlety, complexity and nuance, there is no royal road to understanding other people* (ibid:45).

The utility of Nordenbo's analytical tool was appreciated. His Polar Structure Analysis and Phenomenographic Analysis are simple techniques that provide insight into the perceptions of interviewees. Polar Structure supposes that thematic parts of a person's global understanding of the social and organisational changes associated with the age of transfer can be assembled into aspects or *poles*. One aspect or pole can have a particular bearing on the actual changes; and another aspect or pole can have a particular bearing on that person's view of self in relation to the changes. The two poles are referred to respectively as the 'reality' pole and the 'individual' pole. The basic premise of the analysis is that the polar structure is not simply formed from a chance connection of two aspects of the interviewee's global understanding, but that there is an inner relation, i.e. a certain logic, in the connection of the two themes. In the analysis of interviewees in this case study the bipolar dimensions were as follows, for example: using the Individual Pole an Education Officer was considered to feel *good* about the change he had orchestrated and felt it was *necessary* for the efficiency of the Education Service. Using the Reality Pole it could be assumed that a headteacher was *optimistic* about the effects of change and felt they *would dominate* the future of the organisation.

Phenomenographic analysis deals exclusively with second-order observations of phenomena; how somebody experiences something, how it appears to them 'from within'. First-order observations are concerned with observable facts. The example in Appendix E concerns the headteacher of *Thebes* Primary School in *Pharaoh*. Phenomenographic analysis is not concerned with all components of a person's way of seeing a phenomenon - everything that appears in the global understanding - but only what a person *takes for granted*, regards as a matter of course. It is an attempt to analyse more deeply the subject's reactions. The headteacher of *Thebes* (Chapter 6, p107), feels positive about the changes and recognises the efficacy of the LEA's initiative. In the first, she believes the

planned programme of change is working well for the school. In the second, she is optimistic about the transition and its effects. This understanding permeates the language used in the transcript and itemised, for emphasis, in the Branch Structure. This is essentially a key word listing. It makes it possible to define her semantic fields and thus the categories used in her thinking. 'Reorganisation' and the 'consultative process' are suggested for the *person* level; 'authority' and 'provision' for the *meanings* level. Nordenbo used only adjectives in this part of the analysis. This study uses all the key words. Constant reading of the narrative interviews and the production of categories led to a synthesis of the individual's 'symbolic system' in relation to changing the age of transfer. Summing up the headteacher's 'beliefs', 'intentions' and 'symbolic system' established an overall account which is repeated in Appendix E for easy reference.

Ethical issues

The processes of the case study are grounded in ethical principles in that data was collected and analysed from multiple sources and that, as explained above, original interview transcripts were checked with the subjects for them to comment on the accuracy and sensitivity of drafting (Packwood, 1984). Verbatim quotations are identified with their origin by codes; letters for the type of source and numbers for both LEA and individual contributor (see page 6). As well as providing protection for the participants, the researcher saw this process as crucial for veryifing the research findings. Lincoln and Guba (op.cit.) called this 'member-checking'. Objective information such as documents were capable of relatively easy verification, but much of the information sought was subjective, drawn from individual interpretations of events that were integral to the change in the age of transfer. Such descriptions were often retrospective and coloured by personal values and attitudes. Subjective feelings are crucial in understanding how organisations work (Packwood, op.cit.). However, interpretation is difficult with any degree of accuracy and could only be attempted through triangulating responses gained in one interview with those gained in another. Recognising that this research is rooted in the practicalities and politics of a changing educational structure, and that it would be likely to expose the subjects studied to critical appraisal or censure (Simons, op. cit.), agreements were reached to offer anonymity and their names and local education authorities cannot be identified.

Summary and Comment

Each personal account is in part expressive of the social and educational position of each informant. This study represents these differing and sometimes conflicting viewpoints (Adelman, C., Jenkins, D. and Kemmis, S., 1980). Through presenting these views and, more importantly, the intersection of these views, the dynamics of the phenomenon are illustrated. Insofar as the history of the middle school is related, the view of Carr (1964:6) is very relevant: *'The historian is necessarily selective. The belief in a hard core of empirical facts existing objectively and independently of the interpretation of the historian is a preposterous fallacy'.*

Age of transfer changes meant the reorganisation of middle schools and the disappearance of jobs and status. Marris (op. cit:157), on the management of change, is especially supportive when he describes the definition of occupational identity. This, he says, represents the accumulated wisdom of how to handle the job, derived from experience;

> *Change threatens to invalidate this experience, robbing them of*
> *the skills they have learned and confusing their purpose,*
> *upsetting the subtle rationalisations and compensations by which*
> *they reconciled the different aspects of their situation.*

Some will have worked out their own sense of the change and their experience to good use in other fields. This reconciliation is not necessarily the experience of the individuals within this research, but their story is worth the telling. It has sought to establish the trustworthiness of the study by the use of a rigorous narrative that represents as closely as possible their experience of the change. Both the context and the literature survey suggest that a multi-level study of the change in the age of transfer is appropriate and timely. Accordingly, the writing up of the results reflects the multi-level approach.

The management of the change by County Hall - or at least by the Deputy Education Officers who get the job! - is crucially important if only because its influence on schools and their communities was so complete. Working parties are also reviewed because they formulated the policy to change the age of transfer. In reality, all critical observations made during the consultation exercise related to the work of 'County Hall', and this necessitated an examination of its impact on local and county interests. LEAs do not work in a vacuum. This study focuses on the relationships between the levels - school,

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LEA and government. It is important to evaluate the role of LEAs in the current reorganisations which involve the dismantling of the middle school system. The influence of central government through direct monetary policy and the agency of the Audit Commission affects the competence of LEAs to achieve all that they set out to achieve. It is the perceptions of the DEOs on all these matters that the next chapter examines.

Chapter 5

The LEAs: High Road or Dead End?

Change is not to be advocated for its own sake. But the organisation that
can adapt to changing situations and requirements is the organisation that
survives. The assumption that a given organisational form which works today
will still be right in five year's time is too often a misplaced assumption.
(Handy, 1981)

The research results, as stated in Chapter 4, are being written up in levels
which draw on all the appropriate case studies. Chapter 5 examines first the
world of the Deputy Education Officers who by and large get the job of
dealing with change, and secondly the working parties set up by the LEAs to
examine the educational desirability and the feasibility of changing the age of
transfer. It then examines the leadership of County Hall, particularly the role of
LEA officers, including the two Deputies.

Introduction

The chapter begins by looking at the role of Deputies in relation to what we
know of the Chief Education Officer's job. It goes on to describe the work of
the Deputies in the two study areas, *Oak* in the south, and *Pharaoh* in the
north. The Deputies' understanding is sought of the two main reasons for the
change, the National Curriculum and the eradication of surplus places. The
quality of strategic planning is questioned. It is shown that LEAs, encouraged
by government Circulars and Administrative Memoranda, normally deal with
falling rolls by mergers and closure. The management of the change is dealt
with in some detail, describing the views of the two Deputies; for example,
their attitude to Government pressure, as well as the deliberations of the
Working Parties set up by each LEA. Insights into their management are
gained by looking at the wide consultation exercises, as they involved
headteachers, governors, teachers and parents, and the influence of interest
groups is delineated. The use of phasing as a management tool is discussed. An
assessment is made of the extent of mistrust and suspicion engendered, and
notes the strength of the political clout of councillors. Bold plans for sweeping
away unsatisfactory buildings seem not to have been completely successful.
Both Deputies make an estimate of costs involved in both monetary and human
terms. Conversely, they have ideas of overall benefits accruing from the
change. The chapter concludes with the Deputies' reflections on how things

went; how they might have done things differently. Both seemed optimistic that the change has produced a more robust education service.

The role of the Deputy

Every once in a while there emerges a remarkable educationist whose influence on an individual LEA assumes national importance. In the social phenomenon called 'changing the age of transfer' there were no remarkable educationists; but sincere professionals who believed they were working for the good of the education service. The leadership which a CEO, and presumably a deputy, may afford to heads and schools can fall into either organisation or curriculum, or both. Kogan and van der Eyken (op.cit:24) identify two main groups of tasks,

> *The first is policy advice - the developing and specifying of*
> *objectives. The second gets into the main educational processes*
> *themselves. It is concerned with the promoting and encouraging of*
> *the establishment of good teaching and learning processes: tasks at the*
> *heart of the educational process.*

The beliefs of the CEO and senior officers are tested by the perceptions of the actors in this managerial drama. Changes in the organisation of schooling are complex. Through reasoning and argument it becomes clear that they did not always have the desired effect; the inspectorate feel that their views on the educational merits of the case were not sought; the schools believe that consultation was incomplete; governors were worried by the magnitude of their responsibilities, specially in staffing; some councillors reacted strongly in defence of their constituencies. It is a scenario that calls upon the sharpest personal and professional qualities of a CEO. Kogan and van der Eyken (ibid:27) observe that,

> *Changes are made largely by reorienting the attitudes of the*
> *teaching profession. And securing those changes is a job which*
> *requires a sense of purpose, of educational vision and great*
> *persuasive flair rather than the more coldly rational gifts*
> *associated with many of the administrator's functions.*

Such idealism sits uncomfortably in *Oak* and *Pharaoh*. Decision-making, it seems, was subject to a number of disparate influences. Both study areas resorted *'not to heuristic development methods, but to old familiar working party or discussion group, with predictably marshmallow results'* (Becher and Maclure, 1978:63). Were decisions fudged? How can you create a primary school in five rooms? Did stronger arguments succeed over fair and meaningful

consultation? Why was a closure decision vetoed by the influence of local members of a National Union on the majority party in the Metropolitan Borough? There is reference below, (Chapter 6, p122) to the force of local argument and the influence attached to that, and the local political power agenda of councillors. It is an intricate system of influence.

Claire Pratt was a senior assistant education officer until 1949 when she was appointed Education Officer of the Excepted District of Hayes and Harlington in Middlesex. In 1964 she was appointed CEO of the newly formed London Borough of Hillingdon, from which post she retired in 1971. In her conversations with Kogan and van der Eyken (ibid:14), she spoke of the CEO's role in innovation,

> *... this complex role of leadership, monitor and innovator, is*
> *played out against constraints imposed not only by the agencies of central*
> *government, committees, budgetary control, legal requirements*
> *and historic inheritance, but by some largely undefined, unspoken*
> *boundaries of which the most immediate is the issue of the relationship*
> *between the CEO, the teachers and the local authority.*

Such relationships are revealed within the social and managerial phenomenon called 'changing the age of transfer'. The constraints that Claire Pratt described above, can be modelled by a familiar metaphor, frequently found in middle school literature - the bridge (Hargreaves & Tickle, op. cit:300). Despite the coldly dismissive comment by Miles (1979:1) who said it reduces the middle school to the level of a simple analogy, and the opinion of the Leeds writers (Leeds, op. cit.), who claimed it to be a gross oversimplification which reduces the concept to merely buildings. It has merit as a positive model of the process of changing the age of transfer.

It is more than the simple analogy of a bridge between stages. This bridge conducts the 'traffic' of pupils and parents moving through the school system, and the lifetime experience of individuals involved in education. It bears the weight through an elaborate and intricate system of girders, trusses, transverse beams and longitudinal supports, which are the influences of local argument, political struggles, demographic changes and education provision. They are the constraints applied by central government, committees, budgetary controls, legal requirements and historic inheritance. Its stanchions are in the bedrock of the National Curriculum, buttressed by the commentaries of the Audit Commission. The pathway provided by this bridge, is the educational process

itself, empowering educators and the educated by the transmission of values, purpose and a clear vision. However, the alignments of this bridge can alter - as do the relationships between CEOs, the LEAs and their schools (Kogan). Career paths of many can be interrupted; some may suffer stress (Kryiacou, op. cit.). But each part of the structure of the bridge should work with every other part to equalise the stresses, dissipate the pressures of career changes; introducing a smooth transition and balance to the whole structure.

Deputy Education Officers have widely different understanding of their role. Briault, who was deputy to Bill Stubbs in London for fifteen years, felt his role was 'limited'. He thought his work was '*very directly the planning of the accommodation requirements of the newly built comprehensive schools and the reorganisations associated with them*' (Bush and Kogan., op.cit.). On the other hand, Peter Boulter, who worked closely with his Director in Cumberland, Gordon Bessey, described his own role as having 'a fairly wide brief'. In particular he had to '... *organise the committee work (and) to co-ordinate all aspects of the service*' (Bush, Kogan, and Lenney, op.cit.).

In the study areas, *Oak* and *Pharaoh*, the deputies involved are at second tier and third tier respectively of their Authority. In *Oak*, it was expected that the deputy to the CEO would lead the reorganisation. In *Pharaoh*, the job was given to a Senior Education Officer; a new post at third tier level set up specifically for the purpose. The appointment was given to an existing Assistant Education Officer, albeit a relative newcomer, having been with the Authority for only six months and 'something of an unknown'. The line management for reorganisation in *Pharaoh* is difficult to schematise. The SEO explained his own estimation of the four influences on management of the change as, the Chair of the Education Committee, the Director of Education, himself and the Leader of the Council (T/DEO-2/2). In fact, all of the SEO's reports went straight to the Director once they had been completed. '*On the ground, however, I got a good deal of assistance from the Deputy (and less frequently the Director) at meetings. The Deputy also put in a certain amount of work, on his own initiative, with governing bodies*' (L/ DEO-2/1). To avoid confusion, the terms CEO and Director are used interchangeably in this report. Similarly, the posts designated Deputy and SEO are subsumed in the term 'deputy'. The deputies usually have a close knowledge of the education department and its schools.

Almost all senior education officers were originally teachers, which argues a degree of social concern, and it is difficult to explain why they subsequently forsake the schools and colleges except in terms of a desire to improve the service at the point where policies are decided and begin to be implemented. What other reasons are there? (Birley, op. cit:2).

One cannot assume, however, that all the deputies purposes are, by definition, benign. The scope of the deputy's duties does seem to always include the management of change, albeit on behalf of the CEO. They are busy, on the one hand with the local authority's school reorganisation programme which runs in phases through to September 1997; and on the other, with talking to schools and their Governing Bodies about their wishes, disappointments and aspirations to change still further after the completion of a two-phase reorganisation. What reasons do the DEOs give for initiating change?

The reasons for change

Decisions originated (T/DEO-1/1) either as a consequence of 'in principle' consultations set up by the majority political party, or (T/DEO-2/1) as a consensus of officers, some councillors and some, though not a majority, of headteachers. Both DEOs emphasise the effects of the National Curriculum and falling rolls. When the National Curriculum was introduced a significant minority of local authorities were organised on a three-tier system, with transfer ages at 8 or 9 and 12 or 13. 'Willy nilly ' there was an immediate misalignment with the key stages of the National Curriculum and with its ages for assessment. Within those LEAs that decided to change there was no unanimity of opinion. In the words of a DEO, *'While some heads, were persuaded by the arguments, other heads maintained that there were still merits in retaining 12+ or even 13+ transfer'* (T/DEO-2/1).

Both LEAs have responded to the issue of surplus places.If the criteria for success were extrapolated from their response, it would certainly include a reduction in the numbers of surplus places, and might include the progressive improvement in the quality of the LEA's building stock. But the picture 'drawn' by the deputies is mixed. In *Pharaoh*, the deputy was able to state precisely the figures for the reduction of surplus places. The total of both primary and secondary surplus places at the beginning of the reorganisation programme in 1991 was 15,000. By the end of the programme in 1997 there will be approximately 7,500 surplus places - the numbers will have been halved

(T/DEO-2/7). The deputy in *Oak* was hardpressed to quantify the position in the county. *'It's very difficult'*. He spoke of figures being *'bandied about'* and a *'net saving'* made as a result of the change (T/DEO-1/4). In *Pharaoh*, the deputy analysed the changes behind the actual numbers: *'Some of that change is caused by an increased number of pupils in the system, so we can't claim to have eliminated all of those 7-8,000 places. But the bulk will have been removed by closures of some kind, some of them removed by an increase of actual pupils'* (T/DEO-2/7). He further forecast the continued expansion of nursery provision that, in each case, would take up sixty extra places, or the equivalent of two classrooms per nursery. *'We are also looking at some of our older schools which still have quite a lot of spare capacity and thinking possibly in terms of parts of the buildings closing or mothballing'* (T/DEO-2/7).

The overall strategy for reducing surplus places in *Pharaoh* was to cause some concern. The changing of the age of transfer from 12+ and 13+ to 11+ means that 'automatically one fills up the secondary sector, and creates a certain number of surplus places in the primary sector'. The argument for doing this is that having created more surplus places in the primary sector one can then more easily put forward a programme of closures. There is a greater degree of flexibility in primary closures. This caused some bitterness initially, in the view of the deputy. *'When it was generally realised, however, that without that happening we could not in fact make progress because opportunities for closing secondary schools were much more limited than for closing primary schools, there was general acceptance that this was the only way forward'* (T/DEO-2/5). Would the whole process have been easier with thorough planning?

Planning

The quality of planning is questioned by Boscobel in *Oak*. He does not feel that anyone had the ability to manage an oversight of the whole strategic plan. He questions even if such a strategic plan exists. As a result, he feels that decisions were fudged; that stronger arguments won the day, rather than as a result of fair and meaningful consultation (Boscobel-2/3). But prudent local authorities have long since dealt with falling rolls by mergers and closures. The head of *St. Tree* CE Primary School in *Oak*, explained her own experience, and recalled,

My school, which was a church middle school, closed in 1984. That was a result of the Diocese and the LEA looking at school provision and predicting

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future pupils. They closed two out of three schools in the Diocese. Now, locally, there is a great lack of primary places and all or most of the local primary schools are full (T/HTiii-1/2).

LEAs regularly 'asset-strip'. They sell surplus schools and land, quietly, all the time. Their authority for doing this comes from current regulations that allow surplus land to be sold off and for some schools to be built with no playing field. The Circular (AM 2/81) reduced the minimum statutory area for school fields and encouraged LEAs to sell surpluses. Since then, around 5,000 have been sold (Spencer, 1997). In both study areas, there are currently either school buildings with land, or other parcels of unwanted land, for sale. In one year, *Oak* is reputed to have recouped £40m from the sale of educational facilities and land (L/Herne-1). Although Herne comments (L/Herne-3) that LEAs are not always open and frank when the subject of selling school sites is touched upon, it is acknowledged that *Pharaoh's* education staff readily direct enquirers to a number of sites which are for sale.

Circulars and Administrative Memoranda emanating from the DES regularly gave advice. Circular 5/77, for example, specifically gave advice to, even instructed, LEAs to consider ways of dealing with falling pupil numbers by school closures. Projections then of the school population of England and Wales expected primary numbers to fall from a peak of 5.2 million in 1974 to 4.0 million in 1985, and the secondary school population from a peak of 4.1 million in 1979 to 2.9 million in 1991. The Circular acknowledged that patterns vary between LEAs; that some may already be familiar with the problems of small under-used schools in rural areas and that such authorities will need, for the first time, to consider corresponding problems in urban areas. Today, it is more usual for such intervention to come from the Audit Commission (Chapter 8, p146). Projection of the future school population plays a crucial role in the formulation of educational policy. How was change managed?

The management of change
The change was managed, in both study areas, by a number of influences. Both *Pharaoh* and *Oak* had a political majority, one Conservative and one Labour. Both had able and influential Chairs of the Education Committee. Both the working party and reorganisation sub-committee reflected the relative strengths of the parties at the time, and hammered out the detailed formulation of a change in the age of transfer of pupils from primary to secondary school.

The deputy in *Oak* expressed surprise when it was suggested that there had been Government pressure on LEAs to change from a three-tier system of schooling to a two-tier structure. *'I think that as far as the Government was concerned, they were interested in our reorganisation from the point of view of surplus place removal. And it was on that basis that funding was predicated'* (T/DEO-1/1). On the same point, the deputy in *Pharaoh* also denied direct pressure from Government to move from a three to a two tier system. *'The DFE must have known, of course, that to do so would facilitate the removal of surplus places; I very much suspect that it wanted the authorities themselves to make the decision, in order to avoid any political flak at its end of the operation'* (L/DEO-2/1)

Pharaoh's Working Party was originally created in April 1985 to review 16-19 provision and the effects of any proposed changes on the age groups both below and above 16-19. The Working Party made its report in two stages. Firstly on 6 May 1987 and secondly on 19 January 1988. In the second report, the Working Party asked the Reorganisation Sub-Committee of the Education Services, to consider the desirability of the standard transfer age to secondary school to be 11+ or 12+ (D/2-5). But it was 16-19 provision that was the subject of consultations between January and May 1989. The Authority's plans for post-16 were however terminated in 1993 after the change of control brought about by the Further and Higher Education Act (1992).

In *Oak*, after a report by the CEO on 28 June (C/1-30), a Working Group was set up on 6 July 1989 to consider the educational desirability and feasibility of changing the age of transfer between its primary and secondary schools (C/1-13). In December 1989 the Reorganisation Sub-Committee in *Pharaoh* considered a report by the Director of Education Services (CEO-see p6) on post 16 provision and the implications for the age of transfer to secondary schools. Within the report it was recommended that pupils transfer to secondary school at 11+ (D/2-7). The working party in *Oak* had the single purpose of changing the age of transfer to 11+, but at the same time to recognise the *'very considerable achievements of the first and middle schools'*; try to safeguard the very small primary schools and to take account of the isolated nature of many village schools. On the 8 January 1990, the *Oak* Working Group resolved that there were sufficient reasons for seriously considering a change in the ages of transfer between its schools (C/1-13). On 1 February 1990, the Education Committee resolved to consult governing

bodies, parents, the dioceses and teachers' associations on the question of the ages of transfer. In *Pharaoh*, the Reorganisation Sub-Committee recommended at its May 1990 meeting that support be given for the introduction of a single age of transfer at 11+ throughout its area. This recommendation was confirmed by Education Services Committee on 5 June and reported to Council on 9 July 1990.

Comparative table of principal dates				
Oak			*Pharaoh*	
		April 1985	Establishment of Working Party
		January '88	Report to Sub Committee
			Report to Education Committee
		February '88	Report to Full Council
July 1989	Working Party set up	December '89	Reorganisation Sub Committee
January '90	Consultation proposed	January '90	Report to Education Committee
		February '90	Report to Full Council
April '90	Consultative documents published	May '90	Proposed common age of transfer
July '90	Proposals approved	June '90	Education Committee approved
	Full Council approved	July '90	Full Council approved
July '91	Education Committee satisfied and recommends 2 phases		
		1991-2	Phase 1
1992-3	Phase 1	1992-3	Phase 2
1993-4	Phase 2	1993-4	Phase 3
		1994-5	Phase 4
		1995-6	Phase 5

Table 2

In both study areas, these sub-committees considered all proposals before they went to the education committee. As described above, their recommendations were then considered by the education committee. In addition, recommendations were also distilled through a policy committee in *Oak*, or a policy advisory committee in *Pharaoh*. The policy committee in *Oak* was asked specifically to look at capital funding issues, while the policy advisory committee in *Pharaoh* was a committee of the ruling Labour group that often

wished to look at reports before they went either to the reorganisation sub-committee or to the education committee (T/DEO-2/8). To a large degree the membership of these committees overlapped, so it was unlikely that there would be changes of policy between them. *Oak's* Age of Transfer Working Group made a full report of its consultations and the outcomes to Education Committee on 5 July, and it was approved by the Council on 31 July 1990. Members of the Working Group emphasised that all schools would be changed in some way. *'Change involved not only resource implications, but had more subtle implications for use of time, new ideas, new proposals. These changes would be felt in all schools to a greater or lesser extent'* (C/1-44). Their report acknowledged that there were arguments in favour of keeping the present system. *'On balance, however, they believe that the arguments for transfer at 11 appear to be compelling, and those aligning Oak to the nationally predominating pattern equally so'* (C/1-11). In fact, they approached the results of consultation with caution. The primary sector was almost wholly in favour of the first and middle school system, while the secondary sector was overwhelmingly in favour of changing to transfer at 11+. There were a number of other broad conclusions. There was evidence that educating 11 year olds in middle schools was favoured by some parents, but a significant number saw advantage in secondary education beginning at 11 Years. The Working Group recognised the considerable concern in rural areas about the impact on the future of village schools of a change in the age of transfer, both in terms of their educational and their economic viability (C/1-18).

At the outset, both LEAs made statements of principle in relation to the proposed change. *Oak* wished *'to make sure there were enough school places to meet local needs; to plan for schools to be educationally viable (large enough to offer a broad education to all pupils); to take unsatisfactory buildings out of use; to take account of the strength of parental preference as shown by the level of admissions to particular schools; to make sure the total resources available to Oak's schools are being used effectively; to gain the benefits of all through (5-11) schools, where possible; to take spare school places out of use; to make sure children have a school reasonably near their home; to recognise the particular needs of rural communities served by small schools. '* (D/1-13, page 3). *Pharaoh* coupled these with a statement of aims for primary education. In sections (v), (vi) and (vii) of its Aims and Principles (D/2-8), stated that children are entitled to coherent educational provision which encourages continuity and progression; to a pattern of schooling which

promotes the effective implementation of the National Curriculum with particular regard to continuity within and between phases, progression of the individual child in relation to Key Stages, standard ages of transfer across the Authority and effective assessment, recording and reporting achievement. *Pharaoh* also stated that the pattern of schooling must promote an equitable and consistent allocation of resources within the framework of the Local Authority's policies. Particular consideration must also be given to strengthening nursery provision.

This study concerns these same LEAs effectively turning the clock back! This represents the decline of the middle school in the 1990s. In the two study areas, and in other parts of the country (e.g. Kent, Warwickshire, Hampshire), the LEAs made moves to reorganise their schools from the existing three-tier to a two-tier system. They placed their first and middle schools on *Procrustes' bed* and fashioned them according to their new primary measure. Year groups were lopped off, recently identified as belonging more properly to the next stage. What prompted them? Changing the age at which pupils transfer to secondary schools is the result of pressure from various sources. Local authorities, and specially their education services, felt pressure from government in the shape of legislation or, more obliquely, from government agencies such as the Audit Commission, SCAA and OFSTED.

Because of this, the reply of the DEOs in the two study areas was puzzling. In circumstances where a national curriculum is tuned to the dominant primary ideology and secondary school populations have reduced to a level causing government concern, the deputies did not recognise direct pressure contained in the Audit Commission report of 1990, the White Paper 'Choice and Diversity', and, more immediately, the DfEE criteria for the Standard Spending Assessment system enjoining LEAs to remove surplus places or be penalised (Chapter 1, p15). Indeed, this was not the first time that the Department had exercised direct control over the monetary policies of individual LEAs.

A grant related expenditure assessment (GRE) is made as to what individual authorities should be spending on the education services and authorities are progressively penalised if they spend over 10 per cent more than limits set by the DES (Salter and Tapper, op. cit:230).

The response of the DEOs is puzzling for another reason. Had both *Oak* and *Pharaoh* first considered a 'do nothing' option before embarking on a

programme of change? This is only because other LEAs did, for example, Warwickshire (Warwickshire, 1994,I, 1.1). No doubt there would have been many who felt that there were persuasive arguments for maintaining the status quo; and, thereby, in the short term at least, avoiding instability and uncertainty. Such instability would not be helped by the example, in *Oak* at least and in Warwickshire, of grant-maintained secondary schools proceeding to admit pupils at age eleven. Nevertheless, the DEOs could have pointed to the consequences of doing nothing or, perhaps, returning to a strategy of planning for future needs on the basis of identifying, over time, individual schools for reorganisation or closure. They could have emphasised how very serious this would be and damaging to children.

The DEOs, in deciding that the status quo was not an option, would have had to bear in mind the following conditions,

(i)   *Are budget proposals limited for the foreseeable future?*

(ii)   *Continuing government pressure to remove surplus capacity,*

(iii) *Audit Commission advice that the expenditure absorbed by surplus capacity could otherwise be used to improve educational provision, a point echoed by the LEA's external auditors,*

(iv)   *If surplus capacity is not removed it will not be possible to gain borrowing approval for capital expenditure on LEA schools in the foreseeable future, since the Department for Education's three priorities are:*
       (a)   *Committed expenditure*
       (b)   *Basic need*
       (c)   *Cost-effective proposals to remove surplus places,*

(v)   *The educational benefits which are likely to accrue from a more cost-effective school system and from changing the age of transfer to secondary school, in particular, are strong,*

(vi)   *Grant-maintained schools have either changed age of transfer to 11-16 from 12-16, or are threatening to abandon co-operation with the LEA, intending to move unilaterally if the LEA does not in fact change the age of transfer. The potential for destabilisation at the primary level and confusion for parents is obvious*
       (adapted from Warwickshire, loc. cit.).

The DEOs can surely have no room for doubt as the Audit Commission publishes its latest study, 'Trading Places' (Dec.1996), in which LEAs are again urged to reduce surplus places, specifically, schools where the occupancy rate is 75 per cent or less, since these offer the greatest scope for closure or the

removal of an entire accommodation block - the ways of removing capacity that generate the greatest financial savings (Audit Commission, 1996:44). Having decided to change, or been pushed, LEAs necessarily had to consult.

Consultation

The consultation process varied between the subject areas. In *Oak*, the English County, the 'in principle' consultation, mentioned above, conducted with heads, governors and members of council was followed by the publication of consultative booklets. These were circulated widely through the schools to parents and public. They were available in libraries and council offices. The booklets contained a description of a number of options for the reorganisation of schools in each area, following the change in the age of transfer. The deputy explained that the booklets presented a range of options for discussion;

The way we tackled it was with 'We would like to present
to you x, y, z, as options. What do you think of them ?' And that
gave us a considerable edge in the consultation process as a means
to gather support for an option (T/DEO-1/3)

and that, in order to reach the widest possible audience they were published in a number of community languages. Everyone was urged to attend meetings at their school, and to respond to the discussions by participation or by use of a 'Freepost' scheme. This was an imaginative exercise in what was, after all, a major reorganisation. However, the deputy was not entirely comfortable thinking back to the consultation process. *'I'm not sure you can quantify it, but it did set in some situations where parents got the bit between their teeth against the Authority'* (T/DEO-1/5).

The Metropolitan District, *Pharaoh*, also distributed consultative papers to the public and organised a programme of meetings with staff, governors and the public. Again, these were based on areas and in every case a range of options were described with an indication of the one preferred by the authority (T/DEO-2/3). The deputy expected to gauge the extent of public feeling;

Clearly there could be a measure of disagreement as to whether
we had chosen the right option. Indeed there was a good deal of
disagreement ! We were also criticised at some meetings for not
having looked at all the possible options. In one or two cases members
of the public, and also professionals, put forward patterns which
we hadn't in fact envisaged (T/DEO-2/3)

The authority's attitude was flexible. Originally the working party had assumed that one public meeting per pyramid would be sufficient. They encountered a great deal of criticism of this and were persuaded to extend the number of public meetings so that there was one per school, or pairs of schools (T/DEO-2/3). All views were presented in the working party's report to the Education Committee. In the event, no idea was adopted which had not been considered in some way or other in the consultative paper. The authority did however, in some areas, move from the preferred options to an alternative option as a result of public pressure. *'The area in which this occurred principally was in the agreement (by the authority) that certain Infant and Junior schools should remain separate rather than be amalgamated as we proposed in our preferred option'* (T/DEO-2/3).

The deputies in charge of their reorganisation programmes took, or are taking, time to consult widely and carefully. Although schools and colleges are distinct entities, they are led by professionals *'who expect and enjoy discretion in carrying out their teaching role. The relationship between the CEO [and therefore the Deputy] and the head or principal is not, therefore, that of a manager-subordinate, as is found in the social services, or housing or other local authority departments. Both are senior professionals, yet both work within a setting of public accountability'* (Bush, T. and Kogan, M., op.cit.). In the study areas, one deputy felt, in talking to heads, that the situation *'was better, including a lot of people who mourned the first and middle school system'* (T/DEO-1/5). He did, however, explain that this was just an understanding rather than full knowledge. Not being very close to curriculum issues himself, he suggested a talk with those who are. By way of contrast, the other deputy displayed close knowledge of the range of options amongst advisors, inspectors and heads. *Pharaoh* was a Borough that contained 11+ transfer schools already (T/DEO-2/5). Heads in these areas felt their system was the best. This was to be set against the view that heads tended to support whichever system they were currently involved with. Advisors and Inspectors were of the opinion that the new key stage structure did require 11+ transfer arrangements. They argued that specialist teachers for subjects such as science and modern languages would be much more readily obtainable under an 11+ transfer system. They felt it unlikely that middle schools, particularly the schools operated under 13+ arrangements, would be able to obtain the necessary numbers of specialist staff.

Both LEAs consulted widely, in their view, in an effort to recruit support for reorganisation. The schools believe it to have been patchy. In both study areas the inspectorate express a belief that their views were not sought by their LEA. Were they not interested in the educational merits of the case? *'Or does it simply mean that the education committee is more concerned with estate management than educational quality?'* (L/Herne-1, T/HTi-2/6, Boscobel-8/9).

The tensions here are role-related. There is inherent tension between teaching and administration as spheres of activity. To illustrate this general claim, one can turn to the specific example of the LEA itself and the relationship between elected members and officers. Each has particular tasks and interests; the permanence of one contrasts with the part-time nature of the other. An extended quotation from Dunsire illustrates this perspective:

> *... there are issues which in importance on almost any scale that might be devised are undoubtedly for members, but which are too complicated or difficult to be grasped by lay members without considerable assistance from the officers in presenting, and clarifying, the questions that are for decision. So because of the officer's permanence, his [sic] full-time presence, his expertise, and his control of information and its communication, he can ... derive great influence from his ability to present for decision only those matters, or aspects of matters, which he chooses to present ...*

> *Such a situation fairly teems with occasions for mistrust and suspicion. Understanding the complexities of a problem is not deciding the question, but it is a prerequisite; the man who does not quite grasp a matter may feel he is being presented by one who does with a fait accompli. Selection of the most relevant information for presentation, or the most important choices for decisions, where the whole cannot be presented within reasonable limits of time, paper, etc., may be seen as the 'concealment' of the rest. A decision on one part of a question may have implications for later choices that are not immediately apparent, resulting in allegations of 'being led up the garden path'. And so on. It looks like power without responsibility, simply because, by definition, those who are aware that they carry the responsibility are unable to wield the power that expertise, permanence and information bestows.* (Dunsire, 1973: 161-2)

There were separate consultative meetings for governors, teaching staff and parents. Baron and Howell (1974) recognised the importance of consulting governors. Indeed, it was expressly advised in Circular 10/65. They found it difficult to conceive, if governors had any influence at all, how they can fail to

be involved in schemes of reorganisation which may affect the very existence of their school as individual units (ibid:136-137). In amalgamations , for example, governors are thrown in at the deep end. The chair of governors of a Combined School in Coventry commented;

We felt desperately sorry for the two heads and acutely aware of our responsibility towards the whole staff. I find it difficult to envisage the 'cascade' procedure of interviewing all the teachers. It's going to feel like one-and-a-half terms of hell (Haigh, op. cit.).

Governors have to give freely of their time! A Parent Governor in Warwickshire explains;

Last term we spent the evenings of 12 weeks of our own time - parents, staff and governors - to overturn an LEA officer recommendation to reorganise the school from a First to an Infants school in order to remove surplus places and avoid the loss of a further £20 million ransom to the government. The Education Committee has just voted for the school to become a Primary instead (*The Guardian*, 4 February 1995).

The former adviser, Herne, identifies the consultation process as a referendum. *'There was in effect a vote on this'.* He feels it right to ask, *'What was the result of the referendum? What sort of popular mandate is the committee claiming from the people most concerned?'* (L/Herne-1). Boscobel, adviser/inspector in *Oak*, has a more fundamental criticism of the consultative process;

There were various ... financial promises ... promises that sounded like, 'Oh, yes, we will see that will happen. Don't worry about that, no problem. That will be all right'. In other words, officers were using their crystal ball to predict what the Authority would do in two or three years time to support schools'. (Boscobel-3)

It is his contention that officers did not *'come clean about the future finances of the Authority which would obviously be under constraint'* (ibid.). He assumes that some *'devious political managerial bits'* were going on *'in order to convince people that some decision that was being made was the right one'* (Boscobel-2/3). What he experienced, in fact, could have been precisely what Dunsire (above) was talking about; that on the one hand, lack of understanding on the part of professionals, and on the other, concealment of all the facts or implications by administrators, can lead to mistrust or suspicion.

Administratively, is anyone better placed than County Officers to see and understand the ramifications of all the options, all the available data? The answer largely depends on how the option system was presented. Each study area presented the options for local change in a different manner. *Pharaoh* offered a range of options and indicated at an early stage which one the LEA preferred. *Oak* offered between two and seven options but reserved their judgement on which one would be preferred until after the consultation had finished. The LEAs encountered quite a lot of disagreement. The DEO of *Pharaoh* claims that this was taken on board, considered with all options and, where possible, moved from one preferred option to another (T/DEO-2/3). But County Councillors fought their corner, negotiating more options to open up choice. Failing such intervention, the options would, it is claimed, have been very restrictive (CLR/1-1). Did the consultation reveal such sensitive issues that pressure groups were formed?

Interest groups

It was always the case that *'school closures became a particularly important point upon which pressure group activity could be based'* (Bush, Kogan, and Lenney, op.cit.). The media found this an ideal opportunity to exploit public disquiet (in the comprehensive debates of the 1970s and 1980s).

> *They have tended to emphasise the 'save our school' side*
> *of the argument; and not emphasise that it is costing the*
> *county £13m more than the government thinks the county*
> *should be spending on education. That isn't as sexy as*
> *'save the school'* (ibid:117)

In *Oak*, the parents' groups and individual parents were the main focus of interest, though some of the local councils in the county, at borough or parish level, were interested and got involved in the processes of consultation. In the county, too, there were small groups of loose alliances of schools. These were attempts, for example, to generate support for smaller schools to work together to oppose the proposals (T/DEO-1/3). In *Pharaoh*, the deputy described the major interest group as *'teachers with professional opposition to 11+ transfers as opposed to 12+ transfers'* (T/DEO-2/4). But there was equally strong resistance from the small school lobby that mirrors the effects in *Oak*. The deputy spoke of *'perhaps the most residual bitterness is still felt in some of the rural areas where we closed small infant and primary schools - as a result of which children have had to travel greater distances to school, in*

some cases by bus' (T/DEO-2/7). He concurred that some villages felt that at
the time they had the heart taken out of them by the closure of the school. In a
discussion of size of school in the small school issue, the deputy described
schools which had,

> *in some cases as few as twenty children. We had two*
> *schools with fewer than thirty pupils quite close together,*
> *both of which we closed. The alternative schools were within*
> *a few miles. There were one or two village schools which were*
> *larger than that - in one case the school had around fifty.*
> *However, I have to say that the small village school didn't make*
> *up the bulk of our programme. The bulk of surplus place reductions*
> *were made by the closure of medium-sized urban schools, not*
> *small village schools* (T/DEO-2/7)

Where closures and amalgamations were proposed in *Pharaoh*, there were
orchestrated 'Save our School' campaigns. The deputy thought it 'fair to say
that they were initiated or prompted primarily by the professionals but with a
good deal of parental support, and of course with support also from some
governing bodies'. He cited one example of a certain interest group visiting the
Department for Education, in London, and arguing their case with officials
there. There were written protests at the consultative phase that were followed
up by statutory objections against specific closures. On the other hand, some
closures were not opposed and a number of schools were closed without
meeting any resistance or having to deal with any interest groups (T/DEO-2/4).
What could be done to make the programme of change manageable over such
large LEAs?

Phasing
In both *Oak* and *Pharaoh* the change in the age of transfer was managed in
phases. The change, whose motivation may have been the culling of surplus
places, or the constraints of the National Curriculum, or a combination of both,
was effected in phases which may give the appearance of a mechanical, orderly
transition. In reality, changing the age of transfer was organic; schools evolved
from one kind of organisation to another, teachers found their careers
enhanced or diverted, even obstructed, and LEAs reorganised their
administration to take all this into account.

Phasing a massive reorganisation such as the age of transfer is a practical
device and a management decision. The scope of the changes in each LEA

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meant that phasing was essential. *Oak* considered three and decided on two; *Pharaoh* decided on five, though four and five are operating simultaneously. Another influence was the complexity of changes in a particular area. *Pharaoh* began with what it assumed was an uncontroversial area involving no closures or amalgamations. In practice it was not entirely free of controversy. Decisions on phasing, as we have seen, depend on what Baron and Howell (1974:137) would called 'practicability'. There are two sides to the coin of practicability - the administrative and the political.

Phasing was proposed by the working party in *Oak* and the subcommittee in *Pharaoh*, and accepted in each case by the Education Committee. There the similarities end. In *Oak*, an English county, the political will and probably the will of schools, certainly secondary schools, was that the change should be accomplished as quickly as possible. The deputy explained that the Education Committee's preference was to do it in three phases, but that the eventual decision to do it in two phases was a compromise (T/DEO-1/2). In the Metropolitan District, *Pharaoh*, the change was managed in five phases, though the last two were to be effected simultaneously. The structure of schooling in *Pharaoh* was markedly different from that in *Oak*. The latter had a relatively simple change from 12+ to 11+ transfer. In *Pharaoh* there were three transfer systems in operation; some pyramids transferred at 11+, some at 12+, and yet others at 13+. The management of the change, therefore, had to take into account a staged reduction from 13+ to 12+, then from 12+ to 11+. The first phase was relatively uncontentious, involving parts of the borough having no closures or amalgamations. The plan then was to move gradually to more difficult areas in phases 2,3,4 and 5 (T/DEO-2/2). The deputy in *Pharaoh* explained that it was *'in phase two that we would have to face up to the requirement for school closures'* (T/DEO-2/2). By this remark he indicated the political difficulty (not Party political) that arises when schools are proposed for closure. This difficulty was well illustrated by the fact that one of the closures put through in phase two occurred in an area that was of particular interest to the leader of the council. He accepted the need for the closure. *'Once he had accepted that a school should close in an area which was of interest to him, he was able to use that as a lever for persuading other councillors that it was necessary for them, too, to accept the need for closures in their area'* (T/DEO-2/2).

Effects of change

Age of transfer changes produced some anomalous effects. Unsatisfactory prefabricated buildings still exist in *Oak*. Boscobel claims such buildings are unsuitable for the delivery of the National Curriculum (Boscobel-6). *Branch* Primary (not a study school) in *Oak*, translated from a first school, might be assumed to be a 'winner'. However, it is already full on a cramped site in the middle of a village. Building extra classrooms is problematic (T/CHii-1/2). Did the parent lobby have the loudest voice? To which strategic plan did this conform?

> *There was heavy local partisan pressure not necessarily related to the needs of efficiency, surplus places or planning* (Boscobel-1).

It may be that funding for new buildings is unavailable anyway. After all, is it not a general primary school problem that they did not receive building grants? (T/HTi-1/4). Moreover, schools now wishing to expand, that is change further, are finding it very difficult (T/HTiii-1/1, T/HTii-2/3). The whole process is difficult. There were different perceptions of the building programme pursuant to the Age of Transfer changes. Who decided which schools needed adaptations or extensions? On what information were decisions based?

> *There were stories of how people wandered round and made judgements without the involvement of the senior management and governors. Papers were written about the size of the school, and the available rooms and classrooms, again without reference to the management of the school. And when they found out, there were obviously arguments. But some people didn't find out - don't know to this day that that happened* (Boscobel-3).

What seems to be lacking in *Oak* was a rational oversight. It calls into question the whole issue of planning.

There are tangible benefits from the closure of buildings, when LEAs expect to receive capital receipts from their sale, or their sites. Government restrictions on the percentage of such sales that may be retained by the LEA mean that the Directorate in *Pharaoh* will have to push very hard to receive up to 50%, and they may get as little as 25% (T/DEO-2/4). Both *Pharaoh* and *Oak* are, however, net beneficiaries in terms of capital receipts (T/DEO-1/3). In *Oak*, the benefits from the point of view of buildings were substantial. The opportunity was taken to make improvements that had long been in the pipeline. *'For example, schools in one particular area which had been in*

Victorian buildings for years and years... We were able in fact to close two
very poor buildings and open a brand new one' (T/DEO-1/3).

Both LEAs were funded to carry out approved reorganisations. *Pharaoh*
received central government permission to undertake a new building
programme where it was urgently needed up to a cost of £20m. *Oak* was able
to carry through building projects to sweep away some old stock such as
schools dating from Victorian times. The funding associated with the change in
the age of transfer was said to generate in *Oak* £19.5m, of which £9.75m could
be used to further the proposed change. Government restrictions prevented
more of the proceeds being so used (L/Herne-4). Both authorities could
certainly say that they now have a better stock of educational buildings than
when alterations began in 1991.

Other savings and costs

The DEOs recognised that a tranche of teaching expertise was lost in
reorganisation. They acknowledged the loss of some good teachers, and
probably some less good teachers (T/DEO-2/6). There were recurrent savings
for each LEA due to reduced numbers of Heads and Deputy Heads as a result
of the reorganisation, and, therefore, reduced salary commitments. One deputy
immediately made the point that the redundancy bill 'was substantial' (T/DEO-
1/4). The other observed that they were 'short to medium term costs' (T/DEO-
2/5). In *Pharaoh*, the recurrent savings were calculated on the basis of three
headings:

> *Firstly the basic allowance which each school now receives*
> *under the delegated budget. Secondly small school protection,*
> *because many of our closures would involve the removal*
> *of small school protection.*

He cited an example of the closure of one school in *Pharaoh* which enabled a
six-figure saving to be made in respect of small school protection. He went on:

> *The third area would be premises related costs where clearly*
> *we were saving on heating, lighting, maintenance in those*
> *premises which were closed* (T/DEO-2/4).

The deputy calculated the total recurrent savings on the basis of the three
headings and produced a figure of £1.75 million year on year. The deputy also
referred to the increased viability of schools after the changes as a direct

benefit. The confused picture of different ages of transfer between *Oak* and its immediate neighbours was also remedied. Where neighbouring counties traditionally changed school at eleven, and where parents had a clear preference for the quality of education in *Oak* secondary schools, such parents would send their child either to their own county secondary for one year only, or to a Middle school in *Oak* with the intention of their child transferring at 12+ to an *Oak* secondary school. After reorganisation such manoeuvres were unnecessary (T/DEO-1/4).

Disbenefits, apart from the bill for redundancies and early retirements, included anxiety and dislocation for many involved in the reorganisation. On the one hand, a deputy underlined *'all sorts of uncertainties'* (T/DEO-1/4), while the other deputy emphasised the costs of transitional funding for staff training, and also for the purchase of minor items of equipment for teaching. In *Pharaoh*, the larger phases involved something in the order of half a million pounds of transitional funding. This had to be explained in Education Committee.

That certainly helped to win support, I think, for the scheme when Councillors realised we were putting money in for training and re-orientation. That with the fact that our capital applications to the DFE for new school buildings were being agreed (T/DEO-2/5).

The DEO in *Oak* believes that educational benefits accruing from the change in the age of transfer may not be quantifiable until after four years or so (T/DEO-1/4). Boscobel's perception is different. One of the great successes of the change, in Boscobel's view, was the training scheme created to support the schools (see Appendix A). It was a very big programme. So it was surprising that each of the schools in the study claimed no take-up of such provision. Nevertheless, says Boscobel (Boscobel-4),

Whatever was happening at the age of transfer, happening to that school, there was no shortage of training - particularly the training for Year 3 teachers who found themselves at the bottom of a Junior School never having had that year as part of their experience, and never having taught that age group of children.

The training for amalgamating schools was quite well financed (Boscobel-5). After the change in the age of transfer, schools in *Oak* were able to apply for a further grant for any particular projects that they still needed to carry out. Boscobel encouraged amalgamating schools to apply for more,

As a result of that, I was involved with two that went away on residentials in order to team-build when a First and a Middle had been put together to make a Primary and a Nursery.

This was a strategy used by the new head of *Thebes* CE Primary in *Pharaoh* (see above).

A particular focus of the training, says Boscobel, was the issue of teaching and learning strategies that were being used within both Infant Schools and Junior Schools.

So things like curriculum planning, classroom organisation and teaching styles, all became issues for debate at that Age of Transfer training. And in a way that started the ball rolling for quite a lot of courses that were continued (ibid.).

In fact, it is likely that funding for such courses became problematic. Boscobel, and his fellow inspectors/advisers, found themselves directed more at consultation and support for schools rather than the raising of standards of teaching and learning (*vide* Herne-1, T/HTi-2/6).

I believe there was an avoidance in terms of looking at overall responsibilities regarding standards of education and qualities of teaching and learning (Boscobel-3).

Boscobel rehearsed his child-centred, educational philosophy which echoes the Plowden principles.

Considering the issue of teaching and learning and monitoring standards, which the LEA had started but discontinued, could have provided a higher order reason for the reorganisation - particularly as Key Stages were linked to the age of transfer and assessments were reasonably made at the end of each Key Stage (Boscobel-10).

The issue here is probably the changing role of the LEA, from a managerial to a monitoring and evaluative role. It is not yet complete. It is a faltering change. However, relationships and the actual discourse between authorities and schools are clearly changing emphasis. As indicated above (Chapter 3, p58), the introduction of a National Curriculum and its regime of assessment centralises influence and power. Changing power from the schools to the centre has clearly had a knock-on effect on the managerial role of the LEAs. It might explain both the restructuring of the inspectorate and the new evaluation

of their role. It seems likely that the distribution of powers between the centre and LEAs is currently confused. It is an instance of a political question being translated into an educational response, which mirrors exactly the situation at the birth of middle schools.

> *... whatever rhetorics of educational purpose accompanied the establishment of middle schools - be these to do with primary school extension or the special needs of the middle years - it was the political and economic problems encountered in educational policy and state management more generally in the 1960s that were at the root of their emergence* (Hargreaves, 1986:204-5).

Conclusion

For both *Oak* and *Pharaoh*, changing the age of transfer involved many decisions at every level of the education service. The deputy in *Oak* thought there were many good decisions that were not necessarily all his own. As far as procedures were concerned he thought the best decision was to present a range of options in the consultation phase (T/DEO-1/5). He acknowledged that the change in the age of transfer was managed in a pretty rapid and extensive way (T/DEO-1/1). In *Pharaoh*, the deputy felt it had been best to press ahead with their scheme in a fairly firm manner while at the same time being prepared to make changes in response to strong public opinion,

> *When I look back to Phase 1, I think we were perhaps too negative and too defensive. We did not set out the positive aspects of the proposed changes strongly enough. We were more concerned to ward off criticism of what we were doing. I think gradually we increased in confidence as time went on. That didn't mean we steam-rollered people, but it meant we were more able to put to them the positive side of the reorganisation* (T/DEO-2/6).

There were also decisions to regret. In *Oak*, the deputy regretted the proposal that allowed small 5-11 schools. He thought, generally speaking, that they were the only possibility that could have been proposed: *'But when you consider the difficulties of organising a 5-11 school in five classes, I think that was a bit of an error'* (T/DEO-1/5). He also thought that there should have been a longer lead-in time before the changes. The deputy in *Pharaoh* felt that one might argue that in certain areas it might have been better to close one school rather than another: *'...but I don't think any particular proposal turned out to be wrong - or will turn out to be wrong'* (T/DEO-2/6). The two study areas responded to the issue of contraction.

The issue of contraction can test hard the extent to which rational planning can be reconciled with politics. Many LEAs found that they had neither the organisational nor the legal mechanisms to deal with it adequately, even if they possessed the political will. (Bush, Kogan, & Lenney, op.cit:82)

The study areas had the political will to press forward with change which gained impetus with the 1988 Education Act.

The optimism of both deputies was derived from their belief that this major reorganisation of schools had gone well. It permeates the analysis, after Nordenbo, of their role. *Oak's* DEO felt confident that the change in the age of transfer from primary to secondary school was based firmly on a political will and was appropriate. He felt that the change he orchestrated was good for the well-being of the Authority and its schools. He was optimistic that the transition had produced a more robust education service, and its effects would be beneficial in the future. The DEO is a good organiser who managed the change practically, balancing the hopes and aspirations of schools, governors and parents, with the targets set by the Authority. He explained the mechanics of changing the age of transfer carefully, and emphasised the County's continuing role in managing the outcomes of change (Log, pp 143-144). Similarly, *Pharaoh's* SEO was satisfied with the change he had orchestrated and regarded it as necessary for the well-being of the Borough Education Service. He was optimistic about the effects of reorganisation and felt that they would have a major impact on the quality of education provided in the Borough in future years. He is a confident organiser with the ability to balance the requirement to take positive action with the need to test a range of competing or alternative proposals. The SEO has a coping strategy that harmonises the requirement to reorganise with the aspirations and concerns of professionals and non-professionals alike. Above all, he explained the necessity of change with care, both to try to diffuse any bitterness and to promote the internal well-being of the Education Services (Log, p83). It was the view of the deputies that this optimism was justified. The change had been managed adequately through their alliance with the Chair of their respective Education Committees and an appropriately organised working party and committee structure. Birley (op. cit:3) likened an education officer to *'an incompetent chameleon.* It is not a term that appropriately describes either of the two Deputies. They had varying success with the implementation of the changes in the age of transfer, and this was due to the varying competencies of the education officers and their teams. Birley explains the inbuilt ambivalence,

It is not just that he (sic) has to deal with office matters on the one hand and the affairs of a separate profession on the other, though there is an inter-action between the two which gives educational administartion a special flavour and special problems. He lives in the cross-fire of the demands of local government conditions and those of a costly and idealistic service (loc. cit.).

It must present practical difficulties on a day to day basis.

His legitimate objectives are often obscured by tension between the decisions of the local council who employ him and the policy of the Government for the development of education nationally (loc. cit.).

The arrangements put in place by the Deputies for changing the age of transfer reinforced the managerial ethos and ensured the meeting of a national initiative. But what is the view of headteachers or governors, or anyone else in and around the school office?

Summary and Comment

The transition appears not to have been so smooth, nor was there a state of balance between the sectors of schooling or the phases of the change. There may be serious lessons here of planning, probably resulting in lack of clarity of goals for schools in later phases of the changes.

... if goals can not be clearly and unambiguously formulated from general policy then there is no obvious way of relating problems to solutions in a particular way (Bell, 1979:7).

In the process of change, to what extent can the activities of planning and implementation be separated? Ought they to be so separated? Does one need to question the state of education management by local education authorities? LEAs are under constant pressure to improve effectiveness; to be more responsive to schools' needs and at the same time to reduce costs. If they have indeed lost an empire, to local management, the National Curriculum and OFSTED, then they need still 'to find a role' (Audit Commission, 1989). There is one important caveat: there is no intention here to cast the LEAs in the role of unwilling recipients of central directives. This would be, in the view of Salter and Tapper (op.cit.), *'...to underestimate the identity of interest which ... exists between bureaucracies charged with the common task of managing education.'* The quality of leadership they give depends on how well they articulate their vision of what the education service is trying to achieve. How

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effectively, for instance, in *Oak* and *Pharaoh*, did the main messages of Age of Transfer changes get through to all those involved? There are issues here of relationships between the participants. The emphasis has been on their separate nature, the LEA officers, the councillors, the heads, teachers, parents; but in reality, there exist characteristic tensions arising from the interaction of any two of them. The knowledge that all of them possess about education will tend to be role-related.

The two deputies seem genuinely to consider the LEA and its schools to be partners. They believed their planning was comprehensive but interactive with the partners to the extent of being more flexible. Such flexibility, perhaps accepting the strength of public opinion in favour of one option rather than another; perhaps extending the consultation exercise to a wider franchise than at first envisaged, recognised that LEAs must plan facilities and capacity in a more complex, more volatile, environment. Open enrolment almost certainly involves greater movement of pupils between schools at least in the short term. Schools may also apply for grant maintained status. The evidence from *Oak* suggests that GM status was pursued by two of the study schools as a result of the proposals for reorganisation made by the LEA in pursuance of its planning objectives for the area. The consultation exercise in both LEAs was heavily, in *Oak* imaginatively, resourced. Whereas both study LEAs provided a wealth of information to their schools and their public as a basis for consultation, *Oak* was less good at receiving information. Proper evaluation of figures provided by parents and others could have avoided the closure of a First School yesterday where it has to reopen as an Infant School today.

The environment in which LEAs and their schools now operate is described above as 'more complex, more volatile' only because the effects of the Education Reform Act (ERA) and Local Management of Schools (LMS) have made it so. Boscobel, in *Oak*, believes that the decision-making process in the LEA was affected by the force and emotion of local argument, including the threat to go GM and the local political power agenda of councillors or prospective local councillors (Boscobel-1).

It is these local issues operating within or closely around the schools that become important in the midst of a major change. The next chapter seeks to establish the perceptions of headteachers in relation to the management of the

change in the age of transfer. A small number of governors are included, and one teacher who had been particularly affected by the changes in her school.

The range of problems encountered by schools facing change, indicate that their effects can be chaotic. This is particularly so in small schools, where questions of viability may arise. The effects of cross-cutting legislation are illustrated by the GM 'escape route' which allows schools threatened with reorganisation to opt out of LEA control; and that this, consequently, thwarts the LEAs' own plans to reduce surplus accommodation.

Chapter 6

The Schools: Deemed or Doomed?

*Being also a minority among schools for the middle years,
and an innovatory minority at that, they are at least relatively
immune from complacency; they are more likely to have their
roofs blown off by the winds of change.*
(Blyth, A., 1978:3)

This chapter is concerned with the perceptions of heads and governors, and of one teacher in particular who had been most affected by the changes in her school. As stated in Chapter 4, these results are being written up as levels which, in turn, draw upon all the case studies. The people at this level, typically, may be found in or around the school office, or, indeed, the headteacher's office. This chapter begins to examine the relationship between LEAs and their schools in the midst of major change. It is a summary of the range of problems encountered by first schools and middle schools facing change. Schools in crisis have little or no control over the direction events will take them. In *Oak* and *Pharaoh*, the schools were the front line.

Introduction

It first examines the role of the heads, through interviews, and compares and contrasts them by analysing the transcripts. They were asked to consider the causes of the change, surplus places or the National Curriculum. It goes on to make a detailed review of the problem of surplus places. This is at the heart of problems encountered by the schools, if only because the eradication of surplus places means the demise of the first and middle school system. Whatever the size of school, the changes have curricular implications. It explores the issue of the GM 'escape route', and the perceptions of those heads whose governors took their schools to Grant Maintained status as a direct result of difficulties associated with the LEA's reorganisation and the associated changes to the age of transfer. It shows how this thwarts LEA plans to reduce surplus accommodation. The important issue of the small school is reviewed. It illustrates the bitterness caused by the closure of small, often village schools. It establishes their perceptions of the way the change was managed; how effective the consultative procedure had been; why they thought it had been messy, especially as it revealed conflict between governing bodies; the phasing of the change and the different effects, sometimes chaotic, which it produced. They have varied opinions of building programmes consequent upon the change. Most importantly, they are asked about the effects of amalgamation,

and of possible closure. They have experience of both! Their opinion is sought of the problems associated with the breakdown of liaison systems between the middle schools and the secondary schools because the National Curriculum did not align itself with the three-tier system. They were asked about the overall effects of the conduct of the change. They have a wide range of perceptions about the results of the change and it reviews which, to them, appear beneficial.

The role of the Head

In and around the school office, or the head's study, is the arena in which internal and external relations are either contained or managed. External relations are important at all times, but particularly crucial when the image and material interests of the school are threatened (Ball, op.cit: 253). Managing the boundary of the school has always been part of the head's role. Hargreaves (1980:101) observes that it is heads who are at present the ones who repeatedly confront outside audiences. Brighouse and Moon (op.cit.) believe it has not often been done well. One of their contributors emphasises that

> *the ability of the school to enlist - and respond to - parental*
> *involvement, will be crucial. So will its ability to generate*
> *support, including financial support, from community and*
> *commercial organisations, so, most of all, will be its relationship*
> *with its governing body* (Duffy, 1990:97).

This report draws on the perceptions of heads, governors and a teacher particularly affected by the changes in her school. All of these, individually or severally, may meet in or near the school office. The structural uncertainties that derive from any reorganisation have been clearly rehearsed in Ball (op. cit), albeit in a secondary setting. The reorganisation of *Oak*'s and *Pharaoh*'s middle schools into primary schools was accompanied by widespread publicity which emphasised how 'normal' and unproblematic the change was. Moreover, the adjustments required in the secondary schools to accommodate an extra year group, were characterised in *Pharaoh* as 'very careful arrangements' (C/2-93), and posed little difficulty in *Oak* where 'over 95% (of secondary heads) ...stated their strong preference for change' (C/1-16).

After interviewing in both study areas, the transcripts were analysed with reference to the work of Nordenbo (op.cit.) and the recommendations of Shevels (op.cit.). The primary heads in the study areas are explicit in their reactions to the change in the age of transfer. In *Pharaoh*, the head of *Luxor*

Middle feels bad about the transition and its effects. His overwhelming feeling about reorganisation is its apparent inevitableness. He believes it to have been unnecessary as a means of reducing surplus places. The head is pessimistic about the effects of change, though he can foresee that the LEA will be dominated by them for some time. He has a long-standing record of service with the local authority and holds firm opinions about the efficacy of educational change and is not afraid to voice them. He sees his role, in managing apparently inevitable changes, to exploit them in defence of his staff and pupils; to try to secure for staff a future they deserve, and to afford the best possible scenario for his pupils in the transition year. He is convinced that the local authority has failed to explore other means of reducing surplus places, and that they will come to regret, therefore, the change in the age of transfer (Log, pp95-96). His colleague at *Thebes* CE Primary School, on the other hand, feels that the change in the age of transfer was appropriate; feels good that the planned programme of change is working well for the school and is optimistic about the transition and its effects. She does not feel that they will necessarily dominate either the school's or the LEA's development. Her Christian vision for the Primary School includes the sympathetic management of staff and pupils, and co-operative partnership with governors and parents. She is meeting the challenge of change with a firm belief in the efficacy of the Authority's initiative. She has a coping strategy that seeks to accommodate all individuals in a caring community of learning and teaching (Log, p141-142).

In *Oak*, the headteacher of *Apple* Primary School (GM) feels that the change in the age of transfer was necessary; but that the Local Authority was open to political influence; that agreements were reneged upon; and that, consequently, governors sought and obtained Grant Maintained status. He feels optimistic about the change, and that it will be a very big factor in the school's development. His vision for the Primary School includes the sympathetic management of staff and a close working relationship with the governors. He has the confidence of the parents and pupils. He is meeting the challenge of change with a professionalism that allows him to cope with individual aspirations and bend them to the general good (Log, p177-178). Similarly, the head of *Leaf* Junior (GM) feels that the change in the age of transfer was unnecessary, even disastrous; that the reorganisation was ill-thought out and underfunded; and that, consequently, governors sought and obtained Grant Maintained status. Although he believes the reorganisation to be a retrograde step, and that it rendered many issues inconsequential by comparison, he feels

optimistic about GM status, both practically and philosophically. He feels it will dominate the school's development. His management of the Junior School is purposive. His working relationship with the governors is a good one. He has a coping strategy that seeks to take advantage of the new status to deliver improvements for staff and pupils (Log, p197). Their erstwhile colleague, the head of *St. Tree* CE Primary School, is still with the LEA. She feels that the change in the age of transfer, although necessary, even inevitable, has left her school as an infant school and denied its clear potential to become fully primary. While consciously setting the problem in its overall context of local provision, she explains the fears and concerns of staff sympathetically. She feels optimistic that the situation will improve and that the effects of the change will dominate the school's development. Her coping strategies include making plans and promoting them, in partnership with governors and the Diocese. The head's complex role of innovator, monitor and mentor is set within constraints imposed by the agencies of the LEA in pursuing the change in the age of transfer (Log, p215).

Reasons to change the age of transfer?
The heads in both study areas, though they acknowledged that there were problems associated with the National Curriculum and the straddling of the Key Stages by middle schools, knew that the change in the age of transfer was basically to save expenditure on surplus places. But formal decision-making was hedged around by rumour. In *Oak*, saving spare capacity was a 'suspicion' for one head, no more than an 'understanding' for another. A third knew that *'an awful lot of primary schools in the area were going to have spare places'.* The response in *Pharaoh* ranged from acceptance to a conviction that this was not the only way to save money. The influence of the National Curriculum, and more particularly its structure, was overtly critical. *'The reason basically was it was more in keeping with the National Curriculum. The curriculum was such that it made more sense for schools to break at 7 than it did at 8'* (T/HTiii-1/2). But the head of *Leaf* Junior thought there might be a yet more sinister, or at least a more covert, reason, *'It was felt that if we had Year 7 pupils here, then that would work into KS3 - and I think there were doubts whether or not middle schools could actually deliver KS3 to them. But there was also a suspicion that it was linked to the government initiative in reducing the number of spare capacity in schools; to rationalise particularly the number of First Schools'* (T/HTii-1/2). At *Apple* Primary, the head made a distinction between 'official' reasons and his 'understanding', *"The reasons we were given*

*as heads - the official reason- was that they wanted to break at the end of KS2
and put all the children from the KS3 programme of study into secondary
schools. What we all understood, at least those of us who'd been in the service
some time, that the demographic trends were actually reducing numbers in
secondary schools and were increasing numbers in primary schools. The
Authority saw it as a way of baling out some of the secondary schools which
were really underfunded. They could see that the way to get round that was to
fill them up. It denuded the primary sector and benefited the secondary sector.
I think the secondary sector overall hugely enjoyed Age of Transfer, and the
primary sector did not"* (T/HTi-1/3).

Surplus places

Of the two schools in *Pharaoh*, the head of *Thebes* Primary School accepted
the economic reasons. Her Chair of Governors saw it as a matter for neither
agreement or disagreement, *"I mean, we pay for it. We pay rates to the
Authority same as everyone else"* (T/CH-2/2). Her parents knew that the
Authority had to *"save money"* (T/Pii-2). The head of *Luxor* Middle School
disputed, both in consultation (C/2-135) and in conversation, that this was the
only way to save money. *"Now that could have been done by closing schools,
but they dipped out on this. They had not picked up the gauntlet of this for
many years"* (T/HTi-2/3). He illustrated the point by describing a local middle
school which was due to be closed as it was superfluous to requirements.
Indeed, *Luxor* Middle School took many pupils from its catchment area. But
local members of a National Union had great influence in the *Pharaoh* Labour
Party, and with the Local Education Authority. The closure of the school was
shelved. *"There are so many ways of taking out surplus places other than
doing away with middle schools. To my mind, it wasn't tackled properly. They
wanted to get rid of surplus places because they were not getting the building
grants from central government. Central government said, 'You have so many
surplus places, how can you justify our giving you building grants?'"* (T/HTi-
2/3).

Local and national studies highlighted the unacceptable costs of surplus places.
Local Authorities felt pressure from the DfEE, the government's White Paper,
'Choice and Diversity', the Education Act 1993 and the withholding of building
grants unless spare places were actively reduced. There was probably, in some
LEAs, a lack of coherence in tackling the problem. The head of *Luxor* Middle
School asked, *'Why didn't they simply close schools?'* (T/HTi-2/3). Changing

the age of transfer automatically fills up the secondary schools. It was easier to reorganise the primaries (T/DEO-2/5). Predicting pupil numbers is a lottery (T/HTiii-1/6). County methods of measuring capacity can be at variance with local school opinion (T/CHi-1/4), (see above, Chapter 1, pp11-16). School-by-school forecasts are produced by taking account of several factors including the relationship between the number of children born in an area and still living in it and the number entering school at reception age; the gain or loss to age groups as cohorts move through the school system; the participation rate for post-16 education; and cross-border movement where this is significant and probably not covered by the other factors. In *Pharaoh*, a few first schools questioned the Authority's estimate of the number of pupils who would attend when the proposals were fully implemented. One school provided its own figures to compare with the Authority's (C/2-247)(C/2-5). The forecasts in the short term also benefit from detailed information about known parental preference for secondary places and for some middle schools and from comment from governors and headteachers.

It is possibly inevitable that individual forecasts for schools are less accurate than the forecast for an area of a County or the County as a whole since one or two families can often make a difference, especially to the numbers in small schools. Another quoted a local housing development which, if it came about, would turn the reduction on paper of the school's standard number into an actual shortage of places (C/2-241)(C/2-15). The DfEE, in considering bids for capital expenditure, do not allow for additional numbers expected to arise from planned development. So LEAs can only consider development that has actually started. Consequently, school forecasts do not explicitly allow for additional children who might come from new housing developments planned to start within the next few years.

What, after all, do LEAs take into account? Decline in the population may be supported by facts and figures, but still they are disputed - *'How could they possibly know that for a fact?'*. Reading the story of *The Catkins* (Chapter 7, pp136-138) in which parents attempted to prove their theory that more young children under the age of 5 lived in their district than the LEA would acknowledge, one feels sympathy for their cause if only because the LEA rejected the figures as 'unhelpful'. A governor at *Apple* GM Primary School felt that *'they [the LEA] should go to the local hospital and see who's being born!'*

(T/GOV-1/4). Actually, LEAs do seek information from all District and Borough Councils as a matter of routine.

This enables us to identify potential areas of sizeable housing development planned over the next few years. These are, of course, only plans but regular negotiations are conducted with potential developers to ascertain what contribution ought to be made by them to the cost of providing any necessary school places. Regard has been had to the sizeable developments in reaching a view about what reductions in surplus capacity are likely to be reasonable within fairly broad sub-areas of the education areas of the County (Warwickshire, 1994: Supporting paper Q).

An LEA's duty, to provide enough school places to meet local needs, came into conflict with national policy on parental choice, expanding class sizes and issues of that nature. In effect, schools were in competition with each other. Changing the age of transfer simply created an arena for conflict (Boscobel-5,6). It served to highlight tensions between Government education policies. The current market-led approach to school admissions cannot lead to a perfect match for every school. The Audit Commission (1996) says such an aim is both unrealistic and *'probably undesirable'*, but points out the shortcomings of the planning process.

Oak's DEO could not say how many surplus places were eliminated by the change in the age of transfer (T/DEO-1/4). On the other hand, *Pharaoh*'s DEO quoted a reduction by half, from 15,000 to approximately 7,000 (T/DEO-2/7). A governor in *Pharaoh* believed that there were a lot of surplus places around the Borough, and recognised that something had to be done. A Chair of Governors in *Oak* acknowledged that change in the age of transfer was essentially to lose surplus places, saving costs. However, he believed that it was also forced by the stages of the National Curriculum (T/CHii-1/1, 2). Boscobel believes that *Oak* planned to take most of the spare places out of use (Boscobel-6). Herne, however, scorned the argument about spare capacity. Heads, he said, do not complain about having too much space (*vide Leaf* Middle). The culprit was, in his view, the DES minimum standards for classroom accommodation. They do not allow for modern educational requirements which demand space for all the equipment and resources needed to make the National Curriculum work (L/Herne-1).

The pyramids had varying targets for the percentage reduction of surplus places. For example, *Luxor* Middle School was in a pyramid that required a

59% reduction of surplus places. This was described by the head as a very high percentage, *"nearly a third to a half more than they achieved in the first two phases"* (T/HTi-2/5). This was problematic in that it meant the closure of two middle schools. The local High School was reasonably full. *'I suppose they had surplus places, but they didn't have a lot. In fact, the proof of the pudding is that they have had to come and take 16 classrooms off me and create a split site school'* (T/HTi-2/5). *Luxor* Middle School was destined to be handed over to the High School, same site, lock, stock and barrel. Most of the resources, say 95%, were to follow the children (C/2-136). The small balance of resources was mostly books, *'...those few colleagues who were leaving and going into primary schools took those books to schools who received them. Some primary schools received nothing. Their record in appointing staff from middle schools was quite scandalous'* (T/HTi-2/4).

The head of *Apple* Primary, in *Oak*, explained that governors were angry enough with the LEA that they decided to try for GM status. Part of that picture was concerned with building plans. To cope with changes in pupil numbers following the change in the age of transfer, *Apple* Primary definitely needed an extra classroom. *'We had to spend our own money.* Oak *wouldn't help at all. They said that, although technically there weren't enough places in all the primary schools, or Key Stage 1 schools; there weren't enough places for the number of children applying last year, they would have some classrooms unmothballed and they would have stuffed them in there with no choice.'* He explained that they had to spend £26,000 on this classroom. *'As a GM school we could do that. We spent a year and a half's worth of capital building money to do that. So the school now has fifteen class bases and we did not lose any of our specialist areas. We did not lose the craft room, pottery room, the music room or the Library. We've still got all of these'* (T/HTi-1/7). The head rehearsed the figures; over subscription in the first year of 62, and in the second year an application of 96 pupils. The admission number had been set at 60, *'We are bigger than we were before the Age of Transfer, and with a year group less'* (T/HTi-1/4).

Leaf Junior also went Grant Maintained. This was also for financial reasons. The head described the huge building space with room for 480 pupils, *'It was the GM issue which enabled us to look at our school management in a totally different way... we set up a new Library. We have a new headteacher's room, a new bursar's room, and therefore a new staffroom. The staffroom took up half*

an old classroom and we developed the other half for a Special Needs room.
We have a separate Design and Technology room which is used for DT most
of the time, but also for Science. We had an opportunity for the computers to
be put into a spare classroom. We still have spare space, which is sometimes
mothballed on certain days of the week, or weeks in the year' (T/HTii-1/5).

The head of *St. Tree* CE Primary School had a markedly different experience.
Her school was reduced from a First School to an Infant School (despite the
name). The LEA had made it *'an alternative to closure. It was not an*
alternative to Primary School' (T/HTiii-1/2). One of the head's main
preoccupations now is the need to expand, *'... we can't extend upwards, we can*
only extend outwards - unless County accept that we go back to being a
Primary School' (T/HTiii-1/4).

Curriculum
Whatever the size of school, changing the age of transfer had implications for
the curriculum. At its most simplistic level, it involved matching the Key
Stages by reorganisation. Both LEAs believed the 11+ system is easier to
manage. Are they, in fact, saying that the change was curriculum-driven,
specially since the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988? What was
'easier to manage'?

> *All aspects of curriculum control and policy to determine timetables,*
> *syllabuses, texts and equipment, teaching methods and forms of assessment*
> *up till 1988 have lain officially with LEAs. In practice, this control had not*
> *been effectively exercised by local authorities*
> (Holmes and McLean, 1989:44).

In reality, the National Curriculum, in tandem with the change in the age of
transfer, provoked the destruction of good practice, particularly between
middle schools and secondary school, in liaison between the phases. At *Apple*
Primary, the head accepts that liaison had not really been a problem as they
were a primary school anyway before the change in the age of transfer. *'But for*
two or three years before... that had actually diminished a bit, for all sorts of
historical reasons. The liaison now is strictly at two ends. We are liaising
heavily with nurseries. My Reception Class teachers visit all the children in
their nurseries before they start with us. At secondary level, we have the
subject panels still meeting.' In making this last point, he went on to explain
that GM status had disrupted the subject panel liaison for another secondary

school in the locality; but not, funnily enough, for them, '...*probably because most of our staff are central to them and make a lot of contribution*' (T/HTi-1/5). *Leaf* Junior used to have very close curriculum liaison with its secondary school. *'We'd set up a system where groups of teachers would meet to discuss their particular areas of the curriculum - so there would be someone from each of the schools looking, for example, at science and another at English.'* The head believes that they were achieving what amounted to true continuity. *'From our point of view, that was excellent because when we looked at our Year 7 plans, we thought they were O.K., but we were not sure. So we took them to the secondary school, and said, "What do you think? Is this continuous development?" And they gave us valuable feedback'.* But all this has changed. The head of *St. Tree* regrets that liaison has diminished. She thinks liaison is actually easier if a school crosses a curriculum Stage. *'It makes it necessary. When we first went from primary to middle school there was an awful lot of liaison with secondary schools'.* It was the practice locally for all primary school staff and many of the inspectorate to gather at large conferences in the secondary schools. *'We were all there and there was a lot put into the need for liaison, a lot of INSET and a lot of curriculum development ... It's gone back now to match National Curriculum stages and I feel there is not that necessity'.* Now, she describes the feeling that people have, that there is a cut-off point at the end of Key Stage 1 and at the end of Key Stage 2. *'As far as I'm concerned, there's not very much liaison with my local junior school'* (T/HTiii-1/3).

> *... the institutional overlap in respect of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, encouraged schools to liaise in ways which were beneficial to the children concerned. Such liaison would be lost if 11 plus transfer were (sic) introduced* (C/2-21,22).

In the extreme, primary heads felt rebuffed by the secondary school, *'We've got KS3 and that's ours. You've got KS2 and you don't need to worry'* (T/HTii-1/2). However, promoting teacher contact between schools has important consequences;

> *Such activity was seen as having pay offs in terms of facilitating subsequent, more formal interaction focused on curricular, organisational and pupil transfer matters. They similarly indicate that first, middle and upper school teachers in their relations with each other, are almost by definition mutuall on guard, each with their own interests to maintain* (Blyth and Derricott, op. cit:77).

Boscobel saw work in secondary schools which covered the work children had already done. There was apparently, he claimed, no thought given to liaison with the subject area in the junior school. There existed a complete barrier and break between the two.

Whereas the heads were saying, 'We have liaison', and the heads of year were saying, 'We have liaison'; the subject people were saying quite clearly by their practice that there was no liaison (Boscobel-11).

All through schools (First and Middle) which translate to all through primaries have always liaised closely with feeder Nurseries or contributory first schools. However, having said all that, both Buckinghamshire (Chapter 1, p26) and the Isle of Wight have managed to tailor the National Curriculum to the middle school system (T/HTii-1/5).

The age of transfer proposals raised fears of radical reorganisation in some areas - First schools in competition with each other, the losers to close. Secondary schools threatened with amalgamation on two quite separate sites were locked in a wordy public battle. One of them side-stepped into GM status, thus avoiding the proposed manoeuvre. In such a heated atmosphere, liaison groups in the secondary sector struggled to keep going. There were, regrettably, some exclusions. As calmer times returned, liaison was being worked on again (T/HTi-1/5).

Particular subjects of the curriculum were affected by the reorganisation of schools. French was a casualty as Year 7 was hived off to the secondary sector. *Pharaoh* cited problems of recruitment of specialist staff for subjects like Modern Languages and Science. These persuaded the LEA to prefer the 11+ system, believing it to be able to produce such teachers more readily than the middle school system. One school reported setting in Maths which was producing remarkable results, specially in the top set. Four or five pupils will sit Level 6 in SATs. The head thought this was equivalent to a GCSE. For a number of reasons, this school believed its Year 6 was as strong academically as it could be (T/HTi-1/6, T/GOV-1/2, Boscobel-11). Effects of proposed closure on curriculum were varied. On the one hand, numbers on roll began to dwindle away causing mixed age classes which no-one liked. On the other, the final year was well-resourced - even with two extra teachers (T/HTi-2/4, T/HTiv-1/2). Governors of first schools translated into full primaries were anxious that KS2 was delivered capably, specially as teachers may have

focused on first school age ranges and not experienced delivering the curriculum up to 11 year olds. This was a major issue which was tackled by making such experience a key factor in the school's recruitment policy (T/CHii-1/4).

The head of *Luxor* Middle reflected on the educational implications of the change in the age of transfer. He thought that the LEA would live to regret this reorganisation. By creating large secondary schools, which are subject and department organised, they risk the alienation particularly of Years 7 and 8. In both consultation (C/2-135) and in interview, he cited the good reputations in their communities enjoyed by all the 9-13 Middle Schools in the local pyramid, despite their differing catchment areas. *'The pastoral care, the knowledge of children as individuals, the blend of primary practice and gradual introduction of specialisation were the integral parts of these schools...'* He was unhappy that the secondary schools, in his view, could not reproduce these elements for the 12-13 year child. He continued, *'We have excellent first and primary schools in Pharaoh and I have every confidence that they will successfully cater for the Years 5 and 6 they will now retain. Just two caveats for them, (a) have they achieved a reasonable male/female staff balance as a result of reorganisation, and (b) do they have sufficient subject expertise to advise non-specialist staff right through to the end of Key Stage 2?'* (T/HTi-2/6).

In the south of the district, the head of *Thebes* Primary School was simultaneously making efforts to prepare both the First School and Middle School staff for the next term when they would be combined as one staff. Two extra training days were allowed at the end of the summer term. The head and deputy designate did the arrangements. An outside speaker was invited and a room was booked at a Staff Development Centre. The staff met, as it were, on neutral ground and progress was made, *'...it was nice to get away and you saw a change in that day because we talked about, you know, what we'd like to get rid of out of the two schools; what we'd both got already and what was the good parts about the two schools that we could build on'* (T/HTii-2/5). The real benefit in the Autumn, in the view of the head, was that they were not starting from nothing. They had the vision of the new school because they had all helped to put it together. The Chair of Governors was of the same positive opinion, *'...the idea of getting people together in a different environment with*

a strange speaker - in my view - was exactly the right thing to do. And it worked because people are now pulling in the same directions' (T/CH-2/5).

The small school problem

Proposals to change the age of transfer threw into sharp focus a secondary, but nonetheless, equally important issue. In planning for schools to be educationally viable, LEAs have had to face the problem of small schools throughout the 1980s and 90s. There is a strong, emotive case for the small school, particularly for the early years of primary education, and particularly where the school may be seen as integrated into a local community which it serves.

> *The defence of the small primary school has been strongest in isolated rural areas, where the alternative would mean long journeys for young children, but politically, the closure of what may be regarded as a neighbourhood school, whether urban or rural, is a potentially explosive issue, as parents are likely to see such a move as depriving them of a basic service* (Ozga, op. cit:24).

Nevertheless, the impact of surplus places and economies to eliminate them had a knock-on effect on all sizes of schools. In both *Oak* and *Pharaoh*, there was difficulty in achieving substantial economies of scale as a consequence of fewer numbers. The relationship between cuts in demand and cuts in expenditure is not, it seems, automatic. Overcrowding and the level of temporary accommodation could be reduced; and, at least in *Pharaoh*, the planned extension of use of educational premises for pre-school provision could be put into effect. The position could not be presented as a simple equation of lower numbers and lower costs, but rather an emphasis on the educational implications of population trends. Small schools with reducing pupil numbers find themselves struggling to maintain educational effectiveness and economic efficiency. They begin to lose, at an increasing rate, their entitlement to teaching staff, ancillary staff and capitation. Eventually, they decline in group size and entitlement to points. The outward signs are visible to all in empty classrooms and increasing age ranges within classes. Some effects are less obvious. The curriculum is inevitably reduced. Specialist expertise declines and there are fewer promotion opportunities. Morale declines for all these reasons; the educational impetus falters, not least because of the often unspoken fear of closure.

The most common yardstick for size of school was a minimum of 90 pupils, *'large enough to offer a broad education to all pupils'* (D/1-13). Schools smaller than this were dotted throughout rural areas, mostly in or near village communities. *Pharaoh* quoted cases of as few as 20 children, and that two schools with fewer than 30 pupils, and quite close together, were closed (T/DEO-2/7). *Oak* set up a Small Schools Sub-Committee reporting to its Working Party on reorganisation. Governors reminded members that they *'have an enormous responsibility and they must accept that their decisions will have a fundamental impact on the lives of people in the villages'* (C/1-44); and referred to their belief that one of the benefits of a small school is that governors and staff talk to each other constantly (T/CHii-1/5). Beverley Attwood wrote, on behalf of the Warwickshire Rural Education Network (Warwickshire, 1993b), asking,

> *Can they say our heritage is at stake because the village school is threatened, or that the backbone of rural life, the village school, is to be severed? Can they report that a large number of small schools are closing or merging with larger establishments and that parental choice of a small school is one with a magical number of 90 pupils!?*

The DEO in *Pharaoh* thought that the main resistance came from, and perhaps the most residual bitterness is still felt in, some of the rural areas where small infant and primary schools were closed.

> *... one can understand that some villages felt that at the time they had the heart taken out of them by the closure of the school* (T/DEO-2/6).

Can amalgamations produce schools that are too big? Can an all-through primary expand beyond tolerable levels? Who is to judge? The head of *Apple* GM Primary in *Oak* acknowledged local antipathy to his school's growth in numbers. Herne, in the press, was sure parents did not really want big schools. He went on to cite one of *Oak*'s smallest first schools (with 55 on roll) which recently won two national awards for curriculum; and one of the County's smallest secondary schools (with three-form entry and 'unviable' even by County guidelines), which was selected for detailed description in an HMI publication as a model for others to follow (L/Herne-1).

There was relentless pressure, nevertheless, on small rural schools. The Strategic Plan (Education Service) for Northern Ireland (DoE, 1994) stated,

Even allowing for the wider rural development issues and the need to retain and support a number of relatively small schools in the light of local community needs, this level of surplus provision is unacceptable and points to the need for priority to be given to programmes of rationalisation.

Are we back to square one?

The management of change

From the outset the Authorities' plans were comprehensive. Both issued booklets and accompanying technical papers. *Oak* explained the two-phase change by listing the areas affected and publishing localised information (e.g. D/1-14). *Pharaoh*'s literature contained the projected timetable for seven phases, and was, at least in the earliest phases, detailed. For later stages the timetable was informative if not immediately relevant(D/2-1 to 28). The announcement of the intended change, however, got off to a poor start in both study areas. Information as weighty and immediate as changing the age of transfer achieved local currency in advance of 'official' announcements. There was a distinct period of inchoate awareness in each study area. Rumour and gossip were rife. Ball (op. cit) observes that rumours operate in and around official decision making. Heads in *Oak* used their personal, professional networks. The head of *Apple* Primary School (GM) explained, *'...I think we had some undercover rumours that were coming via councillors and by one person on the Education Committee from the NAHT'* (T/HTi-1/1). This was echoed by the head of *Leaf* Junior School (GM), *'I heard it was being mooted through discussions with inspectors and other headteacher colleagues...At the time I couldn't believe that they were going to take it quite as seriously as they did. It had been considered by County Councillors, I think in about 1980ish, and they had rejected the idea. So I thought this was going to happen again; that it might be a close shave. It was a lot bigger than I thought'* (T/HTii-1/1). Memories of 1982 returned also to the head of *St. Tree* CE Primary School. *'My personal knowledge went way back to the 1980s when ... there were rumblings that the LEA was going to look again at First and Middle schools'* (T/HTiii-1/1). It does seem in the interim that the LEA still hasn't perfected the dissemination of clear, unequivocal messages.

In *Pharaoh*, as far as the head of *Luxor* Middle School was concerned, the Authority could have been more informative in the early stages, *'The authority's notorious for letting heads know well after they have let the press know..... We as heads were rather annoyed'* (T/HTi-2/1). This view was in sharp contrast to the experience of a second respondent. She had been in post

as head of *Thebes* First School for exactly one month when the Senior Education Officer in charge of reorganisation telephoned to ask for a meeting with her and with the middle school head. *"He said, 'I'd rather you kept it to yourselves at the moment but.................' and broke the news that there was going to be an amalgamation, and obviously a change in the transfer age as well. We met the following day when he officially told us. We were able to tell teaching staff but not beyond that. It was still fairly confidential at that point. It was really after the holidays that it became more public. We are talking of summer '92"* (T/HTii-2/1).

The heads and governors in both study areas have been untroubled by fieldwork interviews. Yet their credibility depends, as it were, on their ability to rationalise their middle school and middle schools in general. They at times spoke passionately about middle school values. What they drew on was their understanding and experience of what middle schools do, using a range of explanations available in middle school folk lore or ideology. This is what Hargreaves (ibid:103) calls *'an item of rhetoric'*. They can be truly personal selections. Unremarkably, the processes of changing the age of transfer highlight the different perceptions of, or messages given to, the different participants. This is not as simplistic as it sounds. Every school is likely to be affected, to some degree, by such a momentous reorganisation. Consultation was, after all, patchy - even though the evidence in Chapter 5 shows that LEA officers believed it to have been wide-ranging and complete. These views demonstrate their replicability in both study areas and how difficult it is to tease out opinions/ perceptions of the consultation exercise from those held about the management of the change.

Consultation

In both study areas, consultation was not seen to be effective for each phase (T/HTi-2/1) (Boscobel-3). Indeed, the views of the majority of heads and teachers were not listened to (L/P/1-2). Teachers worry. They do not have the benefit of any kind of general rules in the midst of change.

> *Teachers dealing with day-to-day classroom matters and relatively short-term teaching and curricular problems are frequently in an ambiguous situation which general rules do not fit; they need the emotional support which comes from frequent discussion and consultation with equal colleagues, and this is available in the staffroom at intervals throughout the day. The contacts they require are informal, frequent and highly personal.*

They are dealing with situations in which general rules are of little help
(Musgrove, 1971:79).

The effects of all this doubt and stress was a loss of morale (L/Herne-1). The headteacher of *Leaf* Junior remembered two meetings, *'One was with an Area Education Officer and an Officer from the County who was in charge of it. They had a meeting with parents at the school and they went through the issues there. I don't think there were separate meetings with the governors'* (T/HTii-1/1). In fact, according to the head of *St. Tree*, *'The Chair of Governors and Headteacher were invited to a meeting by the LEA when the whole primary provision for the area was discussed'* (T/HTiii-1/2). At *Apple* Primary, the head was far from satisfied with the whole process; *'As far as we could see, there was no consultation with schools. They weren't asking the people that really understood the system. They were looking at County Councillors. One or two Education Officers were charged with the job of doing it. As far as I could see, it got corrupted by local Councillors who were very concerned with doing the best for their schools because the elections were coming up'* (T/HTi-1/1). Consultation was also a time for promises. Boscobel, in *Oak*, believes promises were made by officers of the LEA which had no hope of being carried out. He suggests that LEAs have a political agenda responsive to local interests, local councillors. The head of *Apple* Primary agrees. He calls it 'interference'. This agenda is over and above the process of consultation (see Chapter 8).

Interest groups tend to mushroom when sensitive issues like school closures or amalgamations arise. The uncertainty of the situation was emphasised. But even where schools established an effective partnership between staff, governors and parents, the expected favourable outcome was not assured (T/HTiv-1/2). The role of the parent governors was found to be very supportive, and a good way of sounding out parental opinion (T/CHii-1/5). Some governing bodies passed resolutions covering their local area and even went so far in part of *Oak* to suggest a pattern of schooling involving the closure of a particular school. This is never good- it is very emotive and causes bitterness (T/HTi-1/2). The concern of governors in *Pharaoh* for their own credibility in the midst of change was clear. It took the form of expressing a lack of confidence in the role of temporary governing bodies (C/2-17)(C/2-13). Such temporary bodies had to be established if closure arrangements were adopted. Within an amalgamation, for example, both schools would technically close, and then re- open as a single unit. The temporary governing body would

'shadow' the schools through this process. Some governors considered that these temporary bodies *'might bequeath an unfair legacy of decisions to the permanent governing bodies of the new schools'* (C/2-17). Governors often fought long and difficult battles to ensure the status of their school (T/CHii-1/3). They do not like crises. The governors of a middle school in Warwickshire responded to the LEA's proposals for change with a list of the issues. It is unique in its coverage. [The numbering is added].

1. *The need to reduce surplus places overall is accepted in principle, but it is not necessary to change the age of transfer in order to eliminate surplus places.*
2. *The importance of Key Stages has been greatly exaggerated, effective liaison is already taking place between schools.*
3. *Proposals to change the age of transfer lack the basis of research which accompanied the introduction of first and middle schools.*
4. *Middle schools will suffer financially with the loss of Year 7.*
5. *A review of the LMS formula is urged in order to address the balance of funding between primary and secondary schools.*
(Warwickshire, op.cit:48)

Consultation in the *Thebes* First and Middle Schools in *Pharaoh* was more of a negotiation. It was meaningful in that everyone was involved, from teaching staff to dinner ladies, cleaners and caretakers. It was meaningful in that all felt able to air their views and their worries about the amalgamation. But the local authority had a second agenda which produced something of a political wrangle. The two schools were Church schools, Voluntary Aided, and their boards of governors had a heavy preponderance of Church governors. Responses at the consultation stage included strong opinion on majority Church of England representation on the Governing Body of the proposed school. It was declared, *'... not compatible with local democratic,and especially parental, interests'* (C/2-95). This resonated well with the local authority's wishes to see a more balanced governing body in the new combined school and, for example, more than one parent governor. This would be in line with the Education Reform Act's provisions. The local authority held negotiations (C/2-102) with the Diocesan representative, the local Vicar, and agreements were reached to produce a balanced governing body. The Chair of Governors of *Thebes* Primary School called this result *"a level playing field,"* and described the formulation of the Shadow Board as *"a little sensitive in the early stages. But it worked out fine in the end."* (T/CH-2/2)

The head of *Luxor* Middle School, unknowingly in concert with a headteacher in *Oak,* saw the whole consultative process as overtly political. He recognised that the ruling Labour majority in *Pharaoh* had determined the question of age of transfer and decided it would be at 11+ uniformly across the Borough. This was a given, an underlying tenet, which influenced all future action. *Luxor* was in Phase 3, so detailed local plans were not at first available. *"... they intended doing the easy bits first, the 8-12 which are easy, and then ward members, elected ward members, when it came to their pyramid, they could have no objections because a) they had already agreed, and b) two phases had gone through quite successfully, thank you"* (T/HTi-2/1). He did not know, in fact, the details of Phase 3 until after the 'easy bits'. He was not keen to *"enquire about...other peoples' grief"* in the first two phases. He said he was aware of numerous protest meetings at various schools from parents whose schools were due to close. He complained of the *'inevitableness'* about it all. (*Luxor* Middle School was about to close - in the very week of the interview.) His main concern in this process had been the consequences for his staff. *"Unfortunately, I have been proved right all along the line"*(T/HTi-2/2).

Phases

Heads noticed different effects in different phases. They believed in *Oak* that the first phase was more generously funded, especially in respect of technology for the school office (T/HTiii-1/5). Governors also believed that phasing, whilst approved, produced different effects. It was suggested, for instance, that schools in Phase 2 benefited from the experience, even pitfalls, of Phase 1. More generally, middle schools in one phase had difficulties in transferring pupils to a secondary school in a different phase. Boscobel points to the dissimilar decisions made in the second phase (Boscobel-2). Phase 1 had been a 'pilot'; in Phase 2 people got wise. He labels this inequality. In both *Oak* and *Pharaoh*, it was thought that job opportunities for staff were reduced in the second or later phases (T/HTii-1/5) (T/HTi-2/4).

Contraction

The management of change is further illustrated by the response of the schools to problems associated with contraction and possible redundancies, and amalgamation or the threat of it. Both had obvious staffing implications. Heads experienced instability of staffing when rolls plummeted; considered redundancies and early retirements (C/1-44).

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The handling of contraction and possible redundancies arising from it was markedly different between schools and between LEAs. Simply put, the change in the age of transfer switched large numbers of middle school pupils to secondary schools. The study schools report drops ranging from 40-50 at *St. Tree* CE, 90 in *Apple* Primary and a school population at *Leaf* Junior declining from 500 to 230. Although these schools have survived the change, for some of them it was touch and go. The head of *St. Tree* CE explained that the LEA hoped that (the drop of 40-50 pupils) would not involve redundancy. *'But the budget implications were that we would probably have to look for staffing reductions. So that we went into all the processes of looking at staff contracts and looking for potential redundancies. That opened the door again for staff concerns and stress, and the future of the school itself'* (T/HTiii-1/3). The headteacher went on to report that, *'It was a very stressful time. The governors' minutes talk about staff feelings; being made redundant; having interviews [with the Personnel Department]; feeling they weren't valued'* (T/HTiii-1/4). At *Leaf* Junior they recognised that the school population in the village had declined considerably, affecting the First School and their neighbouring schools. *'Because of that decline, we felt we had a huge school with children rattling around in it'* (T/HTii-1/3). The drop in numbers at *Apple* Primary meant that income from LMS obviously dropped as well. Staff were made redundant, and the shortage of money affected their programme of repairs to the fabric of the building! (T/HTi-1/4).

The head of *Luxor* Middle School, in *Pharaoh*, as stated above, had the unenviable task of managing his school to the point of closure. His 9-13 Middle School had, in the final year, to be in transition to 8-12. After closure, the remaining two year groups transferred to the local High School. Without such a transition year the High School would have had to admit three whole year groups at the start of a new academic year. There were, however, important staffing implications in the transition year. *'...theoretically my staff, and I think there were sixteen teaching staff at the time, could all have got new jobs.'* If that had happened, the school would have had to be staffed with supply teachers for 180 children. The quality of education could not have been guaranteed (C/2-135 and 143). *'Fortunately for the school this didn't happen but there was a lot of anxiety amongst staff because they didn't get jobs the first time round.'* He explained that he had kept some money back in the budget for staffing this problematic year. *"There was one teacher that I couldn't afford but the authority said 'Keep that teacher on and go into the*

red when you finally close'. In fact, I'll be £14,000 in the red as a result of employing two supernumerary staff." (T/HTi-2/3) The generous staffing enabled the head to enhance the curriculum provision for the final year. But tensions remained. It could not be assumed, for instance, that middle school teachers might want to transfer to secondary schools (C/1-44).

Some staff at *Luxor* Middle School expressed an interest in going into secondary education. All such staff were recruited by the local High School. *'I'm sure that we thought that everyone would be redeployed within the pyramid. It soon became obvious that there were too many teachers for the primary jobs that were going to be created'* (T/HTi-2/5). But, in the event, governors in the pyramid's primary schools appointed people who were not necessarily from reorganising pyramids, *'and indeed came in several cases from outside the Authority'.* The 9-13 Middle School staff have borne the brunt of reorganisation in *Pharaoh. 'The first, primary and secondary school staff have been in protected schools, enlarging schools, and have not had to apply for their jobs'* (L/HTi-2).

Amalgamation

Thirdly, and lastly, the implications of amalgamation, or even the threat of it, were to create problems in *Leaf* Junior in *Oak,* and *Thebes* CE Primary in *Pharaoh. Leaf* Junior's head felt that the options available (after the drop in pupil numbers) must include amalgamation with the First School. His governors were in favour, saying that with a larger school, margins are greater, staff expertise is greater, facilities are greater. But the First School was totally opposed. *'When they looked at the County proposals, the first thing they noticed was that out of six options, four of them dealt with amalgamation, and immediately they decided that was the most likely outcome'* (T/HTii-1/3). *Thebes* CE Primary School is the result of an amalgamation at the time of changing the age of transfer in its pyramid. The Middle School headteacher moved on, leaving the First School head to take over the new Primary School (see p25). She experienced some staffing difficulties. After taking into account two voluntary premature retirements (T/HTii-2/3), the head was left with too few staff used to teaching in the younger age range. The former Middle School staff were, however, willing to move around. One in particular moved from Year 6 to Year 2 (T/HTii-2/4). She was consulted before final decisions had to be made, but if she had refused it would have meant that other staff would have to leave. Nevertheless, the move was, in her own words, *'daunting at*

first'. Once she had moved to the Infant department *'it became apparent just how different it was, and how much my teaching style had got to change.'* When asked if in fact she had the option to say no, she recalled her willingness to do it. She did not agree it was a 'take it or leave it' situation. Neither was there room for bargaining. *'I could have [said no], but I like a challenge'* (T/T-2/1). Her professionalism, her willingness to move in that charged context has been described by her headteacher as "bravery" (T/HTii-2/4). The Chair of Governors concurred, *'...we did our very best to keep the team together; because the upheaval in closing two schools and opening one, and all the things that went around that. If we were having to get rid of staff as well, I think it would have been too much for the remaining staff to reasonably accept'* (T/CH-2/4).

Where County schools might have expected to turn to the LEA for help in managing these staffing problems, they were to be disappointed. Heads and teaching staff in both study areas believed, erroneously, that redeployment as a result of LEA reorganisation was still a possibility. In reality, the LMS schemes which now applied gave governors the power of appointment. The LEA could at best advise. They had no legal way of redeploying their staff (L/HTi-2). Where a school's staffing crisis involved every teacher on maximum scale and two deputy heads on protected Group 7 salaries, the LEA couldn't help. They had no powers to do so (T/HTii-1/3). Schools had to shift for themselves.

The GM 'escape route'
Within the case study, those heads and governors that chose the GM 'escape route' found opportunities to improve their staffing situations (T/Htii-1/4). There is evidence, also, of a school seeking GM status to avoid the LEA's plans for reorganisation or closure. DfEE statistics indicate that of 111 cases of this kind in England and Wales, between 1989 and September 1996, 40 per cent were allowed to opt out and avoid closure (ibid:33). At *Leaf* Junior GM School, the head described his surplus accommodation and the varied uses he had found for it, including periodic mothballing (T/HTii-1/5). He was, in effect, tying up scarce resources in under-utilised school premises. The LEAs aim to reduce surplus capacity was thwarted. The Audit Commission has said that ministers must review policies on the GM 'escape route', currently available to schools threatened with closure through reorganisation, if they are serious about tackling surplus places.

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| (para.70) | In short, this is an area where Government should consider its priorities ... |
| (para.81) | The desired outcomes of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, as well as the satisfaction of parental choice, will not be achieved automatically through the operation of the market alone. |

(Audit Commission, 1996)

Both *Leaf* Junior and *Apple* Primary used such a radical answer for their staffing problems. At *Leaf*, teetering on the edge of amalgamation, they watched the First School go for Grant Maintained status. *'The way it was conducted prevented, I think, any rational discussion of advantages or disadvantages of amalgamation. And it soon became a fait accompli. The possibility of amalgamation was closed'* (T/HTii-1/3). So how did he solve his staffing problems? His governors took steps to opt out and also go Grant Maintained. For *Leaf* this meant special grants for 'restructuring'. *'So that if there were any members of staff who felt they might like to take early retirement, they could do so.'* That is what one of his Group 7 deputies did with a special grant (T/HTii-1/4). The experience of the head of *Apple* Primary made him ill. He had to consider making three and a half teachers redundant in the face of a drop in pupil numbers. In the September of the change in the age of transfer, they were down by 90 pupils, or £90,000. *'We had to make ... teachers redundant. One person actually took an early retirement package with enhancement ... another got out with a promotion.'* The recollection was bitter, *'The finality of it, which really hurt me, was that we had to interview two teachers for one post within our school.. The overall effect was that the governors were so smarted by the age of transfer issue that they decided to ballot the parents to go Grant Maintained'* (T/HTi-1/3 & 1/4).

Buildings

The study schools' experience of building works consequent upon the change in the age of transfer are, to say the least, varied. They do shed light upon the anxieties and preoccupations of headteachers in the midst of change. Both *Oak* and *Pharaoh* wished to remove surplus capacity and, if necessary, by the closure of a school. Both took the opportunity to improve the building stock, often directly negotiated with a particular school, its headteacher and governing body. There were, however, some losers. The commentary of the headteachers of the study schools is, on the one hand buoyant and quietly optimistic; and on the other, as we have seen, informed by a coruscating anger.

The new *Thebes* CE Primary School, in *Pharaoh,* has emerged from the changes with the prospect of a new Nursery addition. This is, of course, very pleasing. The Chair of Governors said, *'I think the only people who are a little unhappy about it are the people down the road in the other Primary School because they want what we're getting and they can't have it because they don't have the accommodation to take it* (T/CH-1/3). In the view of the Deputy Head, who has worked in both village schools, *Thebes* is a divided village with the lines drawn by class. Most of the Primary School teachers live in the village. Two of them can be in their sitting rooms within a minute and a half of leaving the school gate (Log, p135). The provision of a Nursery may exacerbate the position that exists in such a divided village. The Chair of Governors can see the difficulty; *'...if children come here from the other side to us - their catchment, in inverted commas - once these children who are four years old get into their own peer groups they will want to stay with their friends. Realistically, we want that to happen'* (T/CH-2/3). His sensitivity to this difficulty was clearly expressed in his description of the changes necessary to the Admissions Policy. *'The Admissions Policy for the school will have to change because of the Nursery because we will have to say in there that children who come to the Nursery don't have the right to come to the school because that, in fact, would compromise the other school - and, I mean- we've got to live and work with each other for a long time and we don't want hostility there'* (T/CH-2/3). The provision of a purpose built nursery at *Thebes* Primary School is in line with the forecast of the DEO, as discussed above, that such nurseries would "mop up" some of the remaining surplus places (T/DEO-2/7).

Benefits

The perceived benefits of the change included, for example, a secondary school community association in *Pharaoh* which believed that children would be exposed to a wider range of specialist facilities and resources, for Key Stage 3 of the National Curriculum, than would be provided in middle schools (C/2-3). There is evidence in the case study of a closing middle school in *Pharaoh* redistributing its resources among primary schools on the basis of their recruitment of middle school staff (T/HTi-2/4). In *Oak,* transitional one-off payments were made on top of per capita funding to assist furnishing a new classroom or the purchase of new materials.

Herne suggested that £27 per pupil was probably less than adequate to cover all the extra materials required for ten foundation and three core subjects (L/Herne-4). On a wider front, Boscobel questioned whether total resources available to *Oak* schools were being used effectively (Boscobel-6). The London Borough of Ealing made savings by putting primary and middle together - an empty classroom costs £1500 a year (CEO/Ealing).

Conclusion

The headteachers in both study areas were asked their overall opinion of the age of transfer reorganisation. The spectrum ranges from *'disaster...'* at *Leaf* Junior to *'political shenanigans'* at *Apple* Primary; through *'inevitable...'* at *St. Tree* and *Luxor*, to the heady *'we've done better than most ... that's exciting'* at *Thebes*. The head of *Leaf* Junior felt that the whole question of change in the age of transfer had been skewed by the Grant Maintained issue. *'I came to Oak because of the Middle School system. I preferred it. I came out of a Junior School where I wasn't happy with the approach. I thought the curriculum was weak and lacked direction - into the Middle School system, and when they took it away, I was disappointed.'* He said he believed the move to GM status was the right one *'on philosophical grounds.'* He went on, *'I've never had much confidence in the system where education is run locally by County Councillors. I never believed that is the right system ... we must have more national control to raise standards in this country. ... I thought the change in the Age of Transfer was not handled particularly well. I thought it was underfunded, poorly presented and ill-thought out'* (T/HTii-1/5).

Equally trenchant views were expressed by the head of *Apple* Primary, *'... I believe they did not take on board sufficiently liaison with the professionals. By that I mean the heads. The heads could have made it happen ... It's difficult to be dispassionate ... I believe there was too much political interference, especially by County Councillors who were shouting the odds for one or two schools with which they were involved'* (T/HTi-1/7). Feelings of the inevitability of the changes were stressed by the heads of *St. Tree* CE Primary, *'It was difficult. It was done fairly quickly. There was a certain resistance to it. I suppose it had to happen, was going to be'* (T/HTiii-1/5); and of *Luxor* Middle, *'I felt the inevitableness of it all ...'* (T/HTi-2/6). This head, in the throes of closing down his school (see above) was bitter about the apparent inequality of opportunity for his teachers to secure their future employment. The governing boards in the pyramid, *'... were a law unto themselves, and*

appointed people who were not necessarily from reorganising pyramids; and, indeed, came in several cases from outside the Authority'. Unsurprisingly, he feels that the Authority will come to regret this reorganisation, 'To my mind, the Authority should have been challenged in law about their reorganisation plans on the grounds of inequality of opportunity' (L/HTi-2).

In *Thebes* CE Primary the mood is optimistic and, indeed, quietly buoyant. The Year 2 teacher, formerly of Year 6, is coping well. It was not always thus. *'...at first...I felt very much as if I was drowning'.* Help was at hand, however.

> *Luckily, I had got my Mum, who was nursery trained and had just retired. So she came along and sort of sat in the classroom with me, working with the children and giving advice, here, there and everywhere. And she got me up and running again. I think, had that not been there - I would have coped, because I do, but I don't think I would have coped as successfully or as quickly.*

As described above, effective preparations for the amalgamation by the new head, the successful reorganisation of staff, and the securing of a Nursery to be opened in September 1996, combined to generate this feeling of purposeful excitement.

Summary and Comment

In and around the school office you will meet headteachers, governors, and teachers with or without a problem. Reference has been made above (Chapter 1) to the eloquence of heads and governors. They articulate their perceptions of the processes of the change coherently. Their views may differ, but are offered sincerely. Hargreaves (1980:101) explains this by their social position;

> *Given their [the heads'] seniority within the school they are at all times in a position of accountability. That is, they are frequently called upon to provide accounts of the nature and purpose of their institution and of the broader category of the middle school ... for interested parties such as parents, teachers, advisers, inspectors and researchers.*

Tom Peters' *Thriving on Chaos* (1987), is a survival guide for business executives. He has particular advice (p.212) as to the best way to deal with front-line staff. This has certain parallels with those heads, teachers, and governors in the 'front-line' of the changes due to reorganisation of schools. These are Tom Peters' *'company heroes'.* Do they feel like heroes? Peters would pay them well; train them *'excessively'* in class and on the job. Salaried

and non-salaried alike are thrown into the change in the age of transfer and go through a steep learning curve in the process. Governors, heads and staff spend excessive hours struggling with the developing staffing situations in their establishments. Peters would give them an opportunity to participate in the structuring of their jobs and support systems. The LEAs, in following strict guidelines, sometimes ask staff to re-apply for their own jobs. Heads and deputies are always asked to re-apply, and in competition with others! Tom Peters would listen to them. The majority of the heads and teachers are not listened to. Business people feel that Peters has something to tell them. Whether they want to do what Peters recommends, however, is another question.

It is hard to convince anyone to do anything differently from the way they did it yesterday or the day before. Think about the reactions that often greet even the smallest managerial initiative: cynicism, foot-dragging, outright defiance. And the obstacles aren't just inertia and insecurity; people may see no reason to try changing things... Transforming even a small organisation's patterns and routines can be a wrenching, threatening undertaking. John Case (1987:25-26)

It is a hard price to pay when not all the aims of the exercise are met. Surplus places exist albeit mothballed, or purloined for other uses. At least two first schools have been allowed to continue. They have the greatest difficulty when trying to find places for their eight-year-olds in the local primary or junior schools. All-through primaries are regarded as very beneficial for educational reasons, but they were not always created because of strong local arguments. Financial viability was not a requirement. Small schools still exist, though they find it excruciatingly difficult to be continually in a promotional, marketing mode in order to survive. Boscobel observed,

And the headteacher's job has very often become commercial rather than educational. Which is not necessarily something to be encouraged (Boscobel-7).

In both study areas, age of transfer changes were physical. Schools concentrate on the physical effects on buildings, classrooms, class sizes and levels of staffing. Such was the practical message to them.

We are usually interested in the message. *We are content oriented and we do not sufficiently understand the* process of change. *It is so hard to grasp. Not so much in theory, but in our own lives. Innovations are not 'spread' or*

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adopted, they are adapted. More important than the innovation itself is the organisational dynamics and the politics of change (Dalin, op.cit:305).

In both *Oak* and *Pharaoh*, however, there was a huge curriculum area to be tackled. Issues of teaching and learning were less explained, less of a feature of the process of change than they might have been. In *Oak*, in-service training began to unpack some of those issues.

As explained above (see Chapter 4, p72), the fieldwork planned with parents and children in *Oak* proved problematic. However, in the next chapter, the role of parents is highlighted in a story of a forced closure - a vignette of change illustrating *The Catkins* First School disappearing and, three years later, rising phoenix-like as a new Primary School. The children in *Pharaoh* speak engagingly and enigmatically of their attitudes to all the changes around them. Developmental work arising from this case study may well be profitable in the area of children's perceptions of major organisational change, or changes in pedagogy. This study has only 'dipped into' this area and already found a rich vein of comment.

Chapter 7

In Loco Parentis

You are much deceived: in nothing
am I changed but in my garments.
Edgar in *King Lear*, Act IV,Sc VI
(Shakespeare)

The writing of this chapter, as in each of the results chapters, and as indicated
in Chapter 4, addresses the different levels and draws on all the case studies.
This chapter investigates the perceptions of parents in *Pharaoh*, and of some
pupils, of their experience of the change in the age of transfer. They provide a
counterpoint to those of the heads, teacher and governors. They provide
another viewpoint from the DEOs. This chapter illustrates the dissonances of
view between local school and county hall. It is the last 'data-gathering'
chapter.

Introduction
The chapter first examines the role of parents in the processes of changing the
age of transfer. The consultation exercise is observed from the parents' point of
view. A vignette of change is introduced. Parents expressed a range of
opinions on the change, middle schools and the consultation exercise. The
study tries to identify and represent by example the dissonances of view
thrown up by various 'actors' in the change; to identify the range of their
opinions, and especially their feelings of 'inevitability' - that the decisions had
already been taken. The views of some pupils are included. The exigencies of
the fieldwork, and its timing, impeded the gathering of views from parents and
pupils in *Oak*. The commentary that follows is, therefore, based on data
gathered also from other LEAs outside this case study, but who have published
such views within their consultative papers and summaries.

The Role of Parents
The parents in *Pharaoh* have sharp recall of the main arguments and reasoning
that typified changing the age of transfer. Similarly, their children have recent
experience of the effects of the change. By contrast, the attempts to contact
parent groups and children in *Oak* proved too difficult within the available time
frame of the fieldwork. In any case, the change in the age of transfer in *Oak* is
two years or more distant. It is difficult for adults to remember, let alone
children. The adviser, Boscobel, describes it as *'almost a non-issue'* (Boscobel-

8). But in an issue as public and monumental as the change in the age of transfer, parents, *'or more accurately certain articulate and influential parents'* (Ball, 1987: 251), may take sides; may claim preference for one option rather than another. They may or may not take the whole body of parental opinion with them. They may be more influential than even a parent governor, whose role as a representative is problematic (ibid, p 256). The Chair of Governors at *St. Tree* CE Primary School in *Oak* thought the parent governors were very supportive during the age of transfer negotiations, and a very useful way of sounding out the views of parents generally. *'We certainly made a lot of effort in keeping our parents informed throughout the whole exercise. We thought that was very important and that was one way of doing it. Doing things by letter is all very well, and we had to do it. But to reinforce that in an individual context we felt was important, and we certainly valued the parent-governors' contribution'* (T/CHii-1/5).

Consultation

Parents in *Oak* reacted, sometimes strongly, to information provided in the consultation meetings. *'One parent said after being told an all-through school would provide "continuity": "We have continuity at the moment and a first school also provides security for the little ones. I would not like to see my child go into a school with 11 year olds."'* (*Oak* Advertiser Group, 8 March 1991). The press report quoted further: *'One of the main arguments expressed by parents was the fact that five-year-olds - and possibly four-year-olds - would be thrust into an environment with pupils six years older. "They would feel very threatened which would affect their education", one concerned mother of three commented'.* The county education officer present at the consultation meeting sought to allay the fears of the parents by saying that there had been no similar complaints from all-through schools already established in the county. *'But parents remained unconvinced, indicating that the education of their children was a secondary consideration to the education committee. "We want what is best for our children and that means a separate first and middle school", they argued'.* (ibid.).

In both study areas, the views of parents, both individually and collectively, were sought during the consultation process. The extent to which consultation was promoted has been described above (Chapter 5). The DEO of *Oak* felt secure enough to say, *'It is the age at which children transfer. Parents feel comfortable with it, without necessarily understanding the rationale behind it'*

(T/DEO-1/4). On the other hand, when talking about the issue of uncertainty in some aspects of the consultation, he was less confident: *'I'm not sure you can quantify it, but it did set in some situations when parents got the bit between their teeth against the Authority'* (T/DEO-1/5). Parents can affect decision-making by LEAs. When Warwickshire proposed its reorganisation, it worried a lot of people. Speaking in September 1994, the CEO said, *'Many have raised concerns or put forward better ideas. It has been vital for us to know about these worries, fears and good ideas, because they have helped give us a clearer picture of community needs. As a result, one in three of our original proposals have been changed in some way.'* (D/CEO-3/27). The DEO of *Pharaoh* acknowledged that although no proposals for closure were overturned, the Authority had changed amalgamation proposals in the light of local opinion (Log, p76). This is what one expects. LEAs seek consensus more often than conflict. But changing the age of transfer is just such an exercise that reveals divergent views, opposing values and conflicting interests. The DEOs of both *Oak* and *Pharaoh* orchestrated the reorganisation of their schools (see Chapter 5), but each had to manage those dissonances of view thrown up by some governing bodies, a variety of parent groups or even some headteachers. It is in the sharp relief of change that this is best illustrated.

A vignette of change

The Catkins First School is closed. It stands almost empty in a field setting on the edge of a suburban 'village' in the western part of *Oak*. It used to be a thriving, popular First School. Parents viewed favourably the quality of the education provided at the school. They said as much when they opposed the Authority's proposal to close the school and to amalgamate it with a neighbouring school (Log, p173). Admittedly there was a difficulty. Transfer at the age of eight meant pupils going to *Oak Apple* Middle School just under three miles away, and *Oak Apple* First School shared its site. Even the then headteacher concurred, *'I wouldn't take my child to Oak Apple Middle and then come back with the younger sibling to The Catkins. I would put the younger child in the First School next door. That was really the end'* (T/HTiv-1/1). The Authority proposed the amalgamation of *The Catkins* with what would become the newly reorganised *Oak Apple* Primary. But before this proposal was published, rumour and gossip spread around for several months. Actual publication of such an option, among others, inevitably caused uncertainty for those parents whose children were due to start primary education (Log, p172). The former headteacher said, of the nature of such

rumour and gossip, *'As it always is about anything. A certain amount of unrest. Also with new parents coming to look with this hanging over them. The other thing was - even people with one child there - afraid that that child wouldn't get into the next school - were taking their children away from* The Catkins. *If they weren't taking the middle child they were taking the next one. Which you can understand'* (T/HTiv-1/1).

The stakes were high for the proposed *Oak Apple* Primary. *'The future of* The Catkins *was linked to the provision of a new building for* Oak Apple. *Their future as a primary school ... required the replacement of the old First School building which was, literally, falling down. If* The Catkins *stayed, the new building promised for* Oak Apple *would be lost'* (T/HTiv-1/1). The morale of parents was sapped further by comments during a consultation meeting in a local Sixth Form College. *'The inspector spoke to a packed meeting in which he rubbished the work of my teachers'. At the insistence of the head, he spoke to the parents at a later meeting, '... but the damage was done'* (T/HTiv-1/1). There was distress in the voice at this point. During the unrest and uncertainty the school roll dropped and resulted in mixed-age classes. But a determined, vocal group of parents challenged the Authority by presenting a petition with 1009 signatures (Log, p176). In their detailed submission the PTA and Friends tried to establish a case for retaining *The Catkins*. The first and principal point questioned the Authority's alleged underestimate of the number of children aged under five living in the school's catchment area. They conducted a local census survey, counting the number of children, in the locality of the school, aged 0-5 years. They found 260. *'They were superb. I had a school helper and an assistant secretary. She was the one who battled. She became the secretary to the County's Chief Executive. She was superb'* (T/HTiv-1/3). The LEA discounted this information as *'problematic and unhelpful'* (Log, p175-77). When the decision was made, the Age of Transfer Working Group recommended the closure of *The Catkins*, and that the governing body of *Oak Apple* First School be requested to adopt a policy of priority commitment towards the staff of *The Catkins* First School to ensure continuity of staffing (Log, p172). The ex-head struggled to make sense of it all. Wrapped in her own authority, with a confidence born of professionalism, she challenged the LEA *'I think they are watching their backs. I understand that they are re-opening with five-year-olds because it's within a five year span. If they were to open with primary age children, then somebody could come back and say, "Why did you close* The Catkins*?" They would be legally liable if they re-*

opened within five years. I think it's only three' (T/HTiv-1/3). With the benefit
of reflection on the outcomes, for *Oak*, of a major organisational change, the
decision was possibly mistaken, based on poor planning information.

Parental opinions

Parents feared for the survival of their children's school. Parents in *Pharaoh*
expressed a range of opinions; from approval and acceptance of transfer at 11
(T/Pii-2/1), to disagreement with the principle (T/Pi-2/1). In both schools,
parents believed that the change in the age of transfer had already been
decided;

> *There was a paper about the schools joining together, but not about the age
> - that was a foregone conclusion* (T/Pii-2/1)

> *You felt the decision was already made* (T/Pi-2/1)

Could it have been? Within the Warwickshire proposals there was a
particularly strong reaction to an issue of parental choice. For schools
proposed for closure, one of the arguments put forward against this was that it
took no account of parents' choice to send their children to these schools.
Similarly, where schools were proposed for merger, it was argued that most of
the schools and their communities did not wish it to happen. The LEA
acknowledged (Warwickshire, 1994:1, 4.2.6) these opinions; and, whilst saying
it understood them, suggested that there were other strong educational,
financial and other reasons for proceeding with the reorganisation proposals. It
quoted DES Circular 3/87 as guidance:

> *The Government is committed to giving the fullest possible effect to parental
> preferences for particular schools. This commitment does not however
> extend to circumstances where to meet it would prejudice the provision of
> efficient education or the efficient use of resources. A large volume of
> expressed parental commitment to a particular school will be a
> consideration (sometimes a very telling one) which the Secretary of State
> takes into account in deciding proposals, but it will not of itself be
> conclusive if the educational and financial arguments point the other way*
> (Annex 1, Section 3).

It introduces comment from the Audit Commission (1990),

> *So long as excessive surplus capacity remains, it absorbs charge payers'
> contributions to support pupils' education. Parental choice will provide*

indications to the LEA, but is unlikely of itself to drive waste out of the system. LEAs must assume the initiative as the planner of facilities.

Does this in fact contradict what the DEO of Warwickshire said (above), that parental opinion changed one in three of their original proposals? Parents at *Thebes* CE Primary accepted that the change, whatever it was, would not affect their children for very long as they were in their final year. They remembered that the PTA had sent letters to the Authority; had been very organised and sent a petition. The chair of governors had addressed a meeting of parents (T/Pii-2/2).

Luxor Middle had a very strong PTA in its time (T/HTi-2/7). The head had mixed feelings about whether he should have led them in opposition to the proposed closure of the school. He had no doubt that he could have got them wound up. But he confessed to feelings of inevitableness coupled with the belief that campaigning would not have been good for the children. *'I am not afraid of making myself unpopular with the Authority at all, and they know to their cost - but I...had seen the bad feeling created in other schools where they had fought battles - unpleasant scenes - and I didn't think it was good for the kids'* (T/HTi-2/7). At *Luxor* Middle, parents liked the middle school system as a buffer; a sort of half-way stage to growing up.

> *When Mark moved from the first school to the middle school he had a lot more confidence. It was a different atmosphere. It was a change and he felt more grown up. I think it did him good, and he's got that now to go on to the high school* (T/Pi-2/1).

The value of a middle school is well stated. This parent recognised the quality of confidence at the age of eight which fortified the child at 12 years old. He felt the change to be detrimental,

> *I don't think that the next two years for my lad [the younger] in the primary school will give him that confidence - it's still an infant school. He'll not feel grown up* (ibid.).

Another parent concurred,

> *I like the middle school system ... It's certainly a change of atmosphere, a change of teachers, a change of routine which they learn to cope with before they go on to the high school* (ibid.).

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The parents at *Luxor* Middle expressed their feelings clearly and calmly. The circumstances of our meeting were unfortunately the final week of the school's life. As described above (Chapter 6) the school was to close and its buildings donated to the high school on the same 'campus'.

The pages of the local press in both study areas revealed the anguish of the time; school against school, parent group against parent group. In *Pharaoh* there were orchestrated 'Save our School' campaigns (T/DEO-2/4). In *Oak* there were attempts to generate support for smaller schools to work together to oppose the proposals (T/DEO-1/3). The local press on the one hand claimed parental apathy over the issue, but on the other, carried full coverage of these activities and set out the LEAs' proposals for change (N/1-1). The DEO in *Oak* was confident that parents were comfortable with transfer at 11, without necessarily understanding the rationale behind it (T/DEO-1/4). This view was echoed by a governor who believed parents did not understand *'all the ins and outs'* (T/GOV-1/3,4). Parent Action Groups, for example, disliked *'public slanging matches'* between groups representing separate schools as *'neither helpful nor constructive'* (L/P/1-1). Some parents definitely chose not to *'kick up a stink'* (T/HTi-2/6), whereas others responded positively and mounted a campaign . They clearly hoped to bring sufficient pressure to influence the ultimate decision in their favour (T/HTiv-1/3). *'I believe that a public slanging match between groups of parents is neither helpful nor constructive and suggest that people who wish to put forward an argument in support of their school do so to the education committee which has caused this ridiculous situation'.*(Parent Member of a First School Action Group, *Oak* Advertiser: Letters, 8 March 1991).

The views of pupils
The views of some pupils are relunctantly included here, because, as explained above (Chapter 4, p72), the fieldwork timetable did not permit pupil interviews in *Oak*. Pupils in *Pharaoh* spoke of very recent experience. In *Oak* the changes took effect at least two years earlier. The headteacher of *Thebes* CE Primary drove to the high school to collect two ex-pupils of hers to bring them to the interview. On her return, the deputy then drove to another High School to collect the daughter of a part-time teacher at *Thebes*. These three were all ex-*Thebes* pupils. Peter, Karen and Lisa were friendly and confident, obviously at ease in familiar surroundings. Peter and Karen had spent time in classes while waiting for Lisa. The following views are an amalgam of interviews with

secondary pupils at *Luxor* High and *Thebes* CE Primary. The secondary pupils confirmed that they had to go over work that was done at middle school. They were not so sure about being tested on entry, though they seemed to be tested regularly as a way of revising work, or for setting purposes in, for example, mathematics. They agreed that the middle school prepared them well for the secondary school. They spoke of the much greater facilities at secondary than at middle; lunchtime activities and after-school clubs, especially a wide range of sports. They mentioned the super gymnasia. Computer facilities received enthusiastic comments. They are housed in a special room which is full of computers. This is reminiscent of secondary facilities in dedicated suites, the PCs usually networked in a department or in a large library. As far as reorganisation is concerned, these pupils had no idea why it was done. They did, however, remember that parents received booklets and letters. Some said that they had two and a half to three years notice of the change. This was clearly as a result of the phased approach adopted by the LEA.

Talking of the size of their secondary school, the pupils could not be accurate. They guessed 1,000 or 1,200. Each High School has seven to eight feeder primary schools. There was an indication that the secondary school experienced some difficulties with accommodation for two year groups starting simultaneously. One pupil put it matter-of-factly, another succinctly,

> A. *The bigger (older) children say that we are in classrooms (the Science Block) that they should have been in.*
> B. *It's all change!*   (Log, p138)

Lisa had a story for me. She explained that she moved to *Thebes* CE Primary from her own small village school which had been closed. She described the fierce fight by the local community.

> *We didn't want it to close. My Mum and Dad were upset that it closed. Then I came to* Thebes.

The primary pupils from Year 6 in *Thebes* were friendly, obviously used to conversation with visitors to school. They were eloquent and confident. They acknowledged they were being prepared for secondary school. They described the local High School's 'Roadshow' which visited *Thebes* last evening. From their comments could be pictured a large turnout of parents, a short exposition followed by two hours of mingling and discussion with questions in an informal setting. Their view of reorganisation was difficult to assess. They were already,

in the second term, assuming an air of independence and self-esteem because they are at the 'top' of the school. It is almost surprising, indeed, to think they were propelled to the top of the school a year earlier than they expected.

Summary and Comment

Parents clearly constituted a political force in their defence of their children's schooling. Whether or not they were successful, the LEAs regarded such interest groups with some degree of respect. Consultation, although flawed, was specifically designed to allow parental opinion some expression. Both study areas acknowledged that local proposals were changed in the light of parental pressures. The word influence seems more appropriate than pressure. Simply having the power to exert pressure is no guarantee that one is willing to use it or is skilful in its use. Influence is concerned with the actual use of power. So the influence of an individual, a group or a body depends greatly on the resources available. Resources include political resources, such as access to political figures (County Hall), or access to information (including sometimes confidential information), time or community support.

The perceptions of parents and, to some extent, of pupils are a neat counterpoint to those of headteachers, governors or even DEOs. This study has illustrated the extremes; of parents feeling the pangs of inevitability; of resourceful groups of parents fighting doggedly to save their school. Some succeeded. LEAs acknowledge that decisions were revised in the light of parents' concerns. But some failed. Parents brought facts and opinion to the argument over Lisa's village school in *Pharaoh*, and *The Catkins* School. The LEAs received a huge correspondence. Parents and friends of *The Catkins* School knocked on doors conducting a local census of children aged 0-5 years. They offered the results to the LEA; they were repulsed. The parents at *Luxor* Middle were resigned to the changes. Even so, they eloquently explained why they believed in the middle school system. Their emphasis was on the value to their children; the confidence in a different atmosphere, learning to cope. They were complimentary about this school. They defended it when a late-comer to the meeting turned out to be the lone, strident voice in favour of the changes.

For all of them, the change in the age of transfer and the consequent reorganisation of schools, meant a change in their relationship with heads and teachers. It meant changing loyalties. The familiar pattern on which they trusted day by day was broken. Marris (op.cit:157) says that such a change

invalidates the parents' experience. It invited a question. What had the High School done to draw teachers, parents and pupils together in mutual understanding and collaboration?

> *... aimlessness or cynicism will still be provoked even if the changes are intelligent and necessary, so long as people cannot make sense of them in terms of their own experience* (ibid:158).

The overall confidence of pupils was remarkable. It spoke well of their former middle schools, and the way they were prepared for the move. There was no evidence that reorganisation had, or would, dent this confidence. To some extent, the schools effectively insulated their pupils from the sharper effects of the change: to some extent the schools presented the change as a natural evolutionary event. Pupils were supported at least by those staff who were moving on, presenting them with a model of transition appropriate to their age and stage of education, or, perhaps, career path. The content of a survey by Bryan (1980a) provides overwhelming evidence that 'age identity' is central to pupils' thinking.

> *Understandably, most pupils see their transfer from one school to another as a very important stage in their school career, and it is not surprising to find personal aspirations and anxieties ... irrespective of the pupil's age* (ibid:233-4)

When two year groups transfer together, pupils could look for, and expect to find, the security of familiar faces. The confidence observed in the pupils in *Pharaoh* indicated that they had settled in well in their secondary school. These pupils, indeed, seemed to be able to cope well with minor difficulties. The accommodation problem - transfer pupils in the Science block, intended for older pupils - could not in any sense be described, as does Bryan (ibid: 243), in similar circumstances, that this demeaned their status in the new school.

The next chapter looks at the wider arena of educational change in a bureaucratic system. The confident agency of the Audit Commission is analysed; so, too, are the concerns and interests of individuals and groups. The examination of the relationship between LEAs and their schools is further developed. It is necessary to briefly examine the positive decision of some LEAs with middle schools **not** to change.

Chapter 8

Responding to educational change

If men are unable to perceive critically the themes of their
time, and thus to intervene actively in reality, they are
carried along in the wake of change. They see that the times
are changing but they are submerged in that change and so
cannot discern its dramatic significance.
(Freire, 1976:7)

This chapter tries to place LEAs within the broader context of educational
change, by looking at the working of bureaucracy. The agency of the state is
illustrated by the Audit Commission. The examination of the relationship
between LEAs and their schools is further developed.

Introduction

The study tries to place LEAs in the context of the dynamic of change by
examining its bureaucratic function in regard to the other state structures, the
economic base and the social system. There is an explanation of the unique
position of education as a credentialling service for the whole of society
through examinations and schooling. The dominant ideology is described, of
primary education, upon which middle school ideology had been laid, much
like a culture in a petri dish. After examining the influence and confident
interventions of the Audit Commission, the study continues to address the
relationship between LEAs and their schools by looking at the possibilities of
policy and development. Within the arena of change, the concerns and interests
of individuals and groups are adumbrated. These are explained in terms of
vested, ideological and self-interests. Lastly, there is recognition of those LEAs
with first and middle school systems which have made positive decisions not to
change. From the management of change by LEAs, as illustrated in this chapter
and in Chapter 5, it appears that strategic planning is seriously deficient.

Bureaucracy and educational change

Conflicting opinions and pressures are typical of our social democratic
tradition. Salter and Tapper (op. cit.) and Salaman and Thompson (1973) say
that the education system is one component of the structure of the state which
interlocks roughly with other components such as the economic base and the
social system. The management of the system is bureaucratic. The whole
structure is restless. Each component has its own values and interests.

Tensions exist between them. Gramsci (1957) explicates this idea, which Salter and Tapper (op.cit.) take further when they suggest that the tensions are not simply the result of passive structural impediments to the pressures of the economic base or the social system, but also as a result of bureaucratic counter-pressure. The interaction of these pressures is where Salter and Tapper (ibid:7) say the dynamics of change are born. The structure of society stirs. Bureaucratic pressure is the regulatory instrument which allows the complex modern society to settle again into its rational social relationships. State agencies are in fact bureaucratic organisations which have highly developed means of generating and sustaining their own autonomous needs.

The education system, uniquely, does more than this. Not only does it, theoretically, service individual educational need; it also provides a credentialling service for the whole of society through schooling and specially examinations. *'Education is therefore the critical institution in the social control function of the state because it can help to produce and to legitimate patterns of social inequality and mobility through its provision of a suitable rationale'* (ibid: 7). Organisational theory is unhelpful in the study of the social phenomenon called changing the age of transfer because it tells us little of significance about the day day-to-day experience of schools and almost nothing about how schools experience change.

> *I am not claiming that schools never change; only that change usually takes place by small incremental steps, by successive modifications of existing structures, within very familiar and defined limits, and against the very considerable resistance of institutional 'drag'* (Bloomer and Shaw, 1979:25-26).

There is a need, therefore, to look at organisation at both local authority level and at school level. This is not the notion of a single abstraction called organisation (Barr- Greenfield, 1975), but is an examination of the varied perceptions by individuals of what they can, should, or must do in dealing with others within the circumstances in which they find themselves (ibid: 65).

Local Education Authorities have the duty to provide education through schooling. Throughout the period which saw the rise and fall of the English middle school, the dominant ideology has been primary/ secondary. The organisation of schooling is seen to be rational and Education Acts, such as that which created the National Curriculum, give legitimacy to the wider structure of education. As described above (Chapter 5, p88), the uncertain

ideology of the middle school gives way to the dominant primary ideology beneath.

The Audit Commission

In focusing on the interface between the LEAs and the schools, this study has so far obscured the influence and confident intervention of the Audit Commission. The analysis of its intervention owes much to the work of Salter and Tapper (op.cit.) on the former Schools Council and the dissemination of ideology. The Audit Commission was established in 1983 to appoint and regulate the external auditors of local authorities in England and Wales. In 1990 its responsibilities were extended to include the National Health Service, but this study will refer only to its role in the education system. It is a public-spending watchdog (Dean, 1996); *'a quintessential tool of the structural mode of political rationality'* (Dale, 1989:114), which takes government to task for the tensions and conflicts of education policies which are leading to a current mismatch between the number of pupils and places, with schools being either overcrowded or undersubscribed.

The relationship between the Audit Commission and educational change is an interesting one. The Commission, as a national, state-funded, body charged with promoting proper stewardship of public finances and to help those responsible for public services to achieve economy, efficiency and effectiveness, has several advantages as a subject for study. Its prominent position in the educational system leads to the supposition that it is using its authority to legitimate an organisational change which is in tune with the interests of the dominant bureaucracy. Is it using its command and manipulation of state resources to propagate an educational ideology? It does reinforce the dominant primary ideology at the expense of an educational alternative which, some say, has outrun its usefulness. The Commission has effectively defined for LEAs the parameters of change, in a succession of papers on, for example, surplus places.

Secondly, the Commission has functions which are national in scope. Looking at the arguments of Whitty and Young (1976:3) in relation to the constraints within which teachers work, this study reconstitutes them to apply to the work of LEAs;

Given the inadequate and abstract nature of many broad theories about the relationship between education and society, it becomes important to identify

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quite precisely the institutional practices which produce and sustain [the constraints within which LEAs work].

The Audit Commission could provide the opportunity to do exactly this and to act as an institutional bridge between macro-theory and the details of the legitimating process. This, however, is beyond the scope of this research. Nevertheless, given the increasingly centralised education system, and the National Curriculum (rather than its 1944 predecessor, devolved to LEAs in theory and to headteachers and staff in practice), the Audit Commission adopts a promotional stance to positively influence those local agencies responsible for education. It sees its mission as changing LEA's culture and criteria of success. It:

> *... explicitly aims to change them ... specifically, its approach focuses upon 'economy' and a narrow definition of 'efficiency'; greater control and viability; increased centralisation including an enhanced role for chief executives, and a de-emphasis on the role of elected members. Its neglect of effectiveness is caused not merely by the undoubted technical and political difficulties of identifying and determining the impact of local authority outputs, but also more fundamentally as a greater focus on effectiveness could weaken the Commission's attempts to change local authorities* (McSweeney, 1988:42).

The Commission's legitimation of power lies in its national model based on national legislation such as the 1988 Education Act. Its powers of persuasion are dependent on the establishment of its credibility in the eyes of the education service. In the two study areas, the DEOs claimed no knowledge of the Commission's stated position on the eradication of surplus places. Did they not feel obliged to take notice?

> *It is difficult to see how LEAs, traditionally the biggest local authority spenders, will be able to resist entirely the tone and target of the Audit Commission's evangelizing zeal, even indirectly. And if it is difficult for LEAs, how much more difficult it is for schools to step outside those criteria and assumptions as they become responsible for their own finances ... under the system of Local Financial Management of Schools which will further reduce the ability of LEAs to plan and administer education in their local area?* (Dale, op. cit:115).

The Commission has a clear constitution, a set of well-defined goals and an active secretariat which promotes a coherent ethos. It has the drive and direction to utilise effectively whatever legitimacy it has acquired. The

confident intervention described above is that of a known and developed ideological position, appropriate to the education service which is bureaucratic and high-spending.

Ideology propagation by the Audit Commission has three components; capacity, target audience and content. As stated, it holds a prominent position in the educational system. In fact, the Commission's juxtaposition between the DfEE and local authorities, gives it a unique opportunity to take to task LEAs and government alike. The extent of its apparent independence is intriguing. The Commission has built its legitimacy because it is seen as authoritative by other groups with which it engages in consultation and co-operation. It is seen as having the authority to ascribe values to the varied management areas of education. Yet it is dealing with a service with imperfections. The Commission matches an ideal vision of an LEA against the reality of, in the view of McSweeney (op. cit:34),

> *... the ambiguity of goals and uncertainty ... made more acute in many local authority services as the barriers to perfect visibility are not simply the technical characteristics of these tasks but also flow from their environments.*

The large gap between the Commission's model and the complex and ambiguous reality of local authorities is well drawn by McSweeney (ibid.),

> *The organisational boundaries of parts of local authorities are sometimes unclear and especially prone to penetration by external values and influences.*

From the Commission's perspective, LEAs' organisational characteristics may appear inefficient.

> *In some circumstances and instances they may indeed be so; but in others they may be inevitable, intelligent and functional. Ambiguity can be absorbed and lived with whilst maintaining the formal stance of the authority. Conflicts can be reduced and support maintained from a wide range of constituences* (ibid:35).

The Commission's target audience is made up of LEAs, both in terms of the materials produced and the legitimation of arrangements producing or intending to produce economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The ideological content of the Commission's reports is strong in terms of legitimation capacity and legitimation targets. The content of 'Trading Places: The Supply and Allocation of School Places' (Audit Commission, 1996), for example, draws on fieldwork in ten LEAs, makes comparisons with Scotland and New Zealand, works jointly with the National Audit Office, OFSTED and the FAS.

That two Deputy Education Officers, in two separate LEAs, should seemingly deny the influence of an Audit Commission report, *'illustrates the hazards of too readily assuming that legitimation inevitably occurs in a uniform fashion'* (Salter and Tapper, op. cit:124). And this despite the flow of the Commission's work into the national press. The simplest interpretation would dwell on their competency, or lack of it. But are they, in fact, protecting their schools from the harshness of government policy as expressed through the Audit Commission? Or, alternatively, are they masking the effects of those parameters of action so sharply delineated and prescribed to them by agencies outside their influence or control?

Policy and development

Do LEAs have a protective relationship with their schools? Looking at the interface between them, this study explores the practical limits and possibilities of educational development. On the one hand, it gives weight to the perceptions of those principally involved in age of transfer changes. These highlight the pressures on the boundaries of schools and, indeed, the boundaries of local authorities. They also highlight the confrontations and interactions between individuals and groups in the arena of change. An example in *Pharaoh* (Chapter 6, p123), is the successful adjustment to the membership of the governing body at *Thebes CE* Primary, which allowed a reduction in church governor representation.

> *Major educational reforms also tend to change the relationship between the educational system and other sub-systems in society, such as the social services or the church. Though there are examples of innovations where individuals and groups voluntarily reduce their power for the benefit of others, such situations are rare, since most individuals and groups tend to hold on to their power, which confers on them privileges and advantages which they do not want to lose* (Dalin, 1978:28).

On the other hand, it tries to relate these perceptions to policy-making and the pressures derived from demographic movement (economic) and changes in

social control (curriculum). Through such interaction, the experiences, views and interpretations of individuals reveal their practical concerns and interests. These can be identified as being of three types: vested interests, ideological interests and self-interests (Ball, op. cit:16).

Vested interests

Vested interests refer to the material concerns of individuals. Education Officers, heads and teachers are concerned with job security and career prospects, as well as the efficient discharge of their organisational duties and administration. Within this study, the impact of change on an individual's territory induced anxiety. This varied from one teacher to another (Isaacs, J., 1981:94). A teacher at *Thebes* CE Primary School experienced *'panic in the early days'* of her new infant post. She had been in the junior department which she identified as her *'niche'* (T/T- 2/2). This teacher valued the teaching experience of her mother who knew how infants learn and gave practical help. If this is, as Isaacs (op. cit.) claims, a common reaction in schools, it suggests pragmatism - an ad hoc answer to problems that could have been foreseen; been planned for.

The best planning by LEAs had to counter rumour. Information about change circulates both officially and unofficially. Nevertheless, Education Officers sought to discharge their organisational and administrative duties in a plainly efficient manner. They knew that their proposals could possibly produce an enormous loss of morale and confidence. So they sought a consensus. With the best will in the world, consensus cannot lessen the pressure on schools. Schools recognised that Age of Transfer changes, coupled with curricular changes, induced very stressful times. Especially as they had to consider redundancies, hold interviews. It was a time of *'mumbling and bickering'* (T/HTiii-1/5, T/GOV-1/1, T/CHi-1/3). Two routes were identified to boost morale. The first involved expansion from First School or Junior School to full primary status - an option available, for example, to *Branch* First School (not a study school - see Chapter 5, p97), but not to *St. Tree* CE school, or to *The Catkins* (T/CHii-1/4). The second route was to be 'rescued' by GM status (T/GOV-1/3).

Ideological interests

Ideologies, firstly, are sets of values and beliefs which have common currency and systematic expression in documents, meetings, conferences and so on.

They simply refer to matters of value and philosophical commitment. Themes such as the middle years as a separate stage of childhood, or the years of a middle school are years of transition, recur with systematic regularity. Such views of the middle school are therefore more than uncoordinated and disparate opinions but may be said to contribute to a philosophy or ideology.

Secondly, ideologies are sense-making devices. So when headteachers defend the principles contained within middle school ideology, they are defending their own professional commitment and identity. Thirdly, ideologies may persuade, or gain converts to the cause of middle schools, or secure the loyalty and commitment of those already involved.

> *... the optimistic character of middle school ideology, together with its capacity to appeal to sentiments such as individualism and egalitarianism, which already hold strong currency in social democratic thinking, can be seen as an aid to gaining recruits for the middle school cause when educational reorganisation takes place* (Hargreaves and Tickle, 1980:68).

Ideologies have, lastly, been viewed not just as sets of values and beliefs but as blinkers, masking from view the problems and conflicts, the power relationships and inequities, from which they have grown. So the emphasis on the middle schools' unique identity deflected attention from the clash between primary and secondary traditions which were such a feature within such schools in the early years.

Further, ideologies are important agents for legitimation. It is not a straightforward relationship since 'legitimation' is a hazy concept based on changing configurations of power. In the case of educational ideology, the issue is further complicated by its dual function of legitimising a specific educational change through the propagation of a suitable ideology, whilst at the same time acting as an agent of social control. Lynch argues that the advent of the English middle school must be seen in the context of the overall ideological climate of western society in the post-war era and its pursuit of the ideal of democratisation:

> *More narrowly and explicitly, the working out of that ideal into the English educational system, its structure, content, pedagogy, and interpersonal relations, led to the much described reform of primary education and, supported by administrative convenience, to the establishment of middle schools in specific response to one aspect of*

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educational democratisation, namely the movement to comprehensive education (Lynch, 1980:106).

The middle school was born into this ideological background. Its initial success, owing much to the inspiration of influential CEOs, and as an expression of Plowden, has to be seen as the major source of effective legitimation. Moreover, the timing was beneficial, and the support of *'allied intellectuals'* (Salter and Tapper, 1981:54) helped to mobilise the middle school ideology successfully. What has changed? Notwithstanding that Lynch (1980) could talk of a legitimation crisis for the middle school in the 70s and 80s, the economic, educational and *'ideological weather'* (ibid:107) took a further turn for the worse when the centralised curriculum cut right across the ages and stages of the middle school. There seemed also a dearth of influential CEOs - at least, not on the national stage. Locally, one can point to Tim Brighouse at Birmingham , a champion of the primary school; and to Chris Tipple in Northumberland, a champion of the middle school.

Heads advanced views of middle school organisation, some expressed preference for primary schools (T/HTiii-1/2). Education Officers in discussion were philosophically committed to a reorganisation on primary lines. They saw this as a practical answer to pressing political problems arising from economic or curricular sources (L/DEO-1). LEAs identified the educational case for securing the benefits of all-through primary schools (5-11), through amalgamation where possible. They acknowledged that consultation sometimes caused them to change amalgamation proposals in the light of public pressure. Boscobel believed that in reality, the issues of amalgamation and the benefits of a 5-11 school, were often ducked (Boscobel-2, 6). He cites examples of a small school allowed to continue separately, and another where a First School continues, that is 5-8, rather than as an Infant School (ibid.). Reorganisation by amalgamation was previously prompted by the departure or retirement of one of the heads. But changing the age of transfer was seen, ideologically, as making the best use of resources (CEO, Ealing). It was found that heads believed there was merit in a transfer age of 12 or 13 where middle schools gave that blend of primary practice and the gradual introduction of specialisation. Where heads felt that 11+ may be all right, they also explained that 7+ was too early. They valued the First School for the extended time it gave to enable children to overcome the initial reading barrier.

Governors accepted the need to come into line with the majority of LEAs (T/CHi-1/1). They recognised the matching of the National Curriculum to ages and stages. Some felt that there was really no alternative. Others felt that it was all decided (T/GOV-1/4). *'What's the point?'*, they declared. Most recognised unequal treatment between the phases; the assistance the change gave to the secondary sector - *'the tail that wags the dog in* Oak' (T/CHii-1/2). However, they felt that it should not also have affected the primary sector.

Self-interests

Self-interest means exactly that. Individual teachers, heads or education personnel in 'the office', have a sense of self and their place in the system; their identity as a personal construct associated with their work in, say, middle schools or with pupils in the middle years. Satisfaction with the particular setting for their work and achievement is important. In this study this was obvious when schools were amalgamating, or closing. Heads had varying levels of personal knowledge about the changes depending on the longevity of service with their LEA and the strength of their network contacts. Governors relied, it seems, on their heads or on Council officers for information. Initial reaction to change may be so antipathetic as to make one say, *'I don't want any part of this'* (CEO, Warwickshire; Herne; Haig). Others may recognise that the proposed changes may ensure the avoidance of future difficulties (D/Warwickshire - 30). Most heads recognised that a drop in pupil numbers, in a sense, forced changes (T/HTii-1/2, T/HTiv-1/2).

Heads experienced instability during the changes; of staffing when rolls plummeted; of possible redundancies or early retirements; and, overwhelmingly, that of amalgamation. It was a time of opportunity for some, and a possible career move for others; advancement or rejection. Governors acknowledged that it was a time, when sitting heads were involved, that they felt their responsibilities keenly (Chair of Governors, Coventry). Even so, they understood the need to team build despite the upheaval associated with amalgamation (CH-2/4); or to so manage the budget that their care of the property was not compromised (Chair of Governors, Warwickshire). None of the heads liked the formal interviews that accompanied staff changes (T/HTi-1/2, 3), nor when their own jobs were advertised (HT/Warwickshire). They struggled for some flexibility; were grateful when teachers were prepared to move around, even from Year 6 to Year 2! (T/HTii-2, HTiii-1, HTiv-1, T/T-2). The head of *Thebes* CE Primary in *Pharaoh*, identified the need to team

build, to make one camp out of two (T/HTii-2/5). The head at *Leaf* Middle in *Oak* could see the opportunities to solve some practical problems, but felt thwarted in his plans for amalgamation because the First School went for GM status and got it.

Teachers' response to change is interesting. From a wide literature on educational change and teacher responses, the work of Acker (op. cit.) commends itself because she deals with external pressures such as that caused by government legislation. With some reservations, her proposal is accepted that implementing changes in school is contingent upon the various teacher cultures that predate and mediate any government initiatives. These teacher cultures influence the

> *Technical process of implementation and the extent to which teachers define innovations as deskilling or professionalizing their work.* (Acker, 1990: 257)

Through participant observation, Acker listed the changes in teachers' perspectives and practices as they reacted to legislative requirements governing their work in classrooms. Therein lies the first reservation. Changes in the age of transfer are broader than the classroom and wider in scope than a simple curriculum change. Acker employs a variety of evidence to support her interpretation of those changes. In staffroom discussions of the National Curriculum and assessment, she noticed that debate became more critical, academic, analytical and reflective. The second reservation is that the age of transfer changes were relatively speedy; that debate was curtailed and analysis short-lived. There was, in contrast, a widely felt tremor of inevitability.

Acker noted that staff appointments brought a more cosmopolitan view to the teaching in the inner-city school. Age of transfer changes overall incurred a reduction in staff; a reduction in the number of schools. The conclusion that Acker draws from her observation is that primary school teachers do perceive a threat in governmental initiatives and are anxious about their ramifications. '*They are not, however, experiencing these outside pressures as destructive or deskilling. In part,* ' says Acker, '*this is because for them education is a child-centred process rather than a product. They are not simply transmitting a cognitive curriculum.* ' What can be drawn from this for middle school teachers? They too see a threat in age of transfer changes and are anxious about their ramifications. The middle school teacher sees the changes as destructive when the very existence of the school is threatened.

The response of the teacher most affected by changes in *Thebes* CE Primary School was both simplistic and practical. Her comments did not draw upon middle school ideology, but were altogether of a specific problem which was solved in her classroom. To be fair, says Hargreaves (1980:102) the class teacher is seldom required to articulate the general nature and purpose of middle schools. What was discussed had more immediate practical relevance to her own experience.

It was an anxiety-ridden time for parents (Chapter 6, p119). Amalgamation or closure presented them with the need to change loyalties. Moreover, it raised concern for the educational well-being of their children. Could they trust the reasons given by the LEAs? A sharp commentary by parents in the local press concluded that they had no way of knowing that *'an excellent JMI'* would be formed if their First School were to amalgamate with the Middle School. The DEO in *Oak* referred to anxiety and dislocation as a cost to schools (T/DEO-1/4).

Deciding not to change

At the outset of this case study, it was recognised that some local authorities with first and middle school systems have resolved to continue with that three-tier pattern of organisation (Chapter 1, p20). Their resistance is fascinating. In the face of enormous pressure from legislation or governmental agencies, some LEAs have made a definite decision not to change. Birley (op. cit.), is sure that LEAs act when they see value and rationality in a proposal.

Every so often a measure of agreement emerges about the implications of ... principles for a certain branch of education at a particular moment in time. When that moment comes the education officer has to seize the opportunity, first to clarify the issues and to make sure the implications are understood, then to suggest ways in which the principles can be put into practice (Birley, op. cit:9).

But these LEAs have, presumably, weighed up the pros and cons of a change in the age of transfer, and remained unconvinced. The example used is Northumberland. The LEA could see no value in changing, arguing that change would not produce large savings. They compared rather small, uncertain savings with great capital costs and the associated upheaval. Northumberland recognised, for example, the difficult equation between children's journey times

to and from school, and the educational viability of the whole range of schooling. The LEA believed the three-tier system offered the best balance (C/8-3). Its Education Committee believed Plowden arguments (Chapter 1, p20) to be educationally sound. Their system used existing capital stock at its introduction. It was suited to a rural county, and their 9-13 Middle Schools meant relatively local schools for the population. A small number of high schools also ensured viable sixth forms. Even with the 1988 Education Act and the introduction of the National Curriculum, the LEA listed (C/8-3,4) the advantages of its middle schools (Chapter 1, p21).

Northumberland preferred stability (C/8-6), and was of the opinion that there are no inherent weaknesses in the existing system (C/8-7). In the light of all this, Northumberland restated its commitment to the three-tier system (ibid.). It is clear that the interrelationship between the different types of interest is so close that, in the analysis of particular events it can prove difficult to tease out one or other of them.

Summary and Comment

It seems still that there are serious lessons here of planning (see p103) and the state of education management by local education authorities. The message of an OFSTED report on Calderdale was in similar vein – highly critical of the authority's failure to collect and analyse schools' data and the breakdown in communication between schools and the LEA (Adams and Maden., 1977). The idea of heads, governors and senior management being the conduit of public resources in education, on behalf of LEAs, was generally accurate and serious when individuals and organisations like schools behaved in generally good faith. The complication now is that some LEAs have tumbled headlong into change; whether from motives of economy or curricular adjustment; of mischief or incompetence. For example, abandoning the three-tier system of schooling but leaving at least two first schools fully operational (Boscobel-2) and in great difficulties; stating aims in detail and yet not achieving them. For example, the close proximity of a small rural infant school in *Oak*, to its nearest primary school,

It was almost killing that school off, or making it completely non-viable (Boscobel-7).

Clearly, the quality of planning varies between one LEA and another. Where it is good, it is timetabled; the result of wide consultation; understood by staff in

schools, local authority offices and council chambers. Where it is poor, the timetable is indeterminate; skewed by political wrangling; oblivious of the effects on teacher morale; is not the result of meaningful consultation when, for example, local opinions are shoved aside. Perhaps what was needed was a way for managers to conceptualise the dynamics of educational change. One underlying assumption of this research is that it offers vicarious experience to those individuals preparing to manage educational change. In the next, penultimate chapter, a model is proposed to characterise educational change and to facilitate its analysis.

Chapter 9

Modelling Educational Change
Educational change is like a kaleidoscope,
'Colours in a changing pattern move out of view, or
get stuck, or change position when the box is tapped'.
(Kogan, 1975:237)

In this chapter, an assessment is made of the balance between the political, educational and economic forces which prompted the change in the age of transfer. As a result of examining the relationship between central government, the LEAs and their schools, and especially their response to, and dealings with, educational change, the data suggests a modified *perspectival* model to characterise such changes. Word meanings can be slippery. Defining words is also a political activity. It is in part because of the political nature of word meaning that perspectival is chosen, after its usage by Maykut and Morehouse (1994:19), rather than subjective. It is because of the importance of word meaning that each part of the model is compared to and contrasted with the images of educational change in the literature (see Chapter 3, p 50). Each perspective influences how we think about individual or institutional change or development. The essential nature of educational change is a complex, even messy, interaction of the different parts of the government-LEA-schools relationship, in which all the forces meld together. The model, perforce, acts as a comb to disentangle the strands. The model is drawn from multi-layered data. It has three elements which are closely related, their perspectives overlapping in the way shown in Figure 1 (below), and each containing aspects of leadership. In the first, the study addresses the quality of planning by both County and school officials. In the second element, it attempts to evaluate the extent to which the change was ideologically legitimated through the Working Parties and their function, and through the work of the Audit Commission. In the last element, it looks at the culture or ideology of the middle school, and summarises the effects of the change on teaching careers.

Introduction

The study seeks to understand the social phenomenon called 'changing the age of transfer' in all its complexity and within its particular educational situation and environment. To do this, there is description derived from the empirical data of the multiple forces working within the system, which reflect 'policy processes' of educational change. Mindful of the adjuration of House (1981),
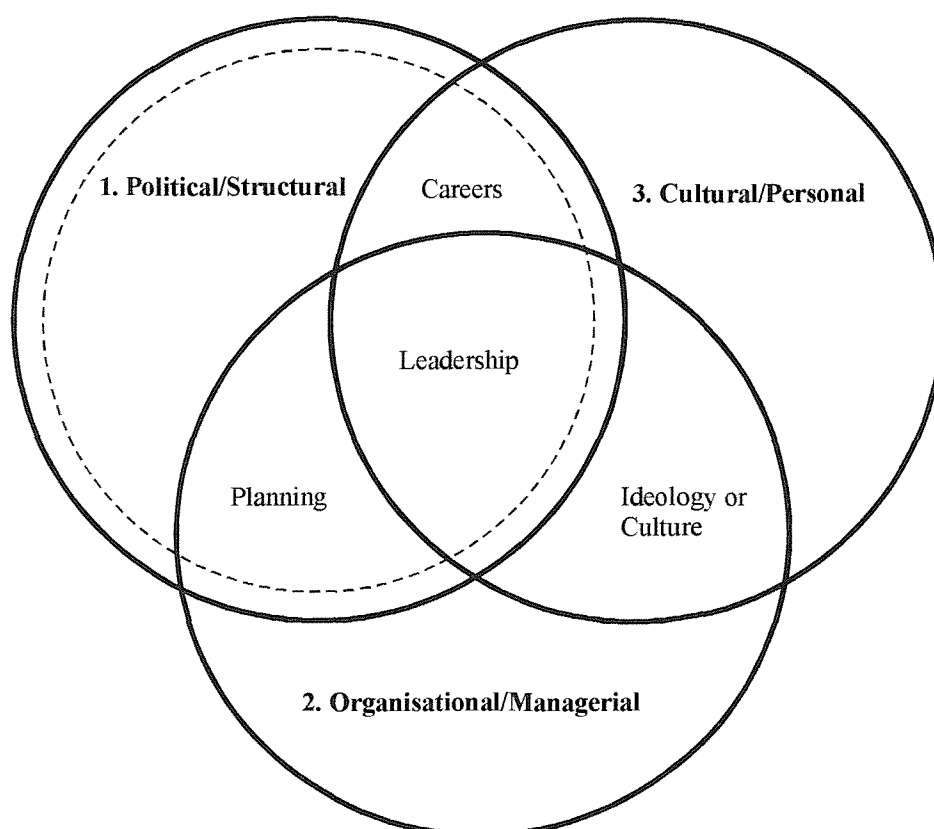
the study recognises that different observers, for different purposes, apply different meanings to these broad sets of forces. Almost by definition change is multidirectional, multifaceted like the *Rubik Cube*. As the observer focuses on one perspective after another, it shifts in and out of disorder. This study shows that schools, among a range of organisations, have had to cope with change after change (notably LMS and the National Curriculum). In rapid sequence, their sets of responsibilities and expectations have been rewritten. LEAs have seen a whittling away of their own powers in favour of central government and individual schools (Open Enrolment, GM schools). Some LEAs, nationally and in both study areas, have favoured changes to the age of transfer because of the combination of political, economic and legislative forces. It is not a tidy process. Political elements by their nature can be derailed, producing non-linear and non-rational outcomes. For an LEA, this study shows that aims can be thwarted by political interference, as shown in Figure 2 (below), which is itself an extrapolation of Figure 1. This is coupled with the notion of structure - the overall pattern of provision in which LEAs operate - to produce the first part of the model, the Political/Structural element. In this study, this element includes evidence on planning, at the interface between the first and the second perspectives.

The second element interacts closely with the first. Indeed, none of the elements are mutually exclusive. For example, the National Curriculum was highly politically and ideologically motivated, affecting the structure of educational provision and the individual careers of those involved. All of this leads to questions on the management and organisation of the changes to the age of transfer. The second element is Organisational/Managerial. Within this study, it includes the creation of working parties, a period of consultation, the setting of a timetable and the institution of phases.

Educational change embraces cultural and personal forces. Morphologically, the structure of educational provision has changed quite abruptly with far-reaching consequences for those involved either at professional or at personal level. The phenomenon of middle schools changing into junior schools, or first and middle changing into all-through primaries, has been very real and immediate to their communities throughout *Oak* and *Pharaoh*. The change for some has been uncomfortable; for others, welcome. The professionals involved have, equally, found it either traumatic or stimulating. Whatever feelings they had were amplified in the local press. Thus, the third element of the model is

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the Cultural/Personal. Within this study, it encompasses the ideology or 'culture' (Harrison, 1972), of middle schools at its interface with the second perspective; and the effects of the changes on individual careers at the interface with the first perspective.

Fig. 1: Educational change forces: a modified perspectival model

Thus, the model has three elements; the political/structural; the organisational/managerial; and the cultural/personal. As can be seen in Figure 1, the interface between any two of them can be characterised by discussion of aspects of educational change. Moreover, the model looks asymmetric. This is deliberate, and is intended to demonstrate the incidence of unintended outcomes especially in the political elements of the model. Where all three perspectives meet, the nature and significance of leadership seems naturally to fit. What follows is its application to the policy process called 'changing the age of transfer'. The national picture covered some seventeen LEAs, over time, who have changed the age of transfer. Although they responded to national priorities

in regard to educational and economic forces, there was, probably, no specific national campaign. However, one cannot discount the uni-directional synergy of multiple forces that coincide; may pull together - even in the same direction! The internal logic of the National Curriculum's structure of ages and stages resonated with, and re-echoed the call of the Audit Commission to rationalise over-provision of school places. LEAs, recognising this simple logic, were 'picked off' one by one. Local papers highlighted the political aspects through their own tendentious writing which played on parental and professional fears. Element one: how political, i.e. planned, were the proposals?

Political /Structural

This study is redolent with political strands at every level, which serves to emphasise the interaction between the managerial and political domains: as when the DEO of *Pharaoh* talks of the political influence at County Hall of committee chairmen and the Leader of the Council (T/DEO-2/2). The DEO of *Oak* suggests that the government was *'interested'* in removing surplus places, but it wanted LEAs to decide in order to avoid the political flak (L/DEO-1/2). For example, the governing bodies of two schools in *Oak* demonstrate what might be described as political infighting by proposing the closure of a third school (see below p171). The CEO of Warwickshire claimed that changing the age of transfer was to be seen as making the best use of resources (CEO/6). *Oak* LEA put up a range of options in the consultative process, but left the lists 'open' to further suggestions. This led to a number of battles, often fought acrimoniously in the local press (T/DEO-1/3). In both study areas, Working Parties were appointed to handle the highly political and contentious proposals of 'age of transfer'; and parents undertook strong and 'noisy' campaigns to save their (often small or village) schools.

> *The political image emphasises the conflicting interests which individuals and groups have in organisations, and which they pursue through building factions and coalitions and through bargaining and compromise* (Glatter, 1988:132).

The political forces were, possibly, aggressively rational; in the deployment of the Audit Commission; in the work of the FAS; and in the powers taken by the Secretary of State in the 1993 Act to order recalcitrant LEAs to close surplus accommodation. Pressure was also exerted through the SSA procedures, effectively penalising those LEAs which were not proactively seeking to reduce surplus places. Salter and Tapper (op.cit:30) claim that the dynamic for

educational change is politically controlled. *'If the political commitment of a particular government to a particular policy is high then it is unlikely to be resisted'* (ibid:38). How important then is the structure - the framework of influence and political commitment. What does the study mean by 'structure'?
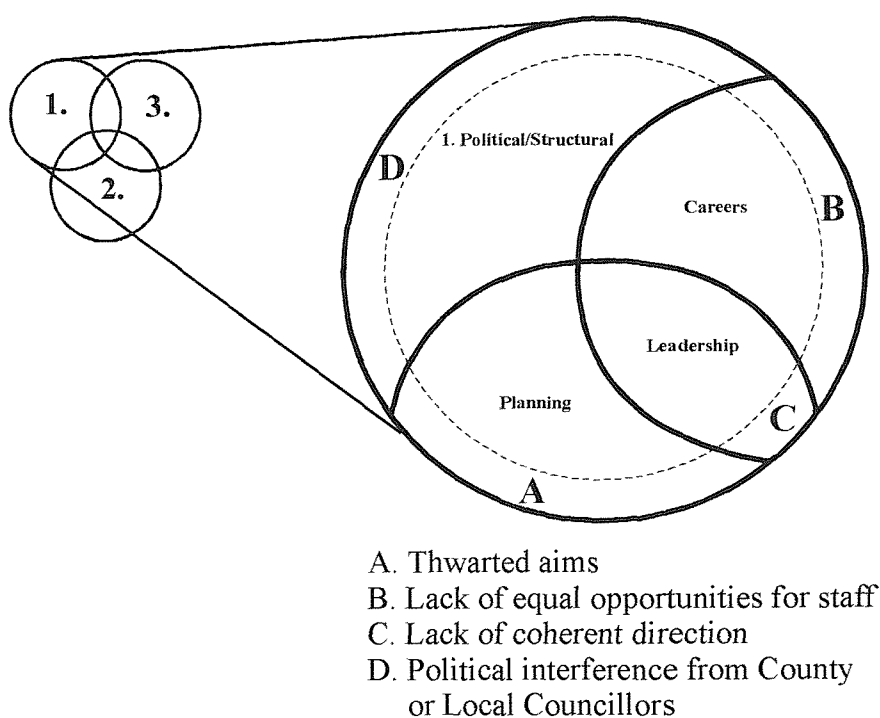
This study uses structure in two ways. In the first, in the sense which refers to the overall pattern of school provision within those LEAs that have changed the age of transfer. Secondly, it is being used in the political sense to refer to the interface between the schools, LEAs and government agencies such as the Audit Commission, SCAA and OFSTED. The structuralism of Salter and Tapper (op. cit.) and of House (1974), (see Chapter 8), is very powerful. It is not that structure as defined by Bennett (1992) and Fullan (op.cit.), among many others, in the sociological sense to include school improvement policies **within** schools. The structural strands in the empirical data include the moves by some LEAs to widespread amalgamations rather than, but not exclusively, closures of schools (C/2-33). For example, in *Oak,* an amalgamation option was resisted by a First School which then went GM and thus denied this option to its Middle School neighbour. Eventually, the Middle School also went GM (T/Htii-1/3). Also, when *Pharaoh* LEA withdrew some proposals for amalgamation in the face of strong, local opposition (T/DEO-2/3). A governing body in *Oak* recognised the need to 'fall into line' with the majority, arguing there was no alternative (T/Chi-1/1, T/GOV-1/2). The Northumberland LEA recognised the difficult equation between children's journey times to school and educational viability, and reaffirmed its belief that the three-tier system offers the best balance for that County (C/8-3). It was explained above, how such changes affect the very existence of categories of schools that no longer seem, in the view of a national body like the Audit Commission, or local education committees, to meet the requirements of curricular efficiency or of cost-effectiveness. These are radical changes which, because they are structural, some authors believe them to be easier to understand.

> *... there is also a wide debate taking place about the nature of education, its relation to training, and the role and responsibilities of teachers and lecturers ... What is expected of them? Such changes are more difficult to identify, and therefore even harder to respond to and cope with, than the more specific structural developments created by government policy* (Bennett, Crawford and Riches, 1992:1).

Tensions and ambiguities

It is the ambiguous distribution of powers between the LEAs, their schools and the centre which form the backdrop to this research. It has been shown that there is no state of balance between the sectors of schooling or the phases of the changes; that the relationships and actual discourse between authorities and schools are changing emphasis; that there is evidence of a breakdown in communications between at least one LEA and its schools. 'Ambiguous' because LEAs must plan facilities and capacity in a more complex, more volatile environment, always running the risk of non-linear and non-rational outcomes. The range of problems encountered during major structural change is elaborated in Figure 2 below, which is an extrapolation of Figure 1 and is intended to make clear that their effects can be chaotic. The three interlocking circles on the left are a representation in outline of Figure 1. Their numbers indicate the focus of each: political/structural in the first; organisational/managerial in the second; and cultural/personal in the third. The first circle is expanded to the right of the figure: it has the effect of zooming into a closer look. The circle can be recognised by reference back to Figure 1. The dotted inner ring is visible; as are the arcs of the other two circles which overlap, or interlock with the first. The alignment of the three focus areas indicates their interrelationships. Where political/structural relates to organisational/managerial, the relevant issue is planning. Similarly, where it relates to cultural/personal, the relevant issue is careers. At the heart of the system - because this figure describes a system: at the conjunction of all three

Fig. 2: Educational change forces: unintended outcomes

A. Thwarted aims
B. Lack of equal opportunities for staff
C. Lack of coherent direction
D. Political interference from County
   or Local Councillors

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focus circles, the relevant issue is leadership. The dotted ring, therefore, signifies that part of management in which is reflected the ambiguities described above; the complex environment which produces unintended outcomes. For example, in *Oak*, planning was at fault when at least two First Schools remained after the change in the age of transfer (Boscobel-2). Also there was a clash of public policies when schools chose to go GM to escape moves by their LEA to trim their capacity or to actually close them down (T/Hti-1/5). In *Pharaoh*, governing bodies in at least one pyramid (organisational district) failed to keep to a local authority understanding that teachers who were displaced by changes in the age of transfer, would be safeguarded by offering them appointment vacancies first (see below, p171). In *Oak*, changes in leadership within the LEA and the consequent shifting of responsibilities, led to less effective management of the changes (Boscobel-3). In both study areas, local councillors became heavily involved in consultation/negotiation within their own 'constituencies' (T/Hti 1/7). Local decisions in *Oak* were heavily affected by local Councillors, and County Councillors (CLR/1-1). Boscobel called it *'the stronger voice, the stronger argument'* (Boscobel-2).

Achieving change in a large public structure like the education service is difficult. This study examines the nature of these difficulties in relation to the manner in which LEAs tried to effect change. The power/coercive perspectives deliniated by Chin (1970) and Zaltman et al. (1977); and the political perspectives of House (1979) and Glatter et al. (1988) have relevance because those LEAs which espoused changes to the age of transfer did so by political, economic and legislative means. Fullan (op. cit.), describes how overload, complexity, incompatibility, lack of capability, limited resources and poor change strategies sabotage innovation. The simple change, of the age at which a pupil transfers to secondary school, by iteration - repeated from school to school - produces random effects among a collection of anticipated results, or patterns. Form and order are not guaranteed. Whiteside (op. cit:20), comments on the purported neutrality of some changes. What is obscured, he claims, is

... the fact that innovations are still means by which some people organise and control the lives of other people and their children according to their perceptions as to what is preferable. It disguises the reality that some people helped to plan the changes, that some people benefited from them while others did not, and that some consequences were intended while others were not.

Although Coulby and Bash (op.cit:2) were looking at the 1988 Education Act, they have a pertinent comment on social change.

Any social policy initiative of this extent and magnitude is likely to generate conflict, not least from those who see themselves as the losers from any resulting changes. Similarly, social policy legislation will have its unintended as well as its intended outcomes and will fit with varying degrees of symmetry alongside other government policies, especially those on finance.

Change thus has many dimensions. Bennet *et al.* (op.cit:2) illustrate it thus,

Change is not just about the creation of new policies and procedures to implement external mandates. It is also about the development of personal strategies by individuals to respond to, and to seek to influence the impact of, structural and cultural change: personal change as much as organisational change.

Planning for such changes in the two study areas was a highly managerial task which was seemingly skewed by political wrangling. Therefore it is pertinent to place it at the interface of these two perspectives.

Planning

Planning took place against a background of educational and social considerations, each affected by the politics of the issue. The question of surplus accommodation has been discussed above. But falling pupil numbers is a phenomenon over which neither the DfEE nor the LEA exercises direct control. The reasons for a decline in the birth rate are related to more general social change, and not amenable to direct government intervention at central or local level. Moreover, the question of planning based on predictions of future births is fraught with difficulty. There are a number of examples in this research of local knowledge about pupil numbers at odds with county information. For example, in *Oak*, the parents of *The Catkins School* - in dispute with the LEA - canvassed the locality, knocking on doors, trying to establish the numbers of children aged 0-5 who could be expected to eventually enrol at the school (Log, p176). In *Pharaoh,* the governors of a First School claimed that the Authority's estimate of the number of pupils who would attend the reorganised school was too low. The school's own estimate was between 240 and 250 pupils compared with the Authority's figure of between 215 and 220 (C/2-247). Similarly in *Pharaoh*, the large catchment area of a First and Middle School was under review. Building development taking place at the end of the village and further development 'in the pipeline' was taken into consideration

when discussing its translation into a Primary School (C/2-15). Local authorities were very much left to 'manage' the problem to suit their own conditions. In *Oak*, at *Branch* First School (not a study school) they had been allowed to upgrade to full Primary status but would have too many children even for the enlarged number of places. The LEA proposed a strategy, which had been used in one or two other schools, to lose the top year for an extra year. This created more space initially which would fill up as the school grew. Although a temporary measure it was clearly very difficult for the parents of those children, many of whom had supported the move to become a Primary School - hoping that their children could stay (T/CHii-1/3). Such may be an example of LEA autonomy which may owe more to the DfEE's inability to develop guidelines for practice than to 'traditional' non-intervention.

Both study areas issued what appeared to be comprehensive consultative documents. These included area booklets, technical papers and the projected timetables. The amount of information was prodigious. *'Education is obliged to change in the full glare of the public eye'*, say Salter and Tapper, (op.cit:66). Both *Oak* and *Pharaoh* acknowledged some degree of flexibility. Thus, to what extent was there rational strategic planning? As in all scenarios of change, there was rumour and gossip; a period of inchoate awareness. Consultation was criticised for not being effective for each phase, thus producing different outcomes. It was said that heads and teachers were not listened to. As discussed above, in this theatre of change Acker's (1990) premise that staffroom discussion of legislative requirements could be typified as critical, academic, analytical or reflective, is questionable. It was more likely to be eclectic, and there simply was not time for such high-level discussion. *Pharaoh* was criticised for not being more informative in the early stages. *Oak* was accused of a patronising attitude. The perceived inequity of some proposals, as described above, led to interest group pressure in both areas; 'Save our school' in *Pharaoh* and the small school lobby in both. Planning for educational viability was erratic in *Oak*. The DEO acknowledged that creating a 5-11 primary school in five classrooms was a bit of an error. The complexities of planning and implementing these political and structural changes lead one to question the management of this organisational change. Of course, both of these strands interact most markedly. With this in mind, the study turns next to the organisational and managerial element. What do the changes look like from this perspective? Were economies of scale made to improve efficiency in the use of resources? Element two: how was the

reorganisation implemented?

Organisational/Managerial

The creation of working parties in both study areas to facilitate the change in the age of transfer can also be seen as a management device. In *Oak*, headteacher representatives were drafted on to the Working Party. As has been noted above, this gave the LEA the opportunity to sound out the practical proposals such as phasing the change and the manner of the consultation; and at the same time gave councillors and heads ownership of changes which were originally political. This is clearly demonstrated in *Pharaoh*, where the working group took decisions on the management of the consultations against the backdrop of a politically determined and non-negotiable change in the age at which pupils transfer. Working parties, however, were the preferred organisational method of each study LEA. The consultation timetable was drawn up to manage the operation; organisational issues arose when , for example, the *Pharaoh* LEA had to decide how many meetings to hold to ensure full consultation. Less than this could lead to charges of political manipulation from the perspectives of parents (T/DEO-2/3). There were difficulties also, at school level, where a teacher at *Thebes* CE Primary in *Pharaoh* (Chapter 6, p126), moved from Year 6 to Year 2. She was described by the head as *'brave'* (T/Htii-2/4). This had much to do with the supportive language used by the head which implied what was right and good about the management of the change. The operation of a phased consultation matched the eventual pattern of the physical changes. Organisationally, this was expected to be a tidy arrangement. In fact, the phases in *Pharaoh* reflected managerial and political difficulties when closures and amalgamations affected the interests of councillors and their constituents. In both study areas, the influence of councillors is thought to have influenced the results. Dalin (op. cit.) describes it as manipulation and back-room politics.

Within the changed institutional environment, Bennett *et al.* (op.cit.) recognised the important requirement of new management skills with which to help colleagues cope. The working parties were both managerial and political, reflecting the political strength of their LEAs - *Pharaoh* was Labour, *Oak* was Conservative. Herne, the former inspector/adviser in *Oak*, observed, quoting Birley (op. cit:1),

Implementation of policy is at its best when it is unobtrusive and can therefore be taken for granted. It becomes noticeable only when it is badly

done or when it seeks to implement unpopular policies. LEAs run political risks when they ignore public opinion (L/Herne-2).

The principle that Herne espouses seems important. Consultation should be a genuine search for reactions to a proposal and incorporate a willingness to modify the proposal in the light of a negative response. The DEO of *Pharaoh* acknowledged, for example, the strength of local feeling against a proposed amalgamation of a first school and a middle school.

Given the relatively small savings which are involved and the extent of local feeling, I would advise that the proposal be withdrawn (C/2-87).

The principle of genuine consultation is one of three principles described by Peter Mortimore, Director of the Institute of Education of the University of London. Writing about managing change (Mortimore, 1997), his second principle is to pilot as fully as possible, and his third is to fund the change equitably. Neither *Oak* nor *Pharaoh* actually conducted a pilot as such. Indeed, it is not altogether practical to pilot a major educational and organisational change. However, each would argue that their first phase was an opportunity to 'test' the system, and that lessons were learned for later phases. Warwickshire, on the other hand, did have the benefit of a local area change before making changes county-wide. In any lesser, or minor change, say the introduction of a new reading or mathematics scheme, adequate piloting is one way of assuring success. A pilot scheme may well carry extra resources to attract volunteers and make the extra effort worthwhile. The results of a pilot may indeed make the actual policy more acceptable.

Equitable funding sounds commonsense. Policies or practices that benefit a minority of schools would only fuel resentment among the others. As noted (in Chapter 5, p97), above, that unsatisfactory prefabricated buildings still exist in *Oak*. *Branch* Primary (not a study school) has a large garden shed for its staffroom. *Thebes* CE Primary School in *Pharaoh* had structural work put in hand to effect the amalgamation of the two buildings. Additionally, it received alterations to create a neighbourhood nursery. Closure of *The Catkins School* in *Oak* was claimed to reduce parental choice and to represent the loss to the local community of an excellent school with good facilities (Log, p173). Mortimore argues that the granting of extra resources for periods of transition is perfectly acceptable,

but giving extra resources to highly advantaged schools creates resentment.

In times of scarcity, it is even more important to fund innovation equitably.
Governors and teachers will be more likely to accept change if they are
convinced that such a principle is being followed (Mortimore, op. cit.)

For governors and teachers to find these proposals to change convincing, they
would need to have confidence in the leadership offered. This aspect is the next
issue.

Leadership

The central issue lying at the juxtaposition of the three perspectives is
leadership. Leadership has the feel of 'first among equals', but that is not quite
the image that comes through this study. Leadership must acknowledge the
structure of the organisation, say, LEA; be sensitive to the political
constituencies; be cognisant of the value sytems and beliefs of the workforce;
and match this with qualities of coherent management and organisation. The
quality of leadership varied between and within each study area. The DEOs of
Oak and *Pharaoh* were sincere professionals who believed they were working
for the good of the education service. This study has examined, in Chapter 5
above, the disparate influences that seemed to skew decision-making. It has
referred, in Chapter 6, to the force of local arguments and the local political
power agenda of councillors; the protracted argument between LEA and
Diocesan authorities (C/2-95) over a more balanced governing body in a newly
amalgamated school is an example.

The DEOs sense of purpose is not in question. Using Kogan and van der
Eyken's qualities (op.cit:27), *Pharaoh*'s DEO had clearer educational vision.
He did, after all, leave a framework for change which would guide the LEA
through the remaining phases after his own retirement. The set of responses to
questions and issues within the consultative documents also illustrate his
personal persuasive flair. In conversation, he had good command of detail. The
DEO in *Oak*, on the other hand, seemed beleaguered when questioned. The
answers lacked detail, specially quantifiable detail such as the number of
surplus places saved. The details were almost certainly available but the DEO
had not been able to rehearse them in advance as he was standing in for the
CEO who had resigned and moved on. But such misgivings were sharpened by
criticism from other sources. Boscobel felt there was no overall strategic plan
and criticised officers of the Authority who;

were using a crystal ball to predict what the LEA would do in two or three
years time to support the schools. In fact, the future finances of the LEA

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would obviously be under constraint (Boscobel-2/3).

The headteacher of *The Catkins* believed that some County officials seemed to have had their own agenda (T/HTiv-1/1). Herne was sure that no attempt was made to seek the views of the County inspectorate on the educational merits of changing the age of transfer (L/Herne-1). The range of critical comment seems to infer that *Oak* lacked coherent leadership.

Individual headteachers were exemplary in their leadership of staff. Nias (op. cit:79), talks of the heads of middle schools playing;

> *a unifying role, facilitating discussion, co-operation, and joint decision-making. This stress upon consultation and collaboration is such a marked characteristic of the ideal middle school that every publication draws attention to it, either directly or by inference.*

Each headteacher in the study schools spoke caringly about the community of the school. Each one struggled to reconcile the needs of the school with the constraints imposed by changes in the age of transfer. In *Pharaoh*, the head of *Luxor* Middle steered the school to a close with overriding concern, both for his staff and their future employment, and the welfare of the children. He would not, for instance, have exposed them to the unpleasantness of a campaign against closure (T/HTi-2/7). The head of *Thebes* CE Primary worked hard to nurture the growing mutuality of the amalgamated staffs (T/HTii-2/5). In *Oak*, the head of *St.Tree* CE Primary explained the fears and concerns of staff sympathetically whilst at the same time promoting expansion to full primary status. The age of transfer changes have left the school with only an infant population. The heads of *Leaf* Junior and *Apple* Primary both looked after the interests of their staff, and pupils, by capitalising on their governing bodies' wish to gain Grant Maintained status.

The leadership of governors impressed one as complete and supportive. They felt their responsibilities keenly when heads and deputies were involved in amalgamation procedures (CH/Coventry). Governors experienced a steep learning curve in dealing with staffing problems. Gone were the days when the LEA could assist by redeploying staff. In these days of Local Management, schools are on their own. Governors' staffing committees faced some hard decisions. Reference was made above to their understanding of the need to team-build despite the upheaval (CH-2/4), or to so manage the budget that their care of the property was not compromised (CH/Warwickshire). As has

been noted above, there was some evidence, in *Oak*, of governors in one locality openly clashing with governors of another local school. The issue, of course, was the survival or possible loss of one of the schools. The head of *Apple* GM Primary made it clear that, during the consultative phase, when the various options were being discussed, the governing bodies of two schools colluded in a plan which proposed the closure of a third school. He thought;

> *that was probably shooting ourselves in the foot to suggest closing a school.*
> *It is never good. It is very emotive, and that caused some bitterness (locally)*
> (T/HTi-1/2).

The head of *Luxor* Middle also reported (Chapter 6, p126) that the governing bodies in his local pyramid apparently made no reference to a local authority understanding - if it existed- that appointments should try to safeguard those displaced by the changes in the age of transfer. These boards were, he said;

> *a law unto themselves, and appointed people who were not necessarily from*
> *reorganising pyramids; and, indeed, came in several cases from outside the*
> *Authority* (L/HTi-2),

claiming that this represents inequity of opportunity for *Pharaoh* teachers.

Bennett et al. (1992:14) point to the tension between individual and organisational priorities.Thus, the complexity of educational forces illustrated by staffing and curriculum changes in the middle schools made leadership very significant, especially in the qualities of the leaders and their values and beliefs. Thus the study turns to the third element in the model. Element three: what may be revealed by examining the cultural aspects of changing the age of transfer?

Cultural/ Personal

Within the research, cultural values are evident in primary or middle school ideologies. Heads and teachers in middle schools have had to make adjustments to their professional values. The ease and quality of that adjustment was in direct relation to their previous experience and training in primary education. An adjustment in values, norms and beliefs was no more evident than in the organising of teaching and learning. As when in each area, First Schools had to think Infant and four-year-olds; Middle Schools had to think Junior and Year 3. The introduction of the National Curriculum had engendered a higher focus on planning Key Stages, and curriculum planning to

fit them. Within a middle school system, this meant that good methods of liaison between the phases was built up. It is clear that some mourn the loss of such good practice (T/DEO-2/1).

Nevertheless, the cultural changes were, perhaps, less problematic because there was no clear objective beyond a simple change in the age of transfer. No consensus had been reached as to the consequences of the change. There is, in the research, an emphasis of the importance of personal strategies to respond to, and to seek to influence the impact of, structural and cultural changes. At a general level within each LEA, newspapers gave extensive coverage to the fears and worries expresed by parent groups or by individuals. At the school level, in both study areas, headteachers had varying levels of personal knowledge depending on longevity of service with their LEA and the strength of their network contacts. Another example, in *Pharaoh*, is the displaced teacher at *Thebes* CE Primary, moving from Year 6 to Year 2 (Chapter 6, p126). She identified the other (Junior) department as her 'niche' (T/T-2/2). She experienced panic in the infant department. Yet, she effectively adapted to the changed environment through professional routines of teaching and learning. Effective routine operations are often the main motors of organisational change. *'The theoretical rhetoric of change seems antithetical to routine, but I have argued that effective systems of routine behaviour are the primary bases of organisational adaptation to an environment'* (March, 1984:33).

Cultural forces in educational change are identified by Bennett et al. (1992), Glatter (op.cit.), House (1979), and Acker (1990). There is common ground among them that the cultural perspective concerns shared values among human (teacher) relationships, habits, norms and beliefs. Thus,

> *... schools and school systems are seen as composed of groups with separate and distinct cultures and their associated values interacting with one another* (Glatter, op. cit:132).

Chin's (1970) normative/re-educative perspective is relevant. This assumes that habits and values of individuals and groups can be changed. It resonates to some extent with Havelock's (1968) social interaction strategy. Educational changes of this magnitude inevitably led to staffing adjustments at the time of implementation. What price experience in such structural change? At this interface, it is pertinent to look at the effects on careers.

Career

The career prospects of many heads, deputies and teachers were affected profoundly by the change in the age of transfer. For some it meant advancement, for others professional difficulty. For yet others it was a complete change of career, or retirement. *'Educational innovations ... frequently require teachers to change attitudes, relationships and roles'* (Nicholls, 1983:3). As has been noted above, Chin (1970) sees the possibility that habits and values of individuals (teacher?) and groups can be changed. A tranche of experienced personnel was lost in the exercise (T/DEO-1/4). Thus the change in the age of transfer cannot be described as neutral. The complex interactions created by the changes tend to obscure

> *the fact that innovations are still means by which some people organise and control the lives of other people and their children according to their perceptions as to what is preferable. It disguises the reality that some people benefited from them while others did not, and that some consequences were intended while others were not* (Whiteside, 1978:20).

All the perceived reasons for the change, such as the curriculum arguments and the economic imperatives that persuaded the two study areas, and presumably fifteen other local education authorities, to make changes to the age of transfer, have been rehearsed. Northumberland preferred stability (C/8-6). In any case, what educational or economic basis was there for removing the middle school? Or was it, indeed, ideological? Such questions are at the very point of contact between two distinct perspectives.

Ideology

The issue of the ideological legitimation of educational change stands, in this research, at the interface between the elements of personal/cultural and organisational/managerial. The middle school represents the cultural aspect from the first and the organisational element from the second. Middle school ideology is at best *'precarious'* (Hargreaves, 1980:83) and for this reason, as stated above, as it is stripped away the underlying primary ideology remains (Chapter 8, p146). Middle schools were regarded by some critics as an extension of the best of primary school practice and worthy of implementation only if justified by educational reasons. The NUT (1969), for example, suggested that LEAs who were adopting middle schools, as recommended by Plowden, should retain the word 'primary' when referring to eight-twelve schools. Further, middle schools were staffed by teachers with, in the main, primary training. This led to charges that the middle school *'might now be*

seen as little more than a hybrid of previous traditions' (Hargreaves, op. cit. :92). Reference has been made above to prophetic voices of doom for the middle school. Because this study relates the partial dismantling of the middle school system as a result of the cross-cutting legislation of a National Curriculum, it is necessary to make one further reference to those forecasting crisis in the early 1980's.

> *In succumbing to the pressures for 'basic' curricula and more and more testing, they are aligning their programmes with a curriculum which makes any institutional identity irrelevant. It then no longer matters at what age pupils transfer, because if the 'core curriculum' of basic, standardised skills becomes a standardised reality, the identity is transferred to the atomised individual graded by level of progress and application to task*
> (Wallace and Tickle, 1983:239).

Five years after these words, the National Curriculum was introduced with its core subjects, foundation subjects and agreed years of standardised assessments.

The change in the age of transfer, required ideological legitimation. Salter and Tapper (op.cit:111-114) discuss the legitimation of educational change. Their theory insists that if it is to be acceptable it has to go through an ideological stage. There are, they claim, two aspects to this stage; (a) the way in which policy is produced, and (b) the policies produced. In both study areas, the LEAs formulated policy through working groups which involved councillors and teachers' representatives. Did the representation give legitimacy to rational policy, or was it in fact a false enfranchisement? Was the policy pre-determined, such that the results of a county wide poll in *Oak* could be ignored (L/Herne-1)? What were heads and governors in *Pharaoh* asked to consider, when a common transfer age of 11+ was already decided (D/2-7)?

It is suggested that the working groups performed the latent functions of enabling the LEAs to use them as a jury against which education policy changes could be tested, and as a centre for negotiations on policies which had, in any case, to be discussed with the main educational interests. This relates to the small schools issue in both study areas, and the question of federal village schools in *Oak*. The latter suggestion came to nought.

> *It was a great idea, but I fear the Authority has dropped [it] because no-one was given ... overall responsibility to maintain [it] as a high profile* (Boscobel-7).

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If the working groups could be seen as policy legitimating instruments; then, even more so, the Audit Commission reports were policy legitimating instruments enabling LEAs to justify change due to economic imperatives such as the wastage associated with surplus places. The Audit Commission, moreover, gives the DfEE ideological protection. This enables it to implement successfully its social control and economic functions and to legitimise its policies whilst managing perfectly the tensions between such functions. The twin justification is that associated with the National Curriculum and its Key Stages. As a new educational policy in 1988 it had achieved a consensus of opinion, and was produced by legitimate policy-making machinery. It was dressed in suitable ideological clothes. That is, primary schooling was the dominant ideology and its adherents represented 80% approximately of the pupil population.

Nevertheless, a cultural perspective offers only a partial answer,

> ... *it opens some windows on the [insiders'] world and identifies certain patterns of thinking and acting which may have some explanatory power when [outsiders] approach the culture with a view to negotiating change* (Hewton, 1982:30).

Summary and Comment

The balance of forces in this process was heavily weighted to the forces of educational rationality inherent in the effects of the National Curriculum and its internal structure of ages and stages; and to the forces of economic rationality apparent in the attempts to eradicate surplus places. As explained above, they may have simply coincided. Nevertheless, educational change creates further change. This study has shown that the National Curriculum, itself an important feature of education reform in the 1980s, played a major role in the restructuring called 'Changing the age of transfer'. The structural changes affected schools in that they had to set up procedures **within** the school required by a legislative programme **outside** the school (Fetherston, 1994:189). This research has been concerned to show how schools set about implementing semi-statutory orders, and, not least, the strategies adopted by CEOs and headteachers. The changes may represent an assault on custom and practice of primary and secondary schooling; in the neglect, perhaps, of beliefs and teaching strategies (Fullan, 1992:113).

In offering a modified model which it is hoped characterises perspectively educational change, it is recognised that effects are far from uniform. At each

interface within the model, the quality of change varies with the quality of planning, or of leadership; with the strength or weakness of ideology or culture. The effect on individual careers can vary between benign support and obstructionism. Teachers would have to be able and willing to teach across the key stages in a newly amalgamated school. Fullan's comment is apposite: *'systems do not change themselves, people change them'* (Fullan, 1993:7). A discussion of educational change must not lose sight of how individuals, or different groups, see their work and view the implications of change.

The last chapter is an evaluative review of the range of problems thrown up by the change in the age of transfer, and of their effects, leading to suggestions for possible development of this research.

Chapter 10

Problems and development
Every goal man reaches provides
a new starting point, and the sum
of all man's days is just the beginning.
(Lewis Mumford, 1957:192)

The objective of this multi-level study has been to describe far-reaching
educational changes which, in turn, shed light on the processes of change.
Contraction within the education system has thrown up a number of anomalous
effects. Unsurprisingly, the change in the age of transfer, one such effect, has
revealed both intended and unintended outcomes; anomalies which have
implications for schools, and LEAs. This chapter addresses key issues which
have been identified by the analysis of the change, and from them makes
overall conclusions about their efficacy. They raise as many questions pertinent
to the future management of educational change. It indicates the distinctive
contribution of this research to the knowledge of educational change and offers
a critique of this work. Lastly, it suggests possible developments of this
research.

Introduction
The perceptions of all those involved in changing the age of transfer are the
canvas on which this study can be said to have been painted. This research is
an empirical exercise, bringing new evidence to bear on an old issue - the
effects of contraction within the education system. In such a scenario, the
middle school, particularly the 8-12 model, has proved specially vulnerable.
The scene setting of Chapter 1 highlighted what were thought to be the critical
aspects of this study. However, these have changed through the iteration of
reading, analysis and reading. So-called sub-themes achieved prominence.
Ideology, or culture, legitimacy and rationality suffused the management of
educational change (Chapters 3 and 8). Leadership emerged as a crucial factor
(Chapters 5 and 9). Of all the issues involved it has distilled six aspects which
remain problematic. They are drawn from the analysis of the perceptions and
opinions arising out of the original questions and answers that lie at the heart
of this study. The perceptions of the management of the change highlight the
first - the quality of leadership. Within the pressures surrounding the decision
to change, it finds three more - the compromise of aims, the connected issue of

poor planning, and the perceived breach of trust by the LEAs (Chapter 7).
From the questions about possible benefits and costs, the fifth issue is the lack
of evaluation of these changes by the LEAs. The sixth issue is the perceived
disregard of important educational questions to do with the quality of teaching
and learning in middle schools. They are dealt with separately but it must be
emphasised that this is artificial. These factors are gleaned from the complex
interaction of a major educational change.

Leadership

The quality of leadership varied at every level in this research. All the reasons
for this have been rehearsed (Chapter 9). It leaves one thinking if we shall see
again the likes of Alec Clegg, Stewart Mason or John Newsom (Chapter 2).
These were remarkable educationists whose influence on an individual LEA
assumed national importance (Chapter 5, p79). Among today's Chief
Education Officers, Tim Brighouse of Birmingham is much respected and has a
national reputation for his robust defence of teachers and teaching. Philip
Hunter and Paul Brett, CEOs of Staffordshire and Bedfordshire respectively,
are among effective senior officers who make a constructive challenge to
educational thinking as it affects LEAs. They, for example, want changes to the
pilot OFSTED inspections of LEAs citing an uncertain evidence base and the
lack of a precise definition of the role of a local authority (Hackett, 1998).

Hargreaves (1986:24) agrees that the role played by key educational politicians
and administrators becomes crucial in a time of educational change.

> *For in responding to economic, social and political constraints and
> competing educational demands, such politicians and administrators also
> realise social and educational goals that are distinctively their own. They do
> not just cobble together administrative compromises, but take the
> educational themes of their time and move them forward, giving them their
> own personal stamp and securing for them broad social support.*

Their creative intervention in the policy process effectively exploits a
structurally loose system (Circular 10/65 outlined six possible ways of going
comprehensive), to gain support for their preferred mode of educational
innovation. At a practical level in the two study areas, this research has shown
that the CEOs, far from being visionaries, perhaps misjudged the unrest within
governing bodies and the vicissitudes of local councillors. In *Oak*, the
governing bodies of two schools proposed the closure of a third school
(Chapter 9, page 171). In both study areas, local councillors were bullish in

defence of their own constituencies. In *Pharaoh*, the LEA held discussions with its Diocesan partner (Chapter 6, C/2-95), which, it is intimated, were more of a wrangle over the number and balance of local authority and diocesan governors in a newly reconstituted school board. In both study areas, the conduct of the change in the age of transfer was delegated by the CEO to either the Deputy or to a third-tier officer (Chapter 5). Whilst this may accord with custom and practice - the deputy always manages change - it leads to questions of appropriateness. The breadth of this substantial change and the technical nature of its operation merited a CEO's strategic vision. This could be said to be even more important in this innovation where LEA administrators reached directly into schools to implement the change, and headteachers virtually *'had to get into line'* (Huberman and Miles, 1984. See Chapter 3). In *Oak*, changes in senior positions within the education department at County Hall reduced the management of the change in the age of transfer to a level which invited criticism, albeit *post hoc*, from a serving Inspector (Boscobel). There appears to be a failure to take all the strategic decisions necessary to achieve all of *Oak*'s aims in changing the age of transfer.

Meeting the aims

Do Education Authorities set themselves impossible targets? For example, they try to recognise the particular needs of rural communities served by small schools. This is not a very cost-effective way of providing schooling and education; and LEAs are constantly reminded that they should be efficient, and value-for-money services should be provided. There is argument over the small, local school (Chapter 6, p118), which, it is said, contributes to the community spirit of any area. The DEO of *Pharaoh* believes;

> *This ... point cannot, however, be adopted as a decisive argument against the closure of a school since it would logically result in the withdrawal of all such proposals, wherever they were made and in whatever circumstances* (C/2-103).

It seems that the aim, in *Oak*, of procuring the benefits of all-through 5-11 schools where possible, was irregularly applied. Small schools have been allowed to continue separately, but not without some problems. For example, the close proximity of a small, rural infant school to its nearest primary school, threatened its viability (Boscobel-7, Chapter 8). The aim to reduce surplus places was thwarted in *Oak* by a number of schools taking the Grant Maintained 'escape route'. This represents a clash of public policies which has now been recognised by the Audit Commission. *Oak* wanted to make sure that

children have a school reasonably near their home. *Pharaoh* was sensitive to the increased distances that children had to travel after rural closures. In the extreme that meant eight miles!

Education must be highly sensitive to local needs, yet it must be a national service without regional anomalies; it must provide equal opportunites for all, yet it must not neglect those with special needs; it must be democratically-based, yet it must be planned and efficiently and economically run (Birley, op. cit:x).

If this is true, then are the effects of the planning monitored?

Planning

Haigh (op.cit) thought the change in the age of transfer would make it easier to get rid of *'crumbly buildings and rotting huts'*. Indeed, LEAs planned to get rid of them, but the fact is that some still exist. By changing the age of transfer to 7 and 11, it was claimed that it would be clearer to parents which school was responsible for their children's progress during each key stage. Is it an unhappy chance, or poor planning, that two First Schools with transfer age at 8, still exist in *Oak*? Poor planning is a connected issue with the compromise of aims. More exactly, thwarted aims are the result of poor planning. It is typified also by rumour and gossip, of which there were manifestations in both study areas. The quality of strategic planning was clearly different in *Oak* and *Pharaoh*. In the former it seems to have been incoherent. The sharing of confidences by LEA inspectors was, perhaps, well-intentioned. However, it seems not to have been a sufficiently secure method of encouraging the flow of information about the change. This is what Havelock (1968) calls social interaction (Chapter 3). Without the firm underpinning of a clear strategy, the change was vulnerable to local political power agendas: some decisions appear skewed, producing unintended outcomes.

Breach of trust

It has been shown that educational change may be riven with conflict (Chapter 3). It is one perspective among many and very easily identified in a period when morale may be extremely low. The DEOs in the two study areas referred to anxiety and dislocation as a cost to schools. But breach of trust seems to be more fundamental than this. The loyalty to school of its parents can be sorely tested when major change is proposed. It is a time of worries, fears and good ideas. Whole communities rally round. They often wage inventive battle with officialdom. This is to be expected. But changing the age of transfer has meant

a powerful upheaval for the professionals and families associated with middle schools, or even first schools proposed for closure. The emotion of the time was clearly reflected in the local press. This is what Ball (1987: 60) calls *'rancorous change'*. Teaching careers were disrupted. Teaching opportunities during the reorganisation in *Pharaoh* were offered to candidates outside the Metropolitan District, leaving some of the Authority's own teachers high and dry (Chapter 9, page 171). This probably breached the trust between the LEA and its staff. The process does seem to have been in the hands of governing bodies; but the Authority, by omission, seems to have failed to prevent what appears to be inequity of opportunity.

LEAs regarded it as a management exercise. However, the reaction during consultation took at least one of the DEOs by surprise. The DEO of *Oak* couldn't quantify it, but some parents *'got the bit between their teeth'* (Chapter 7, page 136). The possible interpretation of this is that parental opinion, in some instances, was emphatically opposed to the LEAs proposals. This study uses just such a vignette of change to illustrate the dissonances of view thrown up by some governing bodies, a variety of parent groups, and even some headteachers. Kelly (1969: 69) says *'conflict and change are inevitably interlocked'*. Parents and friends of *The Catkins School* knocked on local doors conducting a census of children aged 0-5 years. They offered the results to the *Oak* LEA; they were repulsed, called *'unhelpful'* (Chapter 7, p137). Parents had confidence in the school. It was lively and popular in the community. The perception is that it was closed to facilitate development of a neighbouring school. Now - some three years since the closure - the LEA has reopened the building. It is a primary school. It has a new name. Some of its younger pupils might well have figured in that local census conducted by the then parent body.

Lack of evaluation

This multi-level study is the only evaluation of the change in the age of transfer. The LEAs involved appear to have made no provision for an analysis of the benefits or disadvantages of such a major educational change. The omission does not, it seems, surprise Fullan.

> *Evaluation and monitoring progress is probably one of the most difficult and complex strategies for change 'to get right'. It is frequently misused or not used (Wise, 1988). It is usually the last component of a change initiative that gets effectively, or not at all, put in place (Fullan, Anderson, and Newton, 1986).* (Fullan, 1992:124).

A review process has not been built in to either reorganisation package. For example, how completely, how far, were the aims of the LEAs met? The social phenomenon of change rarely has one single, simple result. It would be valuable to make an assessment of the positive and negative features.

The disregard of educational issues

Throughout the consultation procedures, both study LEAs presented an educational case for amalgamating first and middle schools into new primary schools. This was based on their view that planning, i.e. curriculum planning, teaching and learning, would benefit from the single unified approach which amalgamation would encourage (C/2-33). Such an argument, however, ignores the fact that middle schools generally had refined systems of liaison with feeder first schools and their associated secondary schools. So rigorous and professionally valuable was this liaison, that it could be said to be the middle schools' 'jewel in the crown'. Why was it thought to be expendable? It was described above how the middle school ideology dissolved to reveal the dominant primary ideology beneath. This would suggest that middle schools were not effectively 'embedded' in the consciousness of LEAs, CEOs or officers, schools or parents to make them a cause worth fighting for. Enthusiasts might, in answer, claim that the loss of liaison is as detrimental to the primary school (C/2-21,22). They would point to the *raison d'etre* of middle schools - that of making an easier and smoother progression from general to specialist teaching to meet the requirements of the secondary school (Bush *et al., eds,* 1980:478).

In fact, at the school level, teachers and governors reacted strongly to what they called *'adverse proposals'*. Pedagogically, the change in the age of transfer was a sea-change. First schools had to think infant and four-year-olds; middle schools had to think junior and year 3 (Chapter 9, p171). It has been shown how heads and teachers valued the extended time after 7+, either in the first school or in the all-through school, because it enabled children to overcome the initial reading barrier (Chapter 8, p152). Also, for example, transfer one year after the National Curriculum assessments afforded staff who knew the children best, the opportunity to undertake remedial/diagnostic work. It has been shown how parents tried to defend their first school in *Oak* but were repulsed by the LEA; how Lisa's parents fought in vain to keep her village school open in *Pharaoh* (Chapter 7, p141). Parents within this study indicated their recognition of the value of the three-tier system. They spoke of the

quality of confidence in their children at the age of eight, at the point of transfer between the first school and the middle school.

A CEO might give leadership in curriculum rethinking as opposed to organisational matters. CEOs might get into the main educational processes themselves, which are concerned with the promotion and encouraging of the establishment of good teaching and learning (Kogan and Van der Eyken, 1973:24). In the study areas, neither DEO was completely successful in reorientating the attitudes of the teaching profession. The quality of what Kogan calls, 'sense of purpose, of educational vision and great persuasive flair' (ibid:27), was markedly varied.

If it was simply a curriculum issue, then Buckingham and Isle of Wight have shown how to fit the National Curriculum to their middle school systems (Chapter 1, p26). No-one in the two study areas appears to have considered such a course of action. In the process of change, Boscobel - the inspector/adviser in *Oak* - believed there was an avoidance in terms of looking at overall responsibilities regarding standards of education and the qualities of teaching and learning. He explained that the views of the inspectorate were not sought during the consultation process. Moreover, he claimed that the inspectors' role was directed more at consultation and support for schools rather than the raising of standards. This was a point of view shared by Herne, the former adviser, and by a headteacher in *Pharaoh* (Herne-1, T/Hti-2/6).The issue of teaching and learning, and the monitoring of standards, which *Oak* had started but discontinued, could have provided a higher order reason for the reorganisation. This is particularly so because key stages were linked to the age of transfer and assessments were reasonably made at the end of each key stage.

Implications

It would be valuable if the relationship between the LEAs and their schools was more clearly understood. The Education Director of Leicestershire, echoing those of Staffordshire and Bedfordshire (above), responded to news that the County Education Service was to be inspected by OFSTED in the following terms:

> *It is acknowledged there has been no definitive job descriptions for LEAs in recent years and that as a consequence, there are varying interpretations of the LEAs' role and a variety of funding and service arrangements* (Leicestershire, 1997).

Had there been more clarity in the working relationships between the study LEAs and their schools, wide disparities of views between headteachers and the DEOs, could, perhaps, have been avoided. There were clearly opposing views, of the efficacy of consultation; of the management of staff changes; and of the management of information, especially in the early stages of the proposals. Reference was made above, (Chapter 9, page 163), to the ambiguous relationship between LEAs and their schools. This resonates closely with Glatter's view that LEAs face a basic dilemma,

> ... *how to reconcile two distinct sets of requirements: (a) to be flexible and open enough to permit staff and consumer involvement and decision-taking close to the point of action; (b) to be sufficiently controlled to provide a consistency of opportunity for pupils and students and to enable nationally-defined objectives to be met.*
> (Glatter, 1979:26).

Thus, there is a clash between the planning objectives of the study LEAs, and the stated need to involve consumers more openly in decision-making. Notes above refer to the false enfranchisement through Working Parties.

New questions raised

The continuing debate about the role of LEAs is likely to be sterile unless it meets the criteria of clarity; what this study called 'openness', competence in its management and its relationships with its schools, and the necessary powers (Wilkinson, 1998). What part will LEAs play in the government's crusade to raise standards?

Competence means effective management, even of educational change. Coherent planning to underpin rational aims and objectives is essential. Necessary power seems a truism. But if the powers of an LEA are derived from Education Acts, Parliament and the Government, what is the role and responsibility of the Audit Commission? Conflicting legislation can exacerbate the complex relationship between LEAs and, for example, the governors of one of its schools (Chapter 1, pp18-19). The government is now discussing with the Audit Commission how it can evaluate schools' financial performance and give heads guidance on spending efficiently (Rafferty, 1998). How often should headteachers expect to see the auditors? How will this new arrangement cut across existing value-for-money checks carried out by OFSTED? It is likely to aggravate tension between the two organisations.

This study in context and its contribution to knowledge

This is a new qualitative multi-level study of the interaction of policy, organisation and management of change by LEAs. Its subject is a recent, and in some parts ongoing, organisational change. It has provided an evaluation of the life of middle schools and their distinctive contribution to education. This study is multi-site and emergent. It has relevance to forthcoming public and professional decisions in at least two LEAs (see below). The conceptual framework of this study is new. It is the political interface between schools, local and national government. Hargreaves (1986:13) recognised that the study of middle schools affords clarification of the link between policy and practice. Because they are, as he puts it, *'at the centre of the system'*, it is *'sufficiently tightly focused to allow the patterns and consequences of educational policy in one key area ... to be traced clearly'*. Ball (op.cit.) considers this area to be increasingly important. This study extends his chapter 'Inside-out' in concentrating on the external pressures and their internal and structural effects. This work is an in-depth, empirical study within the social dynamics of educational change rather than just the institutional and bureaucratic context of, say, Salter and Tapper (op. cit.). It was noted above that the vast majority of studies of educational change are contextualised within the school. This study provides a modified perspectival model to characterise educational change and to facilitate its analysis. It takes and extends Nordenbo's analytical framework, developed with students of information technology, and applies it to the interviews of Education Officers and headteachers. Many aspects of this study could be described as new evidence on an old issue - that of the contraction of the education service. Additionally, it adumbrates an original analysis of the Audit Commission and its legitimating functions within educational change. In 1970, Birley (op.cit:116-7) wondered how far age of transfer was a national issue, and how far a matter for local discretion. It suggests, on the basis of the evidence of this study, that it has the appearance of a local discretionary matter, but, in reality, enormous pressure is applied through government direct action or its agencies.

A critique of this multi-level study

As explained in Chapter 4, when considering how to *use* data to develop an analysis, there were at least two basic epistemological questions. The first of these was:

1.Data on what? What do these data tell me about and, crucially, what can

they not tell me about? (Bryman and Burgess, 1994:99).

Could a survey have been useful? It was intended to approach those parts of
the processes of the change in the age of transfer which would reveal how the
actors worked out what to do in the situation of change, how they experienced
these processes, and to what extent they made sense of them using ideas or
images such as 'inevitable' or 'heritage at stake'. This multi-level study was,
therefore, much more explicitly concerned with people's reasoning processes,
and the way in which their experiences of the change had determined their
actions. Survey methods are not very amenable to answering such questions.

> *The survey collects information from a range of respondents, attempting to*
> *control extraneous sources of variance by statistical techniques and by the*
> *selection of the sample, with the aim of showing the distribution of beliefs,*
> *traits, abilities and observed or reported behaviour in a population*
> (Sapsford and Evans, op.cit:258).

Survey researchers reduce complicated human activities to data sets expressed
in numerical terms. Survey researchers attempt to collect data about larger
populations than is usual with case study research. The Plowden Report (DES,
1967) is one example of survey analysis in education. Typically, it tries to
establish connections between census-type categories (e.g. class sizes, school
roll, teachers' salaries). In attempting to express these linkages in terms of
numerical correlation, survey analysis does not fit easily into the qualitative
posture. It makes an assumption that the agenda for the investigation can be
set without reference to the understanding of participants and their
interpretation of their world. Survey researchers also assume that their method
can be fixed without reference to the emerging data and the preceding
fieldwork. Survey researchers construe the relationship between the researcher
and the object of their research in a distinctive way; they understand it as
necessary but intrusive, and they make every effort to minimise its effects. Data
are only valid, they say, in so much as the values, promptings and inclinations
of the data-gatherer have been filtered out.

Case studies, by contrast, *'treat each case as empirically distinct and do not*
automatically presume that different instances can be thrown together to form
a homogenous aggregate' (Hamilton, 1980:79). This research has sought to
understand the phenomenon of educational change affecting school provision
and the age of transfer of pupils to secondary schools. This can only be reached

through the experiential understandings of those involved in this social phenomenon. Case study has compatability with such understanding, which survey analysis does not. Its data is strong in reality; its data is gathered in part by personal observation. The study is reported in a narrative style, using verbatim quotation, illustration, allusion and metaphor. Data is thus more publicly accessible than in other forms of research reports. Those administrators, headteachers, governors and parents that have become enmeshed in the age of transfer procedures give essentially personal accounts that cannot be reduced to numbers.

The second of the two epistemological questions was:

> 2. *Strength of claim.* How well *do these data tell me this? How convincing are claims I want to make on the basis of the data? How can I make the strongest claims possible, without pushing the data 'too far' by making claims which are beyond their capacity?* (Bryman and Burgess, 1994:99).

How effective were the alternative ways of minimising bias? The answer involves a re-examination of the validity of the data, and thus the validity of the findings. Are the claims made on the basis of the data convincing? Essentially, are such claims believable? Lincoln and Guba (op.cit.) refer to the believability of the researcher's findings. They call this providing for 'trustworthiness', saying that the believability rests firmly in the qualitative methodology. Methodological validity has been adumbrated in the description of its philosophic underpinnings (see pp62-64), and in the differences in the way qualitative and quantitative researchers approach research. They make different assumptions about the nature of reality. The word *assumptions* is the key. One must make assumptions because anything that a researcher might do to test, say, the nature of reality, must be based on some understanding of that reality. A qualitative researcher must carefully match research questions with methods of collecting and analysing data, according to the qualitative assumptions which underscore research practice. Without an understanding of these underpinnings, research problems may be seen as variations of quantitative inquiry, that is, one thinks in terms of the null hypothesis or objective data.

The issue of whether a research finding is adequate for drawing conclusions, building theory and guiding practice, is crucial in all research. Good scientific research, regardless of its philosophical stance, attempts to avoid personal bias, dogma and superstition. 'This is what keeps science from being merely a forum

for proselytising one's own view' (Davis, J., 1997). It also represents a major criticism of qualitative methods: it lacks rigour and therefore is open to bias. However, the problem of bias is a concern that scientists and social scientists share in common. The perspective of researchers is governed by their individual paradigm and beliefs about the nature of reality and research. Thus, there is always an element of one's own "bias" in all research. The qualitative researcher, paradoxically, seeks both to understand the experience and meaning systems of others, (see above p66), whilst taking into account his/her own biases and perceptions which may unwittingly influence the outcome. To do this, one must sometimes confront one's own beliefs and re-examine them or put them aside long enough to incorporate someone else's perspective. Such researchers, including this one, are not impervious or impartial observers. Subjective researchers are exposed to the same constraints in understanding the world as are the persons they are investigating.

This distinction in research practice is critical in determining the approach to data collection and analysis. This study was conducted within educational establishments and among education personnel by one who has a long history of education and experience. For example, to develop a productive interaction with Education Officers, headteachers, class teacher and governors, one needed to be flexible and reflective of one's own practice in research. It is inevitable that such a researcher, as this one, would have hunches about what may be discovered (see above pp68-69). One must be willing to acknowledge these feelings to oneself so as not to deny, overcompensate, or in any number of ways distort the data. But in carrying out this qualitative research, hunches were not embodied in hypotheses to be confirmed or disconfirmed. Methodologically, one's findings are data-driven and should be within a process which is as transparent as possible. Hopefully, this engenders a degree of trustworthiness.

The design of this research has several aspects which contribute to trustworthiness, four of which were especially helpful. Firstly, multiple methods of data collection increase the likelihood that the phenomenon of interest is being understood from various points of view and ways of knowing. Different viewpoints were compared and contrasted across the two study areas and between the several schools. Which 'facts' were agreed and which open to diverse interpretation was recorded. Convergence of a major theme or pattern in the data from interviews and documents lends strong credibility to the

findings. Case study is a triangulated research strategy. Stake (1995) stated that the protocols that are used to ensure accuracy and alternative explanations are called triangulation. The need for triangulation arises from the ethical need to confirm the validity of the processes. Through such triangulation, it was possible to cross-check a critical incident and identify *The Catkins School*.

Secondly, a permanent *audit trail* of the research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), has been established. The research log, the original interview transcripts, the unitized data cards and the big paper process described as part of the constant comparative method of data analysis, all contribute to an audit trail. The third aspect is to 'test' the analysis at intervals with others. For this purpose, as reported above (p68), fellow researchers who formed a mutual support group acted as 'peer debriefers', hopefully keeping each other honest (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Lastly, Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to the process of asking research participants, or 'actors', whether the report accurately describes their experience. In such 'member-checking', interviewees were encouraged to read the transcripts and both Education Officers and headteachers were able to read draft copies of the chapters which carried their contributions. Their responses were made part of the data. The epistemological strength of case study over other methods of enquiry is evident in its rich narrative which uses verbatim quotation, illustration, allusion and metaphor. The data is thus more publicly accessible than the specialised interpretations of other methods. It is not just story-telling or word-spinning. This is an empirical exercise. It refers to the real world of middle schools under threat and LEAs coming to terms with the harsh reality of a contracting service.

The circumstances of the study were clear (Chapter 4). The timetable and the extent of likely involvement were listed. The conduct of enquiry encountered some difficulties. Access to governors was problematic when so many are in business. Similarly, access to parents and pupils was varied between the two study areas. In *Pharaoh*, parents and pupils were in the middle of its programme of change and could speak meaningfully about its effects (as they perceived them). By contrast, *Oak* had finished its own scheme two years earlier. A preliminary, informal approach revealed only unreliable recollection by parents. It would have been at least as difficult for pupils to remember. The consequences of the case study were recognised. Because the research is rooted in the political life of schools and LEAs, each individual (both personal and official, school or Local Authority) was offered anonymity to prevent them

being exposed to critical appraisal, censure or condemnation. This was a particularly useful strategy. Respondents seemed confident and talked openly and frankly. It is possible that otherwise sensitive data would not have been obtained. The design, the carrying out and reporting of this qualitative research will hopefully persuade readers that the results are credible. This multi-level study has sought to establish trustworthiness both by the use of such procedures and the production of a report that represents as closely as possible the experiences of the individuals studied.

Agenda for future research

One obvious weakness in this research is readily acknowledged. It has been repeatedly considered why some LEAs with middle school systems have not acceded to the pressures to change, but there was no close enquiry of the reasons. It would be fascinating to make an ethnographic study which could stand next to, and complement, this research. The parameters of this work did not include such an inquiry.

For the future, two developments are suggested. The first is that pressure on the remaining middle school systems will lighten as attention moves away from structure to standards, such as the quality of teaching and learning. The second is that a study of children's perceptions of educational change, which were only briefly touched upon in this study, perhaps extending the work of Piggott (op. cit.), would be timely.

The latest position

In various ways, the primary choice has become the standard currency of educational culture. Those who had claimed that middle schools no longer meet the requirements of curricular efficiency or of cost-effectiveness will find little comfort in this study. Middle schools still exist (lest one has given the opposite impression!). They are a smaller minority than they were, but defended with great vigour in Isle of Wight, Hertfordshire and Northumberland, among others. Bradford and Oxford have begun a major review of their three-tier systems (Forum, 1997b:8). Northampton, Newcastle and West Sussex are reviewing their middle school structure, though in the latter LEA it is thought unlikely to bring about change (Personal communication, 23.1.98). In Bedfordshire, an Audit Commission report has identified around 10,000 surplus places. The council also wants to build new schools in mid-Bedfordshire where pupil numbers are growing rapidly.

Bedfordshire runs a three-tier lower, middle and upper school system, and has chosen to begin closures in the 13-19 upper schools. County Council projections indicate that all the upper-school pupils in north-Bedfordshire can be accommodated in four, rather than five, local authority schools and the two out-of-town grant maintained schools (Berrill, 1998). As yet, there is no talk of dismantling the three-tier system. On the other hand, Buckinghamshire (Chapter 1, pp26-27) has already approved the dismantling of its middle school system (Forum, 1997a:7). Ironically, Buckinghamshire LEA had been one of at least two LEAs which pioneered the application of the National Curriculum to their three-tier system. In doing so, they had responded to a national priority in a practical way. As if in a chess game, and under threat, they had moved out of check. Inadvertently, Buckinghamshire moved into checkmate. Hedged in by its neighbour, Slough, and by the Secretary of State's endorsement of a GM school changing the age of transfer to 11, Buckinghamshire has been *zugzwanged* by economic forces. It may be concluded that changing the age of transfer was unnecessary. From an educational viewpoint this would be a tenable conclusion, but it cannot be the only consideration. The mismatch between scarce resources and actual provision would be highlighted by differing ages of transfer along the county border. Parental reaction, as we have seen, is one of the newest market forces within the educational system. Whichever way they react, they can tip the balance. It is simply put and valued as parental choice.

Summary and Comment

Throughout this work it was hoped to foster a close analysis of four interrelated aspects of the social and educational phenomenon called 'changing the age of transfer'. Firstly, aspects of the management of this change are contradictory. The quality of planning was varied. Political wrangling was a feature of local argument. Educational change is always an arena of conflictual interests, but in this change not all the aims were achieved. The quality or lack of leadership was a crucial factor. Secondly, the effects on teaching staff led to a loss of morale, feelings of inevitability, and powerlessness. The effects on personal careers ranged from benign support and advancement to obstructionism. The reorganisation of the educational system called on all involved to change loyalties, both professionally and personally. Ball (1987 : 279) observes, *'Careers, resources, status and influence are at stake in the conflicts ... '*. Pedagogic principles have been tested in their adjustment from middle school to primary school. Thirdly, this study has celebrated the

distinctive contribution of the middle school to the education system. It has examined and evaluated their legislative origins. It has shown how the Plowden principles that applied to the new middle schools apply to the issues of today. Lastly, it illustrates the debate on resources by rehearsing the issues of small schools and class sizes. These are both issues which hark back to the quality of planning, wherein lies a flaw. It has shown that schools can solve their resource problems by taking grant maintained status - a bureaucratic bolt-hole. As Shipman (1984 : 189) says, ' *the essence of bureaucracy is that judgements are made according to rules'*. This effectively thwarts LEA planning, but such schools are only following rules fixed by legislation.

By focussing on the perceptions of the principal 'actors', the study has illuminated the tensions between choice and economy which permeate the whole issue of changing the age of transfer, and the wider education scene. There is ordinarily a tension between promoting parental choice of school and that of controlling the waste of resources through surplus places. Even the Audit Commission (1996: 38) recognises the nexus between meaningful choice and some unfilled places in schools to allow that choice. Yet, *'the tightest control of public expenditure is best served by eliminating surplus'* (para. 45). Such tensions have been eased in the past by amalgamations of schools or straight closures. The study has shed light on the apparent need, in some seventeen LEAs nationally and probably more in the near future, also to change the age of transfer. The Education Reform Act, 1988 (Chapter 1, p16), is an example of conflicting legislation. Its introduction of the National Curriculum, with its key stages, cut 'willy nilly' through the three-tier systems of some 30 - 40 local authorities. The tensions between the two systems revealed the vulnerability of the middle school, especially, but not exclusively, the 8-12 model. LEAs therefore had to respond to tensions in their relationship with government on both economic issues and curricular issues. Changing the age of transfer effectively addressed both. Birley (1970) observed that the relationship between government and LEA was, at best, *'ambivalent'*. Even today, the relationship is riddled with ambiguities. LEAs must operate in accord with a range of legislation, sometimes with conflicting policy objectives. McSweeney observed,

'the ambiguity of goals and uncertainty ... made more acute in many local authority services as the barriers to perfect visibility are not simply the technical characteristics of these tasks but also flow from their environments'. (1988: 34)

Fundamental questions are thrown up, such as 'Is it the environment or the organisation of an LEA, like Northumberland, which might enable it to resist intense pressure to change the age of transfer?', or 'How can these tensions be resolved?', or 'Why does eradication of surplus places also threaten the existence of the middle school?' On the latter point, Professor Duncan Graham (National Curriculum Council) does not think the middle school needs to be threatened by the age of transfer as such (Personal communication, 16.2.98).

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Supporting Schools Through a Change in the Age of Transfer

Effective Curriculum Co-ordination

Target Group: Curriculum Co-ordinators in Phase x schools that are federating, amalgamating or extending a Key Stage.

Six one day courses planned. Each will have the same beginning, focusing on the role of the subject co-ordinator in planning, monitoring and evaluating curriculum provision. Other sessions will contain seminars/workshops on individual subjects. Please choose appropriate days according to your school's needs. You are invited to send up to three participants on this course.

Dates: **Monday 16 May 1994**   9.00 am - 4.00 pm   Course XXA
(Workshops: English, Mathematics, Science)

Monday 23 May 1994   9.00 am - 4.00 pm   Course XXB
(Workshops: English, Design Technology, Geography)

Monday 6 June 1994   9.00 am - 4.00 pm   Course XXC
(Workshops: Early Years, Mathematics, History)

Monday 13 June 1994   9.00 am - 4.00 pm   Course XXD
(Workshops: English, Science, Information Technology)

Monday 20 June 1994   9.00 am - 4.00 pm   Course XXE
(Workshops: English, French, Physical Education)

Monday 27 June 1994   9.00 am - 4.00 pm   Course XXF
(Workshops: Music, Art, Science)

Venue: for each course:

Course Tutors: County Consultants and Advisers from the Curriculum and Management Consultancy.

Supply cover is available for each participant providing that a copy of form FFF is sent to:

Please use a separate booking form for each course and print the preference for the workshop subject choice in the top right-hand corner of the form.

AGE OF TRANSFER interview guide Education Officer

* Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed
  ** permission to record interview on tape
  ** confirm confidentiality agreement; names not to be used in any way, nor
          will information be shared that reveals their identity in any way
* Are you currently involved in managing change?
  ** what ?
* Where did the decision to change the age of transfer originate?
  ** what is the committee structure?
  ** who has the power to push such a change?
  ** how has the political situation helped?   The Mayor
* How was the change managed?
  ** who drew up the timetable? when?
  ** was phasing used? how?
* What consultation procedures were set up?
  ** were these in existence or new?
  ** did they come across defined interest groups?   Save Our School
* What cost benefits did you identify?
  ** buildings / sites
  ** reduction in staffing
  ** surplus places filled
  ** other?
* What cost disbenefits did you identify?
  ** building alterations
  ** redundancies / early retirements
  ** training / support / INSET
  ** other ?
* What curriculum issues arose?
  ** matching Key Stages
  ** liaison
  ** other?
* What was your best decision?
  ** why?
* What was your worst decision?
  ** why?
* Would you do anything differently if you had to start again?
  ** how?

* End
  ** fill out brief profile of own educational background
  ** express interest in further follow-up
  ** reconfirm confidentiality agreement
  ** thank you for participating

This data table was kindly provided by the Research, Analysis and International Department of OFSTED.

96F7MID.XLS

MIDDLE SCHOOLS
DfEE FORM 7 JANUARY 1996 DATA

F7 Code - School Type	Number of schools	Total Full-Time Pupils
8-12 deemed primary	245	72857
9-13 deemed primary	2	867
9-13 deemed secondary	336	132320
10-14 deemed secondary	55	18545
10-13 deemed secondary	9	5485
9-12 deemed primary	4	1311
TOTAL MIDDLE SCHOOLS	**651**	**231,385**

In January 1996, Middle schools of one age range or another were found in 32 local education authorities.

10.5% of pupils aged 10 on 31.08.95 in English maintained schools were in some form of Middle school in January 1996.

SUPPORTING PAPER B

The statutory framework: school reorganisation

1. The main statutory vehicle for rationalisation is the Education Act 1980. This sets out in Sections 12-16 the procedures to be followed in - using layman's terms - closing or amalgamating schools, opening new ones, or changing them in any of the ways specified. In addition, or alternatively, providers might seek to rationalise by means of site transfer or substitution. (Annexe 3, Section 1 of DES Circular 3/87 *Providing for Quality: The pattern of organisation to age 19.*) Section 12(6) of the Education Act 1980 specifies that where proposals need approval of the Secretary of State he may reject them, approve them without modification or, after consultation with the local education or other authority, approve them with such modification as he thinks desirable

2. More recently the Education Act 1993 in Section 12 provides for the responsibility for providing sufficient school places to be held by the Funding Agency for Schools (FAS) as well as the local education authority or by the FAS alone in specific circumstances. The Secretary of State has made an order in respect of Warwickshire that the provision of sufficient secondary school places should be held jointly by the FAS and the LEA. This is because the 10% "trigger point" - the number of secondary pupils in grant-maintained schools as a percentage of all secondary age pupils in the area has been passed. As at January 1994 there were 19% of the total secondary population in grant-maintained schools. At present there are no Warwickshire primary schools with grant-maintained status but shared responsibility with the FAS would occur once the 10% trigger point had been reached in this phase.

3. Sections 232-237 of the Education Act 1993 provide various powers for the Secretary of State to issue directions to an LEA or the FAS, when he thinks that the local provision of places is excessive, to make proposals to remedy the excess. He may specify the time scale within which proposals should be made and set out the principles against which they should be drawn up. If such a direction has been given and not complied with the Secretary of State may make his own proposals (Section 234) applying the same principles. Any proposals of the Secretary of State would be subject to a statutory right of objection from the LEA amongst others.

4. The following expands upon the statutory framework and provides advice to local authorities on the preparation of proposals. The text is taken from DES Circular 3/87 *Providing for Quality.- The pattern of organisation to age 19.* It is understood that the DFE is currently working on a new circular to replace 3/87 which will embrace the more recent changes of responsibility.

"The Secretary of State expects appropriate consultations to have taken place with parents, teaching and other staff, governors and other interested parties at the formative stage of the proposals with sufficient information and time available to permit intelligent consideration of a response to the issues involved; such consultation should normally have taken place within the twelve months immediately prior to

publication. It may be appropriate that a range of options is explored before arriving at a specific proposal, but it is important that before a final decision is made, proposers should ensure that in the course of consultation the emerging choice is sufficiently identified to allow those being consulted to focus on it. Where an entirely new option emerges from the consultation process, the Secretary of State generally expects proposers to broaden the consultations to take account of that option.

The Secretary of State expects proposers to be able to demonstrate that they have considered the views of interested parties in their formulation of proposals. He would not expect proposals to be published in the face of overwhelming local opposition unless the proposers could show that no other form of rationalisation could meet the circumstances of the area. He expects proposers to bear in mind that adapting their plans in the light of local people's views is likely to forestall objections and improve the climate of opinion in which they are considered and implemented. He accepts, however, that the statutory responsibility for the formulation of proposals rests with the proposers and that they have the right to select their own preference, which would mean that views expressed on consultation were not pursued (Annex 1, Sections, 9, 10, 11)

Proposers are reminded that in practice the interval between initial formulation and implementation of proposals is inevitably long, and time enough must be allowed for this. In particular, they must allow several months before publication of specific proposals for consultation with those affected, and they should normally allow at least a term between decision/determination and implementation. The period between publication and decision/detetmination can itself never be short: two months must be allowed for the receipt of statutory objections; and where by reason of objections or otherwise the proposals fall to be decided by the Secretary- of State, it takes on average a further four months or so to do this (and in complex cases can take much longer). (Annex 3, Section3)

Sections 12(3), 13(3) and 15(3) provide for objections to be made to proposals published under Sections 12(1), 13(1) or 15(1) ("statutory objections"). A statutory objection is defined as one made within two months of the publication of proposals by ten or more local government electors for the area, the governors of any voluntary school affected by the proposals and any (other) local education authority concerned. Statutory objections under Section 12(3) which have not been withdrawn in writing must be transmitted to the Department by the Authority within one month following the two month period for objections, together with the Authority's own comments on the objections. (Annex 3, Section 18)"

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13 July 1995   **T/HTii-2**

INTERVIEW KEVIN WOOD WITH AVIS AND PAUL

K	What I said to the parents about confidentiality still applies. So let's press on. Who first told you of this intended change ?
CH (Paul)	It was a phone call to me at my office.
HEAD	I first heard about it when Roger S rang me up exactly a month to the day after I had been appointed as Head to the First School. He wanted a meeting between Mr Carter, who was the Head here, and myself, in the school. He said 'I'd rather you kept it to yourselves at the moment but..', and broke the news that there was going to be an amalgamation, and obviously a change in the transfer age as well. We met the following day when he officially told us. We were able to tell teaching staff but not beyond that. It was still fairly confidential at that point. It was really after the holidays that it became more public. We are talking of the summer '92.
CH	I'm sure it was one of the Education Officers who told me. I wasn't Chair at that time though. I don't know what the communication process was within the two schools because it was the Heads and the Chairs and the Officers.
H	Well, it was absolutely identical. *Pharaoh* bent over backwards to be fair to both schools. We had a meeting for both staff early in the Autumn Term of '92. That was actually in our school hall - back at the First School. Everyone, from teaching staff to dinner ladies, cleaners, caretakers, everyone was invited. Again, I think it was Roger S who came to talk to them and they were able to air their views, their worries.
CH	One thing that did creep out. It came to the fore that it's an option to opt out. I can remember no end of meetingstaking place.
H	That was knocked on the head, really, when *Pharaoh* agreed to make it an even Governing Body.
CH	There was a little political wrangle going on.

K	There was and I have read it in the documents. It was something about there being a preponderence of Church governors.
CH	That's it. You've got it.
H	Foundation governors.
K	And the Diocese agreed ? That there should be level pegging ?
CH/H	Yes
CH	There was a meeting which took place, which I wasn't a party to,[Neither was I. I'd stepped out of it by that time - Head] but it was the Chair of the First School with the Vicar, representative of the Diocese, and I think agreements were then reached that it should be on a level playing field. Thank goodness it was, because there were too few representatives of parents there. I mean, you'd got a situation with the constitution of the board of governors of the church school I think only had one. [I believe so, yes - Head] The formulation of the Shadow Board was a little sensitive in the early stages. But it worked out fine in the end. I'd go through it again to get where we are, Avis, I think. Would you ? [--Laughter-- Head]
K	Can you remember the reasons given for making the change ?
H	I believe it was basically to save surplus places, and it was part of *Pharaoh*'s planned programme of reorganisation of changing transfer age back to 11.
CH	There were a lot of surplus places around this Borough. Whether you agree with it or don't agree with what happened, I mean, we pay for it. We pay rates to the Authority same as everyone else.
H	This was another thing that knocked out 'opt-out' really, because *Thebes* needed a Nursery badly and we could accommodate it within our First School once the age of transfer had changed and this became a Key Stage 2 building. That was a Key Stage 1 building with four classrooms, and it was obvious that there were going to be two classes that could be knocked together into one as a 'purpose built' Nursery.
K	Has it happened yet ?

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H	It is happening. We have the plans and it should open September '96. So that's very exciting.
CH	We are probably, out of the reorganisation so far, and bearing in mind the Authority is still only just dipping its feet into reorganisation - because we were the first pyramid weren't we?
H	No, we weren't the first. They started off with the easiest ones first.
K	You are in phase 3, aren't you ?
H	Yes we are.
K	And 4/5 are being done almost simultaneously.
H	Yes they are - over a two year period because they are the old Borough schools that have transfer age at 13 and, of course, 9 for First Schools. It's a different ball game here, really.
CH	We've probably done better than most because we finish up with a Nursery. And the LEA have now publicly made a commitment, haven't they, because there's been a shrinkage in numbers due to losing one year group. I think the only people who are a little unhappy about it are the people down the road in the other Primary School because they want what we're getting, and they can't have it because they don't have the accommodation to take it. Their argument, and I can see their difficulty, is if children come here from the other side to us - their catchment, in inverted commas - once these children who are four years old get into their own peer groups they will want to stay with their friends. Realistically, we want that to happen [We would be silly not to want that, and it won't happen immediately - Head] We've got commitments to all our teaching staff.
K	Will it in that sense be an Open Nursery ?
CH	There will be an Admissions Policy for the Nursery; and the Admissions Policy, I suspect Avis, will reflect the Admissions Policy for the school [Yes - Head]. The Admissions Policy for the school will have to change because of the Nursery because we will have to say in there that children who come to the Nursery don't have the right to come to the school because that, in fact, would compromise the other school - and I mean - we've got to live and work with each other for a

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long time and we don't want hostility there. Apart from the fact that we don't want to be in a crazy situation where our admission levels are 45 and we've got 60, and at the other end of the village it may be 35 and there's only 20.

K   Have you had difficulty with staffing due to age of transfer ?

H   Not really because of age of transfer. But we have had staffing problems in fact. We had two VPRs.

K   What is a VPR ?

H   Voluntary Premature Retirement. We were, at the First School, an 'old' staff. Three were in their 50s - well two and one almost - and they probably realised they would be the ones heading for the out. And they were offered such a deal that they would have been silly to refuse it.

CH   The sad part about it was they were two happy, super teachers.

H   And both from the younger end that was another sad part about it because I was left, from my point of view, with only 2.5 staff used to teaching at the lower end. In fact it became only 1.5 because one fell ill [Extensively, and as a result of that retired - CH] and retired this year.
Obviously I was concerned that we wanted the style of teaching and the ethos of the school to permeate through, and we hadn't got as many of our staff there to do it. It was fortunate in a way that the staff from the Middle School were willing to 'shuffle' basically - and one in particular who went right down to Year 2 from Year 6. She had been trained from Nursery but she hadn't actually taught them. She was obviously consulted before the final decision was made because there were several permutations of how the staff could go.

[INTERRUPTION BY THE DEPUTY HEAD]

K   A teacher had moved from Year 6 to Year 2.

H   Ah yes - D.A. - she was very brave to do that. But had she not done that it would have meant that some staff would have had to leave. And she was aware of that. There was no pressure put on her whatsoever, but it didn't take a genius to work out really.

CH   If she didn't do it somebody would have had to do it.

H	Yes. So she made that offer. I think perhaps in the first 2 or 3 weeks she might have regretted it, but she certainly doesn't now !
CH	She got pregnant because of it.

[Laughter. K "I blame it on the water."]

H	Because of that we were able to keep all the staff.
CH	I think that was the policy. We were determined, and we did our very best to keep the team together; because the upheaval in closing two schools and opening one, and all the things that went around with that. If we were having to get rid of staff as well, I think it would have been too much for the remaining staff to reasonably accept. Fortunately, with just one exception, all staff were on board.
H	Before we actually joined - back in June last year - Adrian, the Deputy Head and I got together and arranged for an outside speaker to come in and work with us. We thought it was better than either Adrian or I to try and run it ourselves. So we got someone in and booked a room at Sphinx Hall and took them all out. It cost quite a bit on the INSET but I think it was well worth it; because of course, as Sam C was Head in this building and still here, it was like treading on eggshells - through no-one's fault. And it was nice to get away and you saw a change in that day because we talked about, you know, what we'd like to get rid of out of the two schools; what we'd both got already and what was the good parts about the two schools that we could build on. I'm not saying we didn't go back a little when people got back into school, but we felt that when we really got together on the final two training days - because the Authority allowed us to have two extra training days right at the end of the summer term - that we had got a start. We weren't starting from nothing.
K	You'd given them a vision.
H	It was their vision really because they helped to put it together. It was well worth it.
CH	I wasn't there. I first saw the results afterwards and I think it was teamed up on the basis that there were two staffs - and each loyal to their own. There were some disappointed people when Sam went [They were bound to have been, and Sam had been here for many years - H]. So the idea of getting people together in a different environment with a strange speaker - in my view -

was exactly the right thing to do. And it worked because people are now pulling in the same directions.

H   They are. I mean the first term when we came back I was very conscious of the fact that there were two camps still up to a point. We had a new staffroom - I thought that was a sensible move - so we had a spare classroom, we had quite a few of those. We used on of those, and made it a central one. Unfortunately, there was no path at the beginning of the year, but once the path was there life became better. You could sense there was a little irritation.

CH   There was tension because PK, the secretary from the First School and SS, the secretary from the Middle School, shared equal responsibility. Two ladies over the same sink. It became a little difficult.

K   Did the non-teaching staff situation resolve itself ?

CH   It did very well in the end. The Middle School head who had moved to another school not so far away in fact, invited his former secretary to join him. [Yes because he suddenly had a vacancy - H] She got what she wanted. Sam got what he wanted. And now the school is operating with one full-time secretary - and PK has a smile on her face.

H   It did resolve itself. As regards all the other ancillary staff - cleaning staff, dinner supervisors - they were all retained.

CH   Nobody's gone. I would have been very sad if I'd had to go to any of them and say "Look I'm sorry but..". I can remember clearly the day when we had all the staff in the school. I could say to them "Well you've got a job." Some people weren't entirely happy with the job they got - one in particular because of the year group - but at the end of the day if you're retaining staff there's got to be some flexibility there.

K   Well thank you for your time and a really interesting discussion. As I said to the parents - I can assure you that this will be treated anonymously and kept completely confidential.
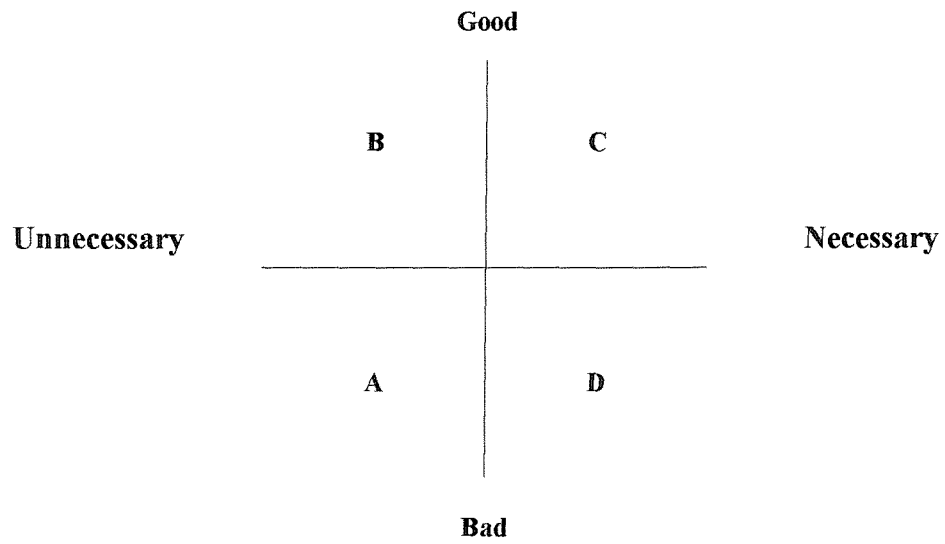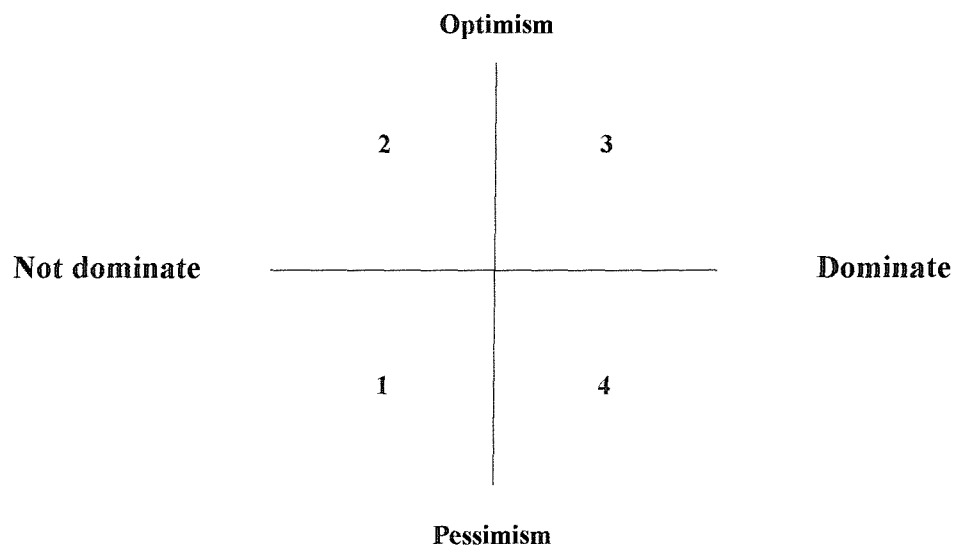
Figure 1: The Individual Pole

Good

B   C

Unnecessary   Necessary

A   D

Bad

Figure 2: The Reality Pole

Optimism

2   3

Not dominate   Dominate

1   4

Pessimism

Branch Structure Example

Level 1		Level 2	
Change seen as personal construct		*Change seen as necessary/unnecessary*	
a) Reorganisation	**b) Consultative**	**c) Authority**	**d) Provision**
amalgamation	heard	appointed	staffing
change	phone call	decision	better
easiest	meeting	Head	problems
transfer age	broke news	final	good
go back	confidential	officially	ancillary
surplus places	invited	style	ethos
planned	talk	public	worth
teaching	air views	Borough	fortunate
programme	worries	fair	sensible
shuffle	realised	everyone	sad
retired	offered	booked	fault
plans	deal	agreed	retained
happening	resolve	basically	badly
rid	concerned	Governors	accommodate
beginning	willing	retirement	knocked-out
building	aware	central	vision
keep	pressure	really	brave
joined	permeate	old	nothing
INSET	together	younger	genius
arranged	helped	several	extra
identical	irritation	able	nice
purpose-built	ourselves	fact	bent
work	allowed	first	outside
permutations	treading	period	path
parts	starting	ball-game	silly
work-out	people	cost	classroom
spare	save	particular	regards
knocked-together	heading	leave	someone
different	eggshells	get away	training

Polar Structure Analysis:

The Head feels that the change in the age of transfer was appropriate; feels good that the planned programme of change is working well for the school and is optimistic about the transition and its effects. She does not feel that they will necessarily dominate either the school's or the LEA's development.

Phenomenographic Analysis:

The Head's Christian vision for the Primary School includes the sympathetic management of staff and pupils, and cooperative partnership with governors and parents. She is meeting the challenge of change with a firm belief in the efficacy of the Authority's initiative. She has a coping strategy that seeks to accommodate all individuals in a caring community of learning and teaching.

Classification: C2/3