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COLLABORATION / NETWORKING IN EDUCATION, ITS CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOOLS.

BY

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Abstract

The underlying purpose of this empirical study is to discover how collaboration / networking in education can facilitate the development of education in our society. It deals with how collaboration / networking can contribute to the teaching and learning in our schools through the encouragement of an open atmosphere of learning, inclusive of all the partners in education. This, in its turn, shows the enhancement possibilities it provides for participating teachers, both professionally and personally, and for students, in the improvement of teaching and learning in the classroom.

The dissertation opens with a glance at education in Ireland to date in relation to the topic of collaboration / networking.

The review of literature draws on current publications in order to set the context of collaboration / networking in education in Ireland.

The empirical research element of this study has come from interviews, conducted with Principals, Teachers and an Education Officer, all of whom are currently involved in pilot initiatives, under the auspices of the National University of Ireland Maynooth, which embrace collaborative endeavours. This study aims to explore the policies and practices which could enable such collaborative / networking endeavours and through the interviews to determine the desirability of such a culture among those engaged in the pilot schemes and the supports found to be conducive to its establishment.

The analysis of the interviewees' viewpoints highlighted the positive impact of the current initiatives in relation to both the collaboration among teachers and the affects it is having on teaching and learning in the classroom.

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Introduction to collaboration /networking in education, its contribution to schools.

In the presentation of my research on the above title, I would like to outline the historical setting in which education has developed in the 20th century in Ireland. It is only by studying this and the developments in society in the latter half of the century that we can understand the need for change in education today.

Society today is a different world to what it was even fifty years ago. Because the very basis of education is people and their development, the educational system, to be successful, must take cognisance of changes in society.

"To cope with a changing world, any entity must develop the capability of shifting and changing – of developing new skills and attitudes: in short, in capability of learning"[1].

It should then set about how best to plan the development within schools so that children in particular but indeed all students irrespective of age can, through the discipline of subjects and development of interests, be encouraged toward development and self fulfilment. This in turn should enable them to be confident, capable, happy people facilitated to make their own contribution to society in whatever way possible for them. I would like to look at society today with a view to understanding the need and value of collaboration/networking in the planning and organisation of our schools in developing the changes within them to make education a meaningful process for those involved.

The purpose of this work is to review the literature, to research and find out how networking has developed in programmes or initiatives namely The Schools for Active Learning Programme, the networking systems in place in the Schools of a Religious Order and The School and Curriculum Development Initiative currently being piloted in Counties Carlow and Kildare. In addition to the study of these networking schemes in themselves, it is of particular relevance to this work to see how networking / collaboration has helped teachers to share professionally and what affects this has had on work in the classroom.

Chapter 1.

Social/Cultural changes and the Need for School Development

1. Society today developing towards openness

Education, in its development of the gifts and talents of people, is intricately interwoven with the society within which it works. People in search of education are people living in society, subject to economic, political, social and emotional pressures imposed on them by that society.

"the school, community and larger social context enable or obstruct learning"[2].

Education is not an element of one's life which can be catered for in isolation, it is very much part of the whole cultural scene and in order to be meaningful must be mindful of the evolving nature of its role. The diverse social backgrounds of students puts pressure on the traditional structures in schools. This demands development as an essential element of education to keep pace with changes in society.

"the world is different than it was, and is changing fast. For an education system to be in tune with change it needs to be flexible, adaptable and responsive to constantly changing circumstances and needs"[3]

"Everything exists as sets of connections with the world around it"[4].

A school cannot function well or effectively in isolation. It is part of a community. In fact the culture of the community is the basis for the school curriculum and the structures possible or advisable for the implementation of same. This means for example, that in the culture of communication and technology, so prevalent today, to increase the possibilities for this communication, schools must be prepared to communicate with the world around

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[1] De Gues, A. (1997) The Living Company, Cambridge, MA, Harvard Business School Press. P20.
[2] Zeichner, K.M. and Liston,D.P.: (1996) Reflective Teaching – An Introduction, New Jersey, Erlbaum, Chapter 2,p22.
[3] Whitaker, P. (1993), Managing change in schools, Buckingham, Open University Press.

them and shape their curricula to develop in the students an ability, not only to cope with these changes, but to use them with ease and, in fact, lead the field in further development. A key element of this cultural shift within schools is that teachers will need to be encouraged to forego the traditional role of operating in the isolation of the classroom and instead to work collaboratively to regard teamwork, curriculum development, decision making and professional development as integral parts of their roles. The achievement of such cultural change in second level schools, according to research literature (Whitaker, 1993), (Fullan, 1993), will require a high degree of openness to change on the part of school staffs and managements, a continuous programme of staff development and other in-service provision in schools and, above all, enlightened leadership.

2. Social And Cultural Changes Lead To Institutional Changes.

There have been changes in society which over time have rippled their way through all strata of society, including the educational sphere. The development of information technology has made a huge impact on society. The improvement in our national economy which has made these things commonplace has insured their influence on the classroom. They have brought the world directly into each individual home. The viewing of television though quite a passive occupation itself opened up the world, different customs and different cultures to all. Discussion programmes and chat shows are available at the switch of a button and people are encouraged through them to speak their mind in every walk of life. Society has become more open, more accountable and more critical.

This new phenomenon when applied to the educational scene creates the need for considerable change. Quite rightly parents and students, in fact the community in general, now feel they can speak up about the educational system and schools, as they do concerning anything that has a bearing on their lives. The Green Paper on Education: "Education for a Changing World" (1992), the Report on the National Education Convention (1994) and the White Paper on Education: "Charting Our

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[4] Land G. and Jarman B.(1992) "Break-point and Beyond", p103. New York, Harper Business.

Education Future" (1995) have sought changes in the administrative structures of the educational system putting in place an educational partnership, inclusive of parents, teachers, pupils and the community.

Society has changed with developments, and as education is the business of training and developing people to take their place in society, so the educational system needs to change accordingly. (Whitaker 1993) (Fullan 1993). Teachers therefore need ongoing training to keep abreast of innovation. Change is occurring at such a pace nowadays that teachers, if isolated as they were historically, could find it difficult without support to cope with the level of this change. A system of collaboration among teachers and networking between schools might provide a support and safety net for teachers in their continuous endeavours to develop new skills (Whitaker 1993) and (Fullan (1993). This was and still is a huge task which cannot be achieved overnight. So the scene is very definitely set for change.

3. Historical Background- emergence towards a difference.

3.1 Primary Schooling

At the beginning of the 20th century the only education provided by the state was in primary schools. These schools were not owned by the state. We had the unusual situation here of schools being owned and run by the different churches but being financed by the state. This remains the case. The fact that these schools are called "national" schools is somewhat misleading. The enormous contribution of religious orders to education in Ireland, in the hundreds of years prior to the foundation of the state this century, should be acknowledged. This was engaged in by them, I am sure, as their mission. However, irrespective of the religious aspect to this, there is a view (Coolahan, J. 1995) that our education system could well have been educationally impoverished without them. Most primary school students did what was the Primary Certificate and left school at the age of 13/14 years. It should also be said that "93%" of these schools are still "under the patronage of the Catholic church": "the remainder are divided between those which belong to

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other religious denominations, and those which are either privately or corporately owned by lay Catholics"[5].

3.2   Second Level Schooling- development of differences became constraints to networking.

The situation with second level schooling is that up until 1930 education was provided privately mostly by religious orders. Those who went on to second level education had to pay a fee. This was not always a very high fee but nonetheless it was parents who had either the finances or who were very highly motivated for their children who sent them to second level schools. In 1930 the government passed the Vocational Education Act which established state schools providing second level education free of charge, to Group Certificate level, to all comers. It was very innovative at the time and provided an education for those who otherwise had no chance of availing of one.

" The remit of these vocational schools was to focus on vocational ("continuation") education per se, and to prepare students for immediate employment and for the examinations which were vocationally oriented at the time, namely the Group Certificate and the City and Guild examinations"[6].

So, for the first time in Ireland, second level education was available to everyone albeit in different types of schools with different curricula and focus. The people with sufficient finances and interest in education went to secondary schools and those without money, or those few in number with money who chose to do so, could develop their skills before joining the work force by attending vocational schools. The vocational system was established as the poor relation and catered from the outset for the working-class.

3.2.1 1960s – State funded second level education for all.

In the 1960s there was a growing realisation that the structure of the post-primary system in the Republic of Ireland was unsatisfactory. In 1968 the government

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[5] P. Clancy et al. (eds.) Irish Society: Sociological Perspectives, Dublin:IPA, 1995. Ch.15 p474.
[6] K. Lynch: Equality in Education (1999), Dublin: Gill & Macmillan. p264.

announced that second level education would be free to everyone. There followed attempts to level the playing field in the second level system. Privately owned secondary schools were invited to join the "free scheme", avail of support from the Department of Education and accept enrolments from their "catchment" area. A great number of private secondary schools opted for the scheme. The vocational schools broadened their base and now offered education to Intermediate and Leaving Certificates.

Following the introduction of free education at second level in the late 1960s there was a huge increase in the number of students remaining in school to further their education. In 1966 the first three out of an eventual sixteen comprehensive schools opened.(Coolahan J. 1981). These were a new type of school. These schools, open to all social classes offered the full span of subjects, academic and technical, and it was hoped that they would break the mould. The new policy adopted was designed to erode the academic/technical distinction, and to encourage the provision of a more comprehensive-type curriculum in both secondary and vocational schools. The comprehensive schools gave way from 1972 onwards to the establishment of community schools.

There are no longer different courses run in one second level school over another. From an examination point of view it should be possible for students to do equally well irrespective of what school they attend. However, schools do differ in relation to the ethos of the school. It is also the case that bigger schools are in a position to offer a greater range in subject choice to students, and there is the social factor as previously mentioned (P.Clancy et al.1995). These differences are so deep rooted in the minds of people that to change them will take considerable work.

There were great differences between the sectors in many ways. Some fee-paying privately owned secondary schools and other non fee-paying secondary schools provided an academic education leading to the Intermediate Certificate after three years, and the Leaving Certificate examination after five years.

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"Secondary schools are legally defined private institutions offering an educational service, this gives them rights in relation to the control of pupil entry and expulsion which would not be permitted in more democratically controlled education systems"[7].

The selection of pupils for entry into secondary schools was practised as a matter of course and those not chosen, for whatever reason, felt rejected. Up until 1995, secondary schools could select pupils on the basis of academic ability by using entrance tests. A ruling by the Minister of Education prohibited the continuance of this practice in all schools receiving public funds.

The Vocational schools are frequently situated in towns where there are also large secondary schools of long standing with whom they compete for students. This is often difficult for vocational schools. They would traditionally have been the school for the working-class people of the town. Because of the "creaming-off" of the more academic students by the secondary schools over the years, it was traditional that those who went to the vocational schools were obviously the less well endowed intellectually and frequently the less well behaved. Many of these pupils came from homes where money was in short supply, the level of education among parents was low and the motivation for education even lower. "While education has the potential to foster individual emancipation and development it can also function as a vehicle for social control and the pursuit of class interest"[8].

The differences established between schools, based on these facts, influenced the perception held of these schools for generations to come, even though the possibility of sitting the exact same examinations and acquiring the same qualifications became possible irrespective of what school one attended. It was, in fact, the basis for the hierarchical differences in our system of education which are still evident today.(Drudy, S. and Lynch, K.,1993) These differences between institutions were the result of historical processes. They were deep rooted in the minds and practices of people in the local communities. These different traditions,

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[7] K. Lynch: Equality in Education, 1999, Dublin: Gill & Macmillan. p264.
[8] Clancy, P.et al.(eds.) Irish Society: Sociological Perspectives, Dublin:IPA, 1995. P491

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orientations evident in the sector could pose a challenge for affecting an effective networking / collaboration system across schools in geographical clusters.

3.3 Cultural diversity, a barrier to networking.

Comprehensive schools, Community schools and Community colleges are frequently the only schools in their towns or districts. They would therefore attract the majority of the local students, losing only those going to either fee-paying schools or to schools within driving range. Vocational schools still attract mostly those whose families have traditionally attended them.

"Parental attitudes towards education and differences in more fundamental value orientations were found to be important"[9].

There are very great differences in the expectations of parents for their children and in the perceptions about what are the desirable outcomes of schooling. Though resources are very much a deciding factor for parents in the choice of school for their children they also exercise choice on the basis of the perceived identity of the school. Parents choose schools which are not only educationally suitable but perceived to be socially suitable. This is probably the greatest obstacle to the notion that equal opportunity can be had by everyone. Courses can indeed be made available to everyone but not everyone is in an equally advantageous position to take up and avail of opportunities. So the result of this complicated process of educational choice is that people tend to remain within their own social grouping.

"it is evident that social class differences between schools were more distinctive than differences within schools, especially at the more extreme ends of the social class continuum"[10].

Students are more comfortable within their own social grouping. " students in disadvantaged schools and in fee-paying schools were conscious of social class differences between themselves and others"[11]. And so it is that parents and

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[9] Ibid. p488.
[10] Ibid. p240.
[11] Ibid. p244

children alike place great importance on being where they feel accepted and where they feel they have a chance to succeed.

So, we have a system theoretically open to everyone in which there is an unprecedented hierarchy which persists despite attempts to equalise opportunities for all. The practices mentioned emphasise the differences between schools, isolating them one from another in their buildings, their ethos, their teachers, who had no occasion to meet professionally, and their students.

The issues here are:

- The building of an openness and acceptance within the teaching profession of teachers of all disciplines and schools,
- The development of this to a level of sharing among teachers working geographically close to one another.
- Through this to develop a confidence in the profession to open up to discussions and review with both students and the community.
- In this way teaching and learning in the classroom could become more relevant and meaningful and thus improve.

The breaking down of these barriers is a huge task facing leaders in the field of education today. However, schools could take up the challenge themselves to develop an open atmosphere between themselves and neighbouring schools and make it work.

4. A Look at Teaching – its isolation.

Teachers, down through the years have been practitioners very much in isolation within their classrooms. It is the work of teaching itself, rather than other possibilities within the profession, that I refer to as being one of isolation.

The teacher's terrain is the classroom. It is the teacher within the classroom who decides what exactly is to be taught or learnt, as the case may be, how much time will be spent on any given item and what response is expected from students. Teachers, generally, would not have consulted with colleagues on these or on

different methodologies possible in teaching. Every teacher has worked on his/her known and trusted methods of getting students through examinations.(Jackson 1968) (Lortie 1969) This was, after all, the real purpose of class work, so why be concerned with getting together with other teachers. Somehow, they were the experts and so whatever they decided within the classroom was undisputed and certainly not a matter for discussion. People were frequently defensive in relation to their position in the field of education. The changes in society in general now show the need for openness and communication in our entire system of education and in fact how essential it is for progress in the field of education. (Fullan 1993) (Whitaker 1993).

5. In-service courses – a move towards diminishing isolation and establishing collaboration among teachers.

The 1990s has been a tremendous decade in terms of changes and innovation in schools. The introduction of the Junior Certificate and the in-service courses to put it in place was the first of these innovations. The tightness of a rigidly prescribed course was replaced by broader topics and guidelines so that there was an invitation to all students whether of low or high ability to choose and learn to their own capacity. There were two levels of examination open to all students in all subjects and three levels in some. This widened the scope for all students and made examinations more inclusive and possible for everyone.

The introduction of the Transition Year, was something very innovative and a breath of fresh air in the education system for those who wished to avail of it. It was to be a year "out", so to speak, within which participating students would engage in creativity, learning and work experience in areas apart from the mainstream courses of Junior and Leaving Certificate. It was to be a "maturing" year free from examination focus and stress.

The Senior Cycle programmes were enlarged to encompass two additional types or styles of Leaving Certificate apart from the traditional one, so that all students irrespective of their ability could find their niche. The first of those , the Leaving

Certificate Vocational Programme, is very similar to the traditional Leaving Certificate except that there is a Links Module with a Work Placement element and compulsory study of a modern language. There has to be a balance of subjects with employment in direct focus.

The Leaving Certificate Applied Programme initiated to cater for the academically weaker students is very different to the other two. It is a modular style programme with short term goals and continuous assessment throughout the course, leaving an examination for a remaining 30% to the end of the course for central examination.

These course changes had a requirement built in to them that demanded a level of communication and co-operation between participating schools and their wider communities. An example of this is the work placement element in these courses. There was a shift, therefore, an encouragement towards openness to work with the community that was a new departure for the teaching profession.

However, with the introduction of the new courses the approach to in-service training changed from a didactic to a workshop style in-service. The Department of Education and Science organised courses which were to take place during the school year, they were delivered in most cases by teachers who were seconded for the job and most importantly of all they were organised to cater for all schools in a designated area. It was the first time teachers were to come together as teachers of particular subjects with their colleagues from all neighbouring schools for the purpose of learning together. The style of these courses was initially quite traditional, in that the material was imparted to an audience whose contributions were rarely if ever sought. However, the lunch and other breaks provided an opportunity to teachers to get to know one another, to chat to one another about the course or their subjects. These courses were certainly an innovation. They did, however, only introduce the possibility of change, as teachers came together at these courses but they did not work together. The appointment of regional co-ordinators for these new courses to visit, encourage and help teachers in schools

within their region is an innovation towards a support system for teachers. This was an intriduction of what had been found to be successful in SAL.

With the Education Act of 1998 demanding the inclusion of all the partners in education, namely teachers, students, parents and the wider community, the scope of the educational scene has broadened to invite those with a vested interest in education to contribute to it. It is vital that an atmosphere of openness and sharing be encouraged and developed in and around schools. Change is a slow process. Teachers need a support system within their schools to facilitate what is a gigantic change for them. One such support system would be that of a collaborative networking system for teachers which would take time to build but which would be of immense value to teachers personally and as a group.

6. Networking , A Way Forward.

"The most promising school improvement strategies place their emphasis on teacher, the classroom, and the patterns of interaction that exist among teachers and between administrators and teachers in the school"[12].

As a result of the value that this holds in enrichment for everyone, is a way forward conducive to creating welcoming centres in which everyone is openly learning from one another. This can happen in smaller or greater circles of collegiality. It can be facilitated by a system of networking. The presentation of some possibilities in a system of networking to assist in the development of schools is the purpose of this research.

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[12] Lieberman & Millar: School Improvements: Themes and Variations. In Lieberman A.(ed.)Rethinking school improvement: research craft and concept. New York: Teachers College Press, 1986.

Chapter 2.

School Collaboration/Networking: A strategy towards school development.

1. Introduction and rationale for school networking

As outlined in Chapter 1 there have been gigantic changes in society, there is an openness demanded, an acceptance of information being freely available, a standard of responsibility and accountability expected. People's attitude to life and concept and quality of living has changed in recent years, as noted in chapter 1. The system of education also needs to change and develop its capacity to deal with students from such a society, to educate and lead them, so that they in turn may participate fully in and to the satisfaction of such a society and to the fulfilment of individual students in the development of their personal talents.

A key feature of today's society is its indulgence in the media. The sharing of information in general through newspapers, television, pamphlets, brochures, billboards and the world wide web has developed people's capacity to communicate with greater ease than was formerly the practice. The ability or need to share either information and methodologies was never the culture in the teaching profession. But it could be helpful nowadays and could provide a support for teachers themselves. The benefits and difficulties of establishing a networking system which could facilitate such a possibility for collaboration amongst teachers is the focus of this chapter.

2. Understanding collaboration – its significant importance
2.1 The need for change

" There is a need to develop a network of co-operating schools which will encourage a new social system committed to change and which will provide

mutual support to personnel in these schools to overcome the pressures to maintain the status quo".[13]

To accomplish this change in education we have to "crack the walls of privatism", according to Bruce Joyce. Or as Michael Fullan writes, teacher isolation and its opposite, collegiality, are a good starting point for considering what works for teachers. (Fullan, M. 1991) This is reiterated by Andy Hargreaves where he explores the demand for change in meeting the needs in society today. These changes are extensive and far reaching. In order to meet these challenges teachers need both pressure to take on the changes and support to enable them to develop strategies, to cope with them personally and to succeed(Hargreaves, A.,1994). Alliances are not just across individuals. Some of the most powerful strategies have involved inter-institutional partnerships – between schools, districts, universities, businesses and coalitions of schools and such.(Fullan, M., 1999, Archer, P. 1994, Callan, J. 1997)

2.2 Society's demands

"The real world demands collaboration, the collective solving of problems.......Learning to get along, to function effectively in a group, is essential"[14]. "The act of sharing ideas, of having to put one's own views clearly to others, of finding defensible compromises and conclusion, is in itself educative"[15]. This system of sharing and co-operation is in fact one of networking as is being dealt with in this thesis.

These same skills of networking in learning organisations are needed in the everyday functioning of the business world. The Conference Board of Canada holds that all companies need people who can communicate, think and continue to learn, with positive attitudes and adaptability, who can work with others [16]. So if

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[13] Schools for Active Learning: Final Report. Callan J. Ch.2, p27.
[14] Fullan, M. (1993) Change Forces Ch.4,p42..
[15] Sizer, T. (1992), Horace's School: Redesigning the American High School, p89, Boston. And Schrage, M. (1990) Shared Minds, New York.
[16] Mc Laughlin, M. (1992) Employability Skills Profile: What are Employers Looking For? The Conference Board of Canada, Ottawa. P3.

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the ability of students to work in teams and to be continuous learners is essential for living then it needs to be developed in our schools.

2.3 "Schools for Active Learning and School and Curriculum Development".

It was in answer to this need for a supportive network that the "Schools for Active Learning" programme (SAL) was initiated and the "School and Curriculum Development" initiative (SCD) which followed it, were undertaken by the Education Department of St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, Ireland. The particular focus of these programmes was the new curriculum for the Junior Certificate in SAL and changes in both junior and senior levels in Irish education in SCD. The initiatives were concerned with effective teaching and learning processes in the realisation of the national curriculum reform at local level. These initiatives set out to increase collaboration / networking both within and across the participating schools and thus to improve teaching and learning in the classroom, which is evidenced in the structures applied in these programmes.

The schools involved were arranged to work and collaborate in cluster workshops under the guidance of a co-ordinator from the Education Department of NUIM. There were teachers as facilitators in each of the schools to lead and encourage the change, in SAL and SCD. In the SCD initiative there was the added appointment of a field officer per cluster who visited the schools within the cluster encouraging, updating and building links between schools.

There were workshops at cluster level for teachers and for principals / deputy principals. Times, dates and venues for workshops were arranged within the cluster to suit local conditions. The fact that the cluster workshops had to be arranged to suit the schools in the cluster, necessitated co-operation between these schools to make this possible. These arrangements required alterations in the transport system serving these schools, parents had to be informed and school calendars shaped to include joint ventures. Collaboration was a necessary element of these arrangements even at a superficial level, but they were more influential than that. The SAL initiative brought a degree of openness to teachers. This

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openness was evident in their interest in new possibilities and in their ability to experiment and discuss their problems and difficulties openly and honestly with one another,(Callan, J., 1994). The importance of participation, collaboration and empowerment was evident in the opportunities afforded to teachers to learn from one another in the workshops organised in SAL. In the exchange of ideas in SAL there was frequently discussion on the efforts made by participants in the implementation of them and in the practicalities encountered by them, some of these efforts would have been quite successful and others not so successful but they were none the less shared.

2.4 Collaboration and success

Inside the school, the collegiality among teachers can be measured by the frequency of communication, mutual support etc. and this is a strong indicator of success. This has been shown to be the case by research study on the topic e.g. "Implementation is an ongoing construction of a shared reality among group members through their interaction with one another within the programme", (Werner ,1980. p62-63.): change at teacher level was strongly related to the extent to which teachers interacted with one another and with others who could provide technical help.(Fullan,M. 1991)

Successful change processes are characterised by collaboration and close interaction among those central to carrying out the changes. Findings on the workshops in SAL indicate that teachers expected leaders "to provide ideas, suggestions and resources,"[17] but equally the "opportunities to share"[18] "skills and experiences are important"[19]. The cluster approach in SAL would unravel new understandings of classroom work and a new confidence and enthusiasm in engaging in a wider range of teaching methodologies. (Callan, J. 1994)

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[17] Schools for Active Learning: Final Report. Callan J. ch.4 p84
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.

In Michael Fullan's book "Successful School Improvement", he discusses how collegiality has been shown to be of paramount importance both for the teaching staff in schools and the success of students.(Fullan, M.1992)

There is no alternative to the primacy of personal contact. As Nias states in her study of school cultures in England:

"(Teachers) are happiest in a social environment characterised by mutual dependence in which "sharing" is the norm and individuals do not feel ashamed to admit to failure or a sense of inadequacy.....relationships between staff who can and do help each other, provide one another with oases of calm in a long and frenetic day, set one another high but attainable standards for professional performance and provide a mutually supportive social environment, are characterised by: personal accessibility; plenty of opportunity for discussion; laughter; praise and recognition"[20]. Nias was writing about teachers in primary schools in England, but the ideal or model of relationships and professional support mentioned here are equally applicable to teachers here and at all levels.

Teachers, traditionally isolated, were and are challenged, and in a sense exposed, by these innovations, even though they are happening in a supportive atmosphere and among colleagues, it is none the less difficult for many of them. Therefore the implementation process for the establishment of a collaborative culture is of crucial importance to its success.

3. Teacher empowerment – collaboration, benefits, challenges.

"The confidence that comes with collegial sharing and support lead to greater readiness to experiment and take risks and with it the commitment to continuous improvement among teachers as a recognised part of their professional obligation"[21].

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[20] Nias, J. et al., (1989) Staff Relationships in the Primary School, London, Caddell. P152/3.
[21] Hargreaves, A. (1994), Changing Teachers, Changing Times: teachers' work and culture in the postmodern age. London, Cassell.

3.1 Achieving through sharing

In Robert J. Starratt's publication "Leaders with Vision" he writes of empowerment as the force afforded through the process of sharing, involving mutual respect and dialogue which gives added dimension to the abilities of those involved. In schools, where relationships of empowerment are to be found among staff, one finds an exceptional school. This empowerment is to be found also in the role of both facilitators and field officers in SAL and SCD.(Archer, P.1994 and Callan, J. 1994/1997) By this empowerment everyone finds a personally fulfilling way of utilising his/her talents towards common ideas and ideals; members of staff are able to achieve things together that they could not achieve on their own; and this power of ideas and ideals raises people's abilities to a new level.

The professional development in SAL was promoted by giving teachers the opportunity to reflect on their teaching practices, to share ideas and experiences with teachers in their own school and with teachers within their locality. There was a focus on the encouragement of whole school collegiality, a sense of co-operation and sharing among teachers in schools.
(Archer, P. 1994). Encouraged participation of this nature that empowered participants to contribute was not confined to subject workshops in SAL. Those held for principals and deputy principals were also participative. An experienced practitioner was generally involved in the presentation and efforts were made to draw out ideas and experiences of other participants. This often became a problem solving exercise, for example, one such discussion was about timetabling. People shared their problems and as a result were given advice by other colleagues as well as the names of software packages and companies that might be found to be helpful.(Archer,P.1994)

In the section on "The New Work of the Principal and the Teacher" in Change Forces (p67) we see the challenges facing educational change, the task is formidable. There must be constant give and take between individuals and the group, the capacity to enter partnerships is essential and a spirit of inquiry and

continuous learning must characterise the whole enterprise or all is lost.(Fullan, M., 1997)

3.2 A relational process

Empowerment in a school context is a relational process in which both teachers and administrators engage in a mutual process of teasing out what the power to be and the power to do means in the school, the positive qualities and the limitations imposed by this communal effort at schooling.
(Starratt, R. 1995). In Change Forces The Sequel, it was found that teachers worked together in subgroups to examine how well students were doing, they related their findings to how they themselves were teaching and made continuous refinements both individually and with each other accordingly. (Fullan, M. 1999). Empowerment is not a matter of administrators giving power to teachers. It is, rather "a process that involves mutual respect, dialogue and invitation; it implies recognition that each person enjoys talents, competencies, and potentials that can be exercised in responsible and creative ways within the school setting for the benefit of children and youth"[22].(Starratt, R. 1995)

The style of leadership practised in "Schools for Active Learning" also embodied principles of empowerment and participation. The director was very much a facilitator of the work of others. When decisions were needed there was always extensive consultation "on the ground".These principles were also to be found in the style of budgeting practised. In its design administrative costs were minimised to allow the maximum possible proportion of the funds to be used at the discretion of personnel in the schools. (Callan, J. 1994)

In the SCD initiative the focus was an invitation to schools to participate so that the dynamic worked from within the school and across schools. There was less imposition from outside than was usual in relation to changes required in schools and inservice courses organised. This was so in an effort to realise the vision of

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[22] Starratt, R.J. "Leaders with Vision". Ch.4 p42, Corwin Press, Inc., California.

SCD namely "the development of a system of interactive professionalism in and across these schools" for the purpose of "the promotion of the school as a learning organisation"[23].

It was also found that informal networks of teachers were emerging from SAL, there was a revival in local branches of subject associations and there was one case of plans to continue subject based workshops after the termination of the initiative. (Archer P. 1994, p.108)

3.3 Trust a prerequisite

Trust is a fundamental prerequisite for empowerment. A teacher must feel free enough to try out spontaneous activities, must trust that there is room for mistakes, that differences will be tolerated and that unique insights will be accepted. Trust is something that needs time to be built up through the establishment of good personal relationships between teachers and administrators "through constantly telling the truth, through encouraging the sharing of ideas and criticisms and through acting on the suggestions of teachers"[24]. (Starratt, R. 1995). Schools, working in SAL, until then had little or no contact with one another but through the building of networking and the sharing at cluster workshops teachers got to know one another, relationships where formed and thus suspicions were dissipated. (Archer, P. 1994)

Schools where staff were motivated and interested in change had teachers who would search for help and draw ideas and insights from external resources both on materials and on how best to put them into practice. The provision of resources is an incentive to teachers to use them, it also awakens awareness "of what is available in the subject"[25]. The encouragement and the opportunities given to teachers in the programme of "Schools for Active Learning" made this openness

[23] Callan, J.1997 Interim Report on the School and Curriculum Development Initiative.p13
[24] Starratt, R.J.1995 Leaders with Vision.p43
[25] Callan, J. 1994 Report on Schools for Active Learning. p86.

possible in a very unthreatening manner. Hargreaves and Dawe (1989)[26] argue that collegiality, "is a tool of teacher empowerment and professional enhancement".

3.4 Confidence

Teachers historically have not been adventurous and, if practices have proved they work, it is difficult to get them to try something that might not work. "The isolation of teaching has left teachers lacking in confidence to risk innovation"[27]. Progress was slow in SAL but was none the less succeeding, however slowly, to bring about positive forward steps in both thinking and in practice. It was an implementation process which provided opportunities for everyone engaged in it to discuss, suggest and share solutions for the varied difficulties and constraints encountered. "Where failure and uncertainty are not protected and defended but shared and discussed with a view to gaining help and support"[28]. (Archer, P. 1994)

Interviews with Principals have shown that "the initiative has been excellent for facilitators", " the facilitators are more confident; this work is giving them an awareness of the bigger picture, what is involved in attempting to bring about change"[29]. The facilitators are an important educational resource in the schools. They were prepared for their work through training workshops. It was stated by one field officer that "they are bonding so well together that this relationship will far outlive the initiative and this in itself will reap many rewards within the system"[30].(Callan J. 1997.p31)

The work of the field officer (Callan, J. 1999. p12) "presents opportunities to committed teachers to broaden their own professional development, particularly in

[26] Hargreaves,A. and Dawe, R. (1989) Coaching as unreflective practice: contrived collegiality or collaborative culture. A.E.R.Assoc.
[27] Hargreaves, A. and Fullan, M. 1991. "What's worth fighting for in your school" p31; and Clarke, C.M. (1992): "teachers as Designers in Self-Directed Professional Development" in Hargreaves, A. and Fullan,M. (eds) "Understanding Teacher Development", London, Cassell.
[28] Hargreaves, A. (1992), "Cultures of teaching: A Focus for Change in Understanding Teacher Development" Hargreaces and Fullan.
[29] Callan, J. 1997 Interim Report on the School and Curriculum Development. p35
[30] Ibid. p36.

the skills of working and negotiating with other school personnel and informally spreading change"

An empowered staff grows to believe that within it's own group it has enough talent and insight to respond to most school problems and create and outstanding school. " By discussing ideas, sharing experiments, and pooling resources, an empowered staff can generate extraordinary energy and enthusiasm"[31]. This has immeasurable possibilities for the building of confidence and the energising of the pursuit of excellence and fulfilment in a school. This "working and negotiating with other school personnel" (Callan, J. 1999) is what is involved in a culture of collaboration towards networking within a school and among schools. (Starratt, R. 1995)

4. Collaboration for school structural improvement – towards implementing a collaborative environment.

4.1 Change, individuality and partnership

There can be no simple clear cut recipe for the establishment of change in schools. It is certain that schools need to become centres of continuous learning in an open atmosphere of sharing values and experiences, beliefs and goals. But a very live part of the challenge of change is that people change as they work through their perceptions and experiences. So, the situation in one school would be quite different from another. What is common to all is the need to build the capacity within schools to handle innovation so that it results in effective teaching in an atmosphere of open collaboration.

This entails taking a close look at the work of teachers, the expectations of society and of teachers themselves, how best time can be managed to facilitate maximum possibility for effective change, with minimum problems of stress and related barriers. It also includes examining how the culture of co-operation and openness

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[31] Starratt R.J. 1995 Leaders with Vision. p44.

can be developed, so that teachers are not isolated and out on a limb, so to speak, but comfortable in the knowledge that help is at hand at all times. There is a partnership demanded by legislation now in this country involving parents, teachers, students and the community. Not only is this an obligation but if it were never legislated for, it is, in fact, ,"an essential aspect of achieving success"[32].

Those teachers and schools that are developing a collaborative culture, will have the skills and the confidence to meet this challenge, because they are already used to sharing their ideas and discussing possibilities. The involvement of teachers in the implementation of educational change is essential for its success.

4.2 Components in developing collaboration

This new model of organisation necessitates new ways of doing things in schools. Teachers are thrust from the relative isolation of their classrooms to the larger world of the school. The collaborative inquiry process involving teachers, administrators and parents in Accelerated Schools according to McCarthy "seems to have the potential to make lasting and meaningful changes in the culture of the school, unlike other quick-fix solutions" [33]. Among the seven interlocking components required in the new work of teachers can be found "teachers must work in highly interactive and collaborative ways in new structures, that cluster students, team teachers, provide common planning time, link to parents and community, and participate in wider networks of learning"[34]. (Fullan 1993)

In order to be able for that teachers must develop the habits and skills of continuous inquiry and learning, in different groups over time as they form and reform relationships and find support in the culture of learning.

4.3 Clusters as a format for in-service

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[32] Hargreaves, A. and Fullan, M. (1998) What's Worth Fighting for Out There? Toronto.
[33] McCarthy, J. (1992) "The effect of the accelerated schools process on individual teachers' decision-making and instructional strategies". Paper presented to the American Educational Research Assocation, San Francisco.
[34] Fullan,M. (1993) p81. Change Forces.

Peter Archer found that the model of inservice provided in the cluster based workshops in SAL was superior to more usual styles of inservice, (cf. table 7 p65), and the willingness of teachers to experiment was impressive (cf. Table 1 p48).The following comments were shared by teachers:

"the opportunity to share ideas is great",
"the workshops are a rare opportunity to compare notes with colleagues in similar circumstances",
"it is comforting to note that others have the same problems as me and it is useful to see how they try to solve them"[35].
Even though there was a shift away from whole class teaching to some extent it was "not radical but significant"[36].

The principle of using the cluster as a network of support was central to this programme. Schools involved were seen to draw some of the supports they needed through networking with other educational institutions, especially other schools in their area. (Archer, P. 1994). This is shown also in the Newmann and Wehlage's (1995) study of successful schools internal collaboration extended to encompass from the wider environment the use of staff development opportunities and external accountability standards. (Fullan, M.1999)

The involvement of local expertise in SAL was sought both in the teachers need for workshop presentations and in the deliberate attempts made to involve local Teacher Centres. Efforts were also made to develop networks within each cluster e.g. facilitators within a cluster met after workshops to discuss progress and workshops were also held at cluster level for principles and deputy principles. "Principals and vice-principals, in particular, seemed to experience the clustering of schools as one of the most significant features of the initiative"[37].

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[35] Archer, P. (1994) An external Evaluation of Schools for Active Learning. P45.
[36] Ibid. p52.
[37] Ibid. p40.

Regarding the workshops "Principals and Vice-Principals expressed general satisfaction with the format – and several had done other courses so comparisons were at hand"[38]. School based activities which were designed from the activities in the workshops included, reviewing their role, working on staff motivation, developing groups/ teams and delegation.

There was an expectation or hope that workshops would focus on efforts by teachers in their own classrooms, that suggestions made at workshops would be taken back to the classrooms for experimentation and that the experiences and results would be shared.

In an assessment of the workshops for teachers it was concluded that the use of actual classroom materials and the discussion of problem solving processes proved to be very stimulating. These workshops did effect the thinking and the practices of teachers, though naturally this varied among them. Comments from teachers include "Very good facilitators, they have a good attitude; they aren't offering pearls of wisdom but are encouraging the sharing and pooling of ideas", "I was very sceptical about this at the start, but in fairness it worked well. I tried some of the activity based learning and it did work", "mixed feelings"[39].

4.4 Facilitators

The facilitators were key people in this system. They worked within their schools on school based workshops and some were selected then to lead workshops for teachers at cluster level.(Archer, P. 1994). An equivalent is to be found in the selected "mentors" in Little (1990b). It was found to be of great importance that the selection of both facilitators and mentors be based on their expertise and their credibility in the classroom and among their colleagues.

Facilitators giving presentations, in SAL, often referred to and called upon other teachers present as having greater and wider experience than themselves.

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[38] Ibid. p20
[39] Ibid. p31

Demonstrations of methodologies were a common feature of workshops. There were frequently lively discussions about the strengths of particular methodologies. Discussions on resources and the sharing of ideas about relevant materials formed the basis for a list of relevant materials to be put together and be available to teachers in the course of the workshop.

Facilitators were encouraged to adopt what was termed an "assignment orientation" i.e. participants were asked to take on assignments they would be willing to report back on at the next workshop. This was very low key in the form of suggestion that methods might be tried out and reported back on. However, what worked best was when particular people took responsibility to experiment and report back.

It is evident that the "Schools for Active Learning" programme has made major inroads into creating the atmosphere and climate for change in the schools chosen for the initiative. Therefore to establish support structures and institutional co-operation to facilitate this reality of collaboration, where teachers could share expertise and learn from each other, was important to this programme.

5. Staff development and the implementation of change

Let us take staff development as a strategy for implementation. This was reviewed earlier in Fullan and Pomfret 1977[40] where it was shown that staff development and effective implementation of innovations were strongly interrelated. It made little difference whether the innovations were locally or externally developed.

5.1 Teacher collegiality a basis for success

We look at developments or changes in schools that create their capacity and performance for continuous rather than short-term improvements.

[40] Fullan, M. and Pomfret,A. (1997) Research in curriculum and instruction implementation. Review of Educational Research, 5(47), 335-97.

"Teacher collegiality and other elements of collaborative work cultures are known to be related to the likelihood of implementation success (Fullan and Pomfret 1977, Little 1982). So we can understand that schools, where norms of collegiality and experimentation are to be found, are much more likely to implement change successfully. These can never be taken for granted, though, by staff developers who should consider the school as a whole organisation just as much as they do individuals or small groups of staff.

So school improvement is very much dependent on, and interwoven with, teacher development. Successful school improvement as a permanent capacity within a school will not be achieved, unless staff development and institutional development are moulded into an integrated reality.

5.2 Cox and deFrees, Lieberman et al. and the Chicago reform

Fullan writes on the work of Cox and deFrees (1991) on the restructuring programme in ten schools in Maine, that they have made considerable progress in four areas: refocusing student experiences, altering teaching and learning, redesigning the school, and making connections with people and agencies outside the school. (Fullan, M. 1993: Archer, P.1994: Callan J. 1999). This restructuring included making time, forging links, asking questions about power, talking about what constitutes successful learning and other pertinent elements.

Lieberman, Darling-Hammond and Zuckerman (1991) describe the lessons from the project in twelve schools in New York City. (Fullan, M. 1993). Among the positive outcomes were: Student-centred changes in curriculum and teaching strategies, parent involvement in events outside school hours, more successful approaches to such things as discipline and classroom management. This led to the creation of a sense of hope, the discovery of strengths, talents, and shared ideals among staff, the strengthening of professional norms as teachers learned how to collaborate, deepen their expertise and make time to share ways to improve teaching and learning for students[41]. Lessons learnt here were increasingly

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[41] Lieberman et al. (1991) Early Lessons in Restructuring Schools, New York.,p35/6.

familiar as they tied in well with those learnt in other projects mentioned. Areas of importance were the fact that

- conflict is an inevitable part of change,
- team-building must involve everyone in the school,
- finding time for change enhances the prospects for success,
- facilitators combined with opportunities for training are critical elements of successful restructuring efforts[42].

The Chicago reform story centres around elementary schools. The experiment began in 1988 in its 550 schools. Over one third of the schools improved substantially, others improved moderately, whereas a minority, some 15% declined. Bryk et al. (1998a) give us further detail in their summary of the salient features of organisational change which sound familiar:

"Engagement of parents and community resources;

Access to new ideas;

Professional community;

Internalising responsibility for change;

Strategic educational planning"[43].

We have found in the Chicago schools that they "drew upon an extensive array of outside connections – including individual faculty at local colleges and universities, programmes supported by area foundations, the business community, and other institutions – to guide and support their organisational development"[44],(Fullan, M. 1999) Similarly in the SAL and SCD initiatives schools were both co-ordinated and extensively supported by the University of Ireland, Maynooth and by other schools in their area. (Archer, P.1994; Callan J.1994 and 1999)

5.3 The School and Curriculum Development Initiative

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[42] Ibid. p36-38.
[43] Bryk et al., (1998a) Charting Chicago School Reform, Boulder, CO, Westview Press.
[44] Bryk et al., (1998a), p242.

The School and Curriculum Development Initiative (SCD) has a lot of similarities with the Schools for Active Learning Programme (SAL) and could be seen really as a development of the work accomplished there. Again the participating schools, of which there were twenty, were geographically adjacent to Maynooth. They were organised around four clusters: Newbridge, Kildare, Carlow town and Co. Carlow. The structure of clusters which had proved to be particularly effective in the SAL programme was again chosen to be the vehicle through which teachers of different subjects would come together. This enabled the building of relationships and the development of understanding and collaboration which could facilitate the sharing of skills, practices and experiences and thus enrich teaching possibilities. (Callan, J.1998; Louis 1989; La Rocque and Coleman 1989a).

The adopted structure of having facilitators in every school, of the visits of a field officer who was in touch with all of the schools, of the cluster workshops which were consultative and inclusive of all participants, all helped to mould the thinking of teachers so that they themselves felt the need for change and were more comfortable in tackling it, in the available support through SCD.

Equally important was the style of management of the overall co-ordinator who suggested, queried and discussed possibilities to inspire contributions from schools. This was painstakingly worked at on the ground, to create a culture of collaboration among teachers, which somehow seemed to grow from within.(Callan, J.1999).

The workshops for Principals/ Deputy Principals endeavoured to develop school leadership qualities which would promote a "learning-enriched environment in the school"[45], the development of skills in people management and skills in developing the school as a learning organisation. The actual topics were informed by the schools, in answers to questionnaires to solicit their greatest needs, so that they would be found relevant to the day to day work of leaders. This style of co-operative working was also researched and analysed by Louis in case studies of five reportedly effective schools and their districts. The scenario here was one of

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[45] Callan, J. (1997) Interim Report on "School and Curriculum Development" p6.

"co-management, with co-ordination and joint planning enhanced through the development of consensus between staff members at all levels about desired goals for education" [46]. It was only those schools so engaged that experienced successful school improvement projects.(Louis 1989).

5.4 La Rocque / Coleman and Rosenholtz

Equally in LaRocque and Coleman's (1989a) analysis of "district ethos" and quality in school districts in British Columbia, independently and systematically arrived at, the findings were similar. They reckoned that a high degree of interest and concern relative to six sets of focuses would characterise positive district ethos. These focuses were ones of learning, accountability, change, caring, commitment and community.(La Rocque and Coleman 1989a).

Fullan in writing on Rosenholtz's (1989) research made it clear that principals must be continuous learners and through their leadership create conditions for teachers to be continuous learners also. The changing of schools has been most effective and enduring in influencing the entire school culture when "a strategy involving collaborative planning, shared decision making, and collegial work in an atmosphere friendly to experimentation and evaluation" was the norm.(Purkey and Smith 1985).

Change always means learning either something new in itself or learning how to put new strategies in place. Therefore the process of implementation is always one of learning. When it is focussing on particular innovations, staff need to be trained or developed to manage the innovation on a personal level and then to implement the innovation both on an individual and collective level.

6. Collaborative teaching and learning towards a community of learners

6.1 Teacher development towards collaboration

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[46] Louis, K. (1989) The role of the School District in School Improvement, Toronto, OISE Press. p161.

To a degree the openness and collaboration among teachers as a result of the SAL initiative is largely due to the style of in-service employed by the programme. This was a model of in-service development which in its structure and its style discovered a useful mechanism to break the hard ground firmed by routine and secure practices. It seemed that participating teachers readily accepted it with a notable degree of enthusiasm. It restored their faith in in-service as evidenced in their willingness to openly discuss difficulties and enthusiastically share their experience and expertise. These changes, though perhaps small enough when taken separately, when taken as a whole had potential to bring about a considerable change in the climate of schools. They had promise for teacher enrichment, which they effected to a modest extent and were the basis for the realisation of a collaborative teaching and learning school culture which became the focus of the School and Curriculum Development Initiative (SCD).

Headteachers were also learners with their staffs, they encouraged and actively supported the interests of staff and responded to their concerns by recommending courses, other schools to visit, people to talk to or appropriate reading. They initiated developments themselves and supported the initiatives taken by others[47]. It also emerged that while working together many teachers changed their beliefs and practices over time but tensions and disagreements had to be worked through for this to occur. Tension is part of collaborative working[48]. A shared sense of purpose and related action is something to be eternally worked towards and is never fully achieved.

The following study of five primary schools which were selected on the basis of their commitment to work as a group, offers particularly good examples of the dynamics of collaboration and change. The topic of the study was whole school curriculum development in these schools in the UK. The study was carried out by Nias, Southworth and Campbell, in 1992. Two of the four themes enumerated by

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[47] Nias, J., Southworth, G. and Campbell, P. (1992) Whole School Curriculum Development in the Primary School, Lewes, Falmer Press. P104.

[48] Ibid. p153

Nias et al's investigation stand out from others in their relationship to this work on networking:

(1) the central importance of teachers' learning, individually and in relation to colleagues:

(2) how changes in teachers' beliefs and practices toward greater "sharedness" evolve over time and how independence and interdependence co-exist in dynamic tension – conflict is normal.

The foundation theme identified by Nias et al is teachers' learning: "the main impetus for their learning came from the shared belief that existed in all the schools that practice could always be improved and hence that professional development was a never-ending process a way of life"[49]. Further to that teachers who wanted to improve their practice were characterised by four attitudes:

- they accepted it was possible to improve,

- were ready to be self critical and to recognise better practice than their own and

- they were willing to learn what had to be learned in order to be able to do what needed or had to be done[50].

Nias et al.(1992) conclude that whole school curriculum development is inherently complex, that individual and shared concerns must coexist in dynamic tension and that under these conditions continuous learning is the key ingredient for development. Change continues, there is no end to it.

An external evaluation of Schools for Active Learning was conducted and published by Peter Archer in July 1994. In the concluding pages of the external evaluator's report on SAL there are some noteworthy conclusions in relation to the impact of this initiative on both teaching in the classroom and in the support of networking. The experimentation of ideas for workshop purposes was not confined to the occasional "trying out". There was an obvious shift, however modest, away from traditional teaching methods. Teachers were prepared to risk experimentation and had developed the confidence to do so, sure of the support that could now be tapped.

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[49] Ibid.. P72.

6.2 Staff development leads to improved student outcomes

Though it was felt that staff development must surely have positive effects on student achievement it was not proved to be the case until Stallings set out in 1989 to improve teaching and student achievement in reading practices in secondary schools. The research was extensively carried out over years which meant it was not of the quick fix style but took consistent management on three different designs involving different groupings of teachers. The cornerstone of the model, according to Stallings, are

"1. Learn by doing: try, evaluate, modify, try again

   2. link prior knowledge to new information

   3. learn by reflecting and solving problems

   4. learn in a supportive environment: share problems and successes"[51].

This is further corroborated by research done in Richmond County, Georgia, US which further confirms the link between staff development , implementation and student outcomes. There was initially eighteen months of intensive training and follow-up with teams of teachers focusing on models of teaching. In their findings Joyce and his colleagues claimed considerable implementation in the classroom related to a dramatic impact on student achievement and student promotion rates.(Joyce et al. 1989)[52]

Michael Fullan in "Change Forces , The Sequel" deals with the question of collaborative schools in chapters three and four. He cites the work of Newmann and Wehlage (1995)[53] and their colleagues Louis and Kruse (1995)[54] where explicit evidence on the relationship between professional community and student performance is provided. They traced the reasons for the better performance of

[50] Ibid. p73.

[51] Stallings, J.A. (1989) School achievement effects and staff development: what are some critical factors? Paper Presented to American Educational Research Association, San Fransisco.

[52] Joyce, B. et al (1989) School renewal as cultural change. Educational Leadershop, 47(3), 70-8.

[53] Newman, F. and Wehlage, G. (1995) Successful School Restructuring, Madison, WI, Centre on Organisation and Restructuring of Schools.

students to whether or not the school had a "high professional community". Among their arguments for professional communities making a difference to the success or otherwise of a school are the following "teachers engage in collaborative activity to achieve the purpose", "teachers take collaborative responsibility for student learning...." And "schoolwide teacher professional community affected the level of classroom authentic pedagogy, which in turn affected student performance"[55]. There are other examples of the effects of inside school collaboration . One such example is from work in secondary school reform in Winnipeg in the Manitoba School Improvement Programme (MSIP). The programme was designed "to improve the learning experiences and outcomes of secondary school students......by building schools' capacities to become transforming schools that engage students actively in their own learning"[56].

Bryk et al, found that the Chicago schools that made a difference were schools where teachers felt comfortable exchanging ideas and where a collective responsibility for student development was likely to emerge.It is encouraging to find that collaborative cultures have been found to have such positive effects on teacher development and student successes.

"As work becomes more complex and collaborative, companies where people work together best have a competitive edge"[57]. The concept of collaboration must spill out beyond the confines of the school.

Another example is in the Learning Consortium arrangement, established in Ontario [58]. For this study there was a partnership of four large school districts and two higher education institutions attempting to link classroom improvement and school improvement through collaborative university, district and school activities. The focus here was on instruction and learning in the classroom and continuous teacher development. The hallmark of the Learning Consortium is the opening up

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[54] Louis,K. and Kruse, S. (eds) (1995) Professionalism and Community, Thousand Oaks, CA, Corwin Press.
[55] Fullan, M. (1999) Change Forces, The Sequel, p32.
[56] Ibid. p34
[57] Goleman, D. (1998) Working with Emotional Intelligence, New York, Bantam Books.
[58] Fullan, M., Rolheiser-Bennett, C. and Bennett, B. (1990) Linking classroom and school improvement. Educational Leadership, 47(8),13-19.

of relationships across classrooms, schools and systems by developing and implementing new norms and practices for continuous improvement.

"The Learning Consortium has been successful in mobilising large numbers of school and district personnel in voluntary, co-operative action to improve the learning environments of both teachers and students"[59].

6.3 Community of learners

There is growing evidence that positive attention to matters outside the classroom can significantly improve what goes on within the classroom, just as the lives of students inside the classroom is enormously affected by what is happening at home and among their friends.

Sizer's Coalition of Essential Schools established to help each student to "learn to use one's mind well"[60] is very interesting in relation to the large number of schools in the U.S. who joined the network based on the principles in place by Sizer. There was a strong sense of presenting education as relevant to the everyday lives of students and of the value of co-operation in the acquiring of education, once again the sense of collaboration. "The development of a sense of community and the habits and skills of collaboration among students is also a central tenet of all proposals to develop schools as learning organisations"[61] in both Gardner's "The Unschooled Mind" and Sizer's maxims that "teams of teachers should have direct responsibilities for developing a community of learners"[62]. " "you cannot have students as continuous learners and effective collaborators, without teachers having these same characteristics"[63]. "Teachers must succeed if students are to succeed, and students must succeed if society is to succeed"[64].

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[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid. p44.
[61] Ibid. p44
[62] Ibid. p44/45
[63] Sarason, S. (1990) The Predictable Failure of Educational Reform, San Fransisco, CA, Jossey-Bass.
[64] Fullan, M. (1993)Change Forces.p46.

The more that schools become collaborative in their culture the greater the sense of sharing and openness within the school and consequently the greater the cohesion will develop between the school and the other partners in education. Both the school and the community can contribute to each other's development. "The most important task facing the school in the immediate future is collaboration with parents in building active communities of learners"[65]. (Coleman,J.1998) "to transform the school from a bureaucratic organisation to a thriving community of learners"[66].(Fullan, M. 1993)

7. Constraints in the implementation of collaboration

It is the contention of M. Fullan in Change Forces (1993) that reform projects in schools which underestimated the need for collaboration and networking on the ground among teachers in relation to their work in the classroom ran into difficulty and were not as successful as they might otherwise have been.

7.1 Minimal change in teaching or teacher collaboration

One such was the New Futures Initiative to restructure urban schools in the US. This was a programme set up to run for five years. However, after three years, it was found that New Futures interventions "left the basic policies and practices of school unchanged" [67]. Of twenty-three components making up the changes across the schools, sixteen were classified as having "no impact" on instruction, five had "minimal", one had "some" and one had "substantial". "It stimulated almost no fundamental change in the primary intellectual activities…in schools" [68] nor did it result in qualitative changes in the working relationships among teachers. "Simply providing time to meet …was no guarantee that teachers would know how to work

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[65] Coleman, J. (1998) Parent, Student and teacher Collaboration: The Power of Three, Corwin Press.
[66] Fullan, M.(1993) Change Forces. Ch.4, p42
[67] Wehlage, G. et al. (1992) Restructuring urban high schools: The New Futures Experience, American Educational Research Journal p66.
[68] Ibid. p73

together in ways likely to result in more engaging curriculum and improved student performance"[69].

It seemed that a culture of networking had not been worked upon which would develop the habits, skills and beliefs necessary to enrich the teaching and learning. This underlines the importance of building a culture of openness and collaboration leading to networking, to enrich effective teaching and learning.

Taylor and Teddlie [70] draw similar conclusions from their study of the extent of classroom change in "a district widely acclaimed as a model of restructuring"[71] undertaken in thirty- three schools. Teachers in sixteen of the schools reported higher levels of participation in decision making, but they found no differences in teaching strategies used. They also found there was little evidence of teacher-teacher collaboration. In fact, extensive collaboration was found in only two of the thirty-three schools.

While facilitators in SAL encouraged the participation of teachers through asking them to present examples of their work, response was relatively poor. (Archer, P. 1994) Teachers still prefer to get hand-outs of other peoples' work to contributing some of their own! The question remains, is this through fear, shyness or laziness? Direct transfer from workshops to the classroom proved difficult and even rare. Whole class teaching still remained the most common form of teaching. (Archer, P 1994)

There is also a study by Berends (1992) which revealed that only 23% of the schools nominated had addressed the four components of
- student experiences,
- professional life of teachers,
- governance and
- community co-ordination.

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[69] Ibid. p76
[70] Taylor, D.and Teddlie, C. (1992) " Restructuring and the classroom: A view from a reform district: American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.

Among conclusions about the failure to reform drawn by M. Fullan are that " the core culture of teaching and learning is extremely difficult to change,......partly because most strategies fail to focus on teaching and learning. Change in teaching for more effective learning requires major transformation in the culture of the school, and in the relationship of the school to other agencies – an incredibly complex undertaking"[72].

7.2 Imposed change doomed to failure

Conflict is a necessary part of change. Reactions and perceptions are not always favourable, and it is a considerable challenge to schools to learn to make their way, in what can sometimes be a hostile environment. Change can be demanded by authorities in their official policies, but changes of this kind are superficial.(Hargreaves, A.1994). There needs also to be guided content to include all staff members sharing and respecting each others ideas so that some may not be inhibited and thus become dependent on colleagues instead of contributing. A balance needs to be carefully maintained so that administrators do not use this culture of collaboration to impose their control and power, but rather that it serves the implementation of innovation in a pluralistic and flexible manner to encourage personal growth and development.

"The breakdown of teacher isolation is a mechanism designed to facilitate" the introduction of new teaching styles "imposed by experts from elsewhere in which teachers are as technicians rather than professionals exercising discretionary judgement"[73].(Hargreaves,A. and Dawe,R.1989)

Teachers in the Taylor and Teddlie study (1992) did not alter their practice ....increasing their participation in decision-making did not overcome norms of autonomy so that teachers would feel empowered to collaborate with their

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[71] Ibid. p4
[72] Fullan M. (1993) Change Forces p54.
[73] Fullan, M.(1992) Successful School Improvement. P107.

colleagues"[74]and the impact on schools was minimal without this collaboration. The point is not that participation in decision-making is a bad thing: it is that it is not focussing on the right things – the cultural core of curriculum and instruction. (Fullan, M. 1993).

According to M.Fullan (p50-54) there were similar findings obtained in the implementation of the Chicago Reform Act of 1989 and the introduction of development plans in the UK to assist schools in co-ordinating their work following central government reforms and LEA initiatives. Wallace 1992 found that the required developmental planning process did not match the realities and complexities of the school.

Hallinger, Murphy and Hausmann (1991) found that though principals and teachers were hugely in favour of restructuring they did not make the connections "between new governance structures and the teaching-learning process"[75]. With the best will in the world commanding change or putting new programmes in place has not addressed the cultural core of curriculum and instruction and so has not been sufficient to bring about real improvement in the teaching and learning processes so that they became more effective.

7.3 Rushing reform is problematic

"It is well known that major policy initiatives are often introduced rapidly, with little thought of time given to consider implementation"[76].(Joyce and Showers 1988). Little (1990b: 9-10) cites the Californian Mentor Teacher programme where a precipitous schedule of implementation was forced to fit in to the state's fiscal year[77]. Based on nine case studies and a summary of 291 districts, Bird

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[74] Fullan, M.(1993) Change Forces. P50.
[75] Hallinger, P. et al. (1991) "Conceptualising school restructuring: Principals' and teachers' Perceptions", American Educational Research Association, Chicago.
[76] Fullan, M. (1992). Successful School Improvement p101
[77] Little, J. (1990b) The mentor phenomenon and the social organisation of teaching. Review of Research in Education 16, A.E.R.Assoc.

(1986)[78] concludes that, "a good deal was lost, and little or nothing gained, by haste in implementing the mentor program".

It was further found that rushing complex innovations often results in simplifying and reducing the scope of change. Little notes Huberman and Miles's observation based on their twelve case studies of innovation of how "downsizing" got rid of most headaches during the initial implementation but also threw away most of the potential rewards: the project often turned into a modest, sometimes trivial enterprise"[79].

We need to be aware that in contrived collaboration there is a danger that those in authority will bring about certain innovation by using the collaboration of teachers while at the same time stifling the individuality and creativity of teachers.

7.4 Resources

The constraints imposed by time, space and resources were considerable in the **SAL** programme. Time was needed to plan for active learning, to prepare materials, for teachers to explore together. (Archer, P. 1994). School time-tabling was a major difficulty. A time-table, once put in place, is more or less set for the school year so innovation and flexibility for experimentation purposes unless in place as a possibility at the beginning of the year could not be catered for by changes in time-table during the school year. This is a considerable constraint. Size and shape of buildings and rooms proved to be another difficulty for innovations. "Physical set up and provision of resources do influence style of teaching engaged in"[80].(Hamilton, D. 1975)

In the selecting of mentors, and the criteria used for same it was found to be of great importance that this selection be based on the expertise of the mentors and their credibility both in the classroom and among their colleagues. They needed to

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[78] Bird, T. (1986) The mentor's dilemma.
[79] Huberman, M. and Miles, M. (1984:273) Innovation Up Close. New York, Plenum.

be people who had a track record of working successfully with other teachers. These were also the criteria for the selection of facilitators in the SAL and SCD initiatives.(Archer, P. p18) However, what was problematic in California was that after the selection process and the post-selection support, Bird and Alspaugh (1986)[81] found that 40% of districts participating in the first two years of California's mentor programme allocated no resources to support mentors during implementation.

What was shown here was, as is found in Joyce and Showers's (1988)[82] work, that innovation was dealt with merely as such with no long term support structure and therefore their impact was superficial and short-term.

8. Conclusion

It is, however, enlightening to find that throughout the literature available on in-school programmes, it has clearly been shown that where a culture of collaboration has been encouraged and fostered, it has been evident in the remarkable results that ensued. This was the case irrespective of the actual programme in question, or the level of the school involved. So the value in this collegiality or collaboration among teachers lies in the support it affords them, in the openness it allows them and in the confidence it has developed in them, not only to take on the changes demanded in catering for today's society in our schools, but to embrace them and in fact at times to initiate them.

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[80] Hamilton, D. 1975 "Handling Innovation in the classroom"; and Sarason, S. 1982,"The Culture of the School and Problems of Change"

[81] Bird, T. and Alspaugh, D. (1986) 1985 Survey of District Co-ordinators for the California Mentor Teacher Program.

[82] Joyce, B. and Showers, B. (1988) Student Achievement through Staff Development. N.Y,, Longman.

Chapter 3. Methodology.

1. Introduction

This chapter contains the methodological approaches used to conduct this research study. The purpose of the study is to discover the level to which collaboration is evident in schools, as understood by a sample of interviews, to ascertain the opinions of teachers on the level to which it is present in the context of their everyday work in schools. The rationale will be briefly outlined and the chapter will then describe the main aspects of the research design and the methods of data collection and analysis.

2. Rationale of this study.

As has been stated, collaboration / networking constitutes the preferred culture to introduce change as found in experiments reviewed in chapter two of this study. The successful establishment of collaboration in schools means that the leadership must be convinced of its value so that commitment to the building of a collaborative school culture and all that it demands becomes a priority. This collaboration is to date not a factor in the role of Principal as outlined in the Education Act 1998. Nor has there been an inclusion there of opinions on the qualities, skills and knowledge needed to carry out this role. This study in its endeavours to ascertain the areas of collaboration, the ensuing influence it has, the constraints it encounters and the qualities needed in the exercise of this collaboration as found in some secondary schools is therefore timely.

3. Research Design

3.1 Aspects of this study.

The main aspects to this study are:
(1) to ascertain behaviours in second level schools to see if collaboration is practised, in other words what teachers do and how they do it?

(2) To establish the attitudes and dispositions of both Principals and teachers to collaboration, is it desirable and to what extent is it supported.?

(3) To identify the skills, knowledge, qualities and competencies of teachers if collaboration is to be established in schools.

(4) What support systems would help and how can this collaboration be developed?

3.2 Interviews

"In keeping with the qualitative tradition of attempting to capture the subjects' own words and letting the analysis emerge, interview schedules and observation guides generally allow for open-ended responses and are flexible enough for the observer to note and collect data on unexpected dimensions of the topic"[83].

"An approach to open-ended interviewing we find effective and feel comfortable with is one in which you treat the person you are interviewing as an expert. Explain yourself to the person and describe in a general way what you are interested in and why you are interviewing him/her"[84]. The advantages of this approach are;

• You let the subject in on the study by using a personal, inviting approach.

• It establishes the interviewee as the one who knows and the researcher as the learner.

• It shows respect for the ideas and opinions of the interviewee.

The focus of this research is the experience and perception of teachers themselves as recorded in the interviews, " the interview is used to gather descriptive data in the subjects' own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world"[85]. It did not set out to judge levels of collaboration in particular second level schools nor to prove any hypothesis in

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[83] Bogdan, R.C. and Biklen, S.K.. 1998. Qualitative Research for Education, An Introduction to Theory and Methods. Allyn and Bacon, U.S.A. p71.
[84] Ibid. p.97.
[85] Ibid. p.94

relation to them, " you are not there to change views but to learn what subjects views are and why they are that way"[86].

In responding to the literature and research on collaboration I decided to pursue the following main questions within the interviews:

1. What kinds of developments are taking place in schools at the moment?
2. What instigated these developments?
3. How are these developments being facilitated?
4. Is this collaboration engaged in within schools only or is it engaged in also across schools in the area?
5. To what extent are these developments influential in the quality of teaching and learning activities in the classroom?
6. To elicit views on the changes and supports necessary in the system to facilitate a higher level of collaboration.

This method is consistent with the views of Merton and Kendall " qualitative interviews vary in the degree to which they are structured. Some interviews, although relatively open-ended, are focused around particular topics or may be guided by come general questions"[87]. The interviews were designed to facilitate the exploration of the above questions.

3.3 Population.

The question of who to interview and from which schools were the initial decisions at this junction. I looked to the schools involved in two separate initiatives being piloted at the moment involved in building relationships between teachers of particular disciplines within their own schools and also across the schools in both of the initiatives though as separate entities. These initiatives are (1) the School and Curriculum Development Initiative (subsequently referred to

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[86] Ibid. p.99
[87] Merton, R.K.& Kendall, P.L. (1946) The focused interview, American Journal of Sociology 51:541-557.

as SCD) in the Kildare and Carlow areas and (2) the schools of one Religious Order as a group of five and more particularly one school of that five in which there is an additional programme being implemented.

In the case of SCD I chose three schools. There are, in fact, eighteen schools involved in SCD at the moment. These are spread over the two counties in question. There is a mixture of Secondary Schools and Vocational Schools. As I represent the Chief Executive Officer, in the Vocational System in one of the counties, on the Steering Group responsible for the implementation of the Initiative, I did not choose any Vocational School in my research. This decision was in the interest of validity as the question of whether my position would influence the capacity of the interviewees within the Vocational System to be open and frank in their responses was one I was not prepared to risk. Time was a factor in the decision to restrict my research to three schools. I chose two which were geographically close at hand and therefore easy to get to in the given time constraints and the third at a distance because I thought it important to include the wider area.

The number interviewed from the three schools was fourteen. These included Principals, facilitators, and teachers from each of the schools. Facilitators are, in fact, also teachers chosen for their personal competency and personal commitment, to encourage and enable staff within their school towards embracing change. I also interviewed the two Field Officers, like the facilitators, competent, committed teachers involved across the schools, working and negotiating with other schools' personnel, informally spreading change in the two counties, bringing the numbers of interviews to sixteen in this section. By including the facilitators and field officers I interviewed personnel with some experience of organising, directing, engaging in and evaluating the areas of interest in this study.

To ascertain what is happening and how it is occurring in the Religious Order run schools I interviewed the Education Officer of the five schools, and a facilitator in one of the schools which is close at hand and also within which there is a separate programme being piloted.

4. Research Methods

For my research I decided to use "the method of standardised interview with no schedule"[88]. I did not want my interviews to be too stylised and yet I needed them to give me answers on the same themes though from different people. "Information in the qualitative interview project is cumulative, each interview building on and connecting to the other. It is what you learn from the total study that counts. While you might learn more from some interviews than from others, and while you cannot get the same intensity from everyone with whom you speak, even a bad interview contributes something"[89].

4.1 A Pilot Sample

I piloted the interview schedule with three people in one school, which was not included in the three for the actual research. There was the Principal, one facilitator and one teacher in the pilot scheme, all three working in the same secondary school, which was easily accessible to me, from the point of view of proximity, and those asked were willing and very obliging with their time. The teacher's interview was fifty minutes long, the facilitator's interview was three quarters of an hour and the Principal's interview was twenty minutes long, and that was the order in which I had interviewed them.

In my study of these interviews, I discovered that if I focussed the conversations better, the interviews would, in fact, be better geared to my study and at the same time be less time consuming for all concerned. I had allowed the interviewees to talk about their school and what was happening there without particularly gearing them towards what teachers worked on together. I got a lot of background information on the history of the school and how it had traditionally responded to ideas either from within or outside the school and how under the leadership of

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[88] Kane, E. (1985) Doing your own Research, Marion Boyars Publishers, London and New York. P.63

different Principals this had varied. I did also get information of the kinds of activities staff members engage in currently, how they were initiated, and what supports them, which was more focused on the area of this particular study.

As a result of this, I improved my technique for the later interviews. Details of activities engaged in in the schools, the perceptions and dispositions which guide them, was the dominant research tool relating to particular areas chosen, so that the topics probed and developed provided descriptive data of a kind not possible through questionnaires. The value of the interview over the questionnaire "is to get each subject to feel relaxed and open and to talk about the topics in a meaningful way, exploring the different meanings of words and questions"[90].

4.2 Access

In the case of the SCD group I telephoned the Principal in each case and discussed the possibility of visiting his school for the purpose of my research. In all three the level of co-operation was remarkable. They were not only willing to be interviewed themselves, but they also arranged with a facilitator in the school, so that the interviews on each campus could be carried out in the same day, rather than my having to return at times on different days, when teachers might have been free from teaching. This was particularly useful to me considering the time constraint for me. I then wrote to each Principal to thank him for his co-operation and to assure him of the strictest confidence and "a guarantee of anonymity in any eventual report; a depersonalising of the work by showing that one's interests are on strategies, methods, cultures or whatever, and not on individuals"[91]. It is important "above all...to establish a feeling of trust and rapport"[92].

The time and venue of the interviews was decided by the Principal. This gave them some control, which is important. The average duration of the interviews

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[89] Bogdan, R.C. and Biklen, S.K. (1998) Qualitative Reaearch in Education. Allyn and Bacon, U.S.A. p96.
[90] Ibid. p.98.
[91] Woods, P.(1986). Inside Schools, Ethnography in Educational Research. P.27. Routledge Education Books.

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was twenty five minutes, the longest time was forty minutes and the shortest was fifteen minutes. On arrival at the schools I found Principals and staff really friendly and welcoming and those I interviewed were well disposed to the research study.

4.3 Conduct of Interviews.

My purpose at the outset was to create a relaxed atmosphere, non threatening and reasonably comfortable. The gaining of quality information depends on good relationships between participants. "There is no real substitute for what the researcher sees, hears and experiences in person. Everything, too, that is presented to one's gaze or ear is of potential relevance. This includes much of what one might otherwise judge to be trivia – one person's trivia may be another person's height of significance"[93]. I knew at least one in each school, and in one school three, of those I interviewed. I had met some of the others briefly on other occasions prior to seeking their assistance with my research. This was helpful in terms of getting to the core of the interviews quicker than might otherwise have been possible.

At the outset of the interviews I reiterated the study I am researching, told the interviewee what educational interests I am engaged in and reconfirmed the confidentiality of material gathered by me through the interviews. I proceeded to query the types of happenings in schools that involved teachers working together on in groups. I tried to empathise with my interviewees as they chatted quite freely about the happenings in schools interjecting with phrases or gestures such as "yes, I understand"; supportive gestures; nodding agreement. I avoided being judgmental or giving advice.

4.4 Interview Notes

[92] Ibid. p.63.
[93] Ibid. p.42.

On the evening of the days on which I held interviews I filled in a log outlining the collection of the data. This contained the day, the date, the place and time length of the interview. Notes were written during all of the interviews and these were studied on the evening of the interview to make sure the recording was true of the interview while it was still fresh in my mind. I asked each interviewee if they would mind if I taped the interview, so that I might use the tape to check the validity of my recorded notes. The response varied. Once I noticed any hesitation, I immediately said I would prefer not to tape them as I was concerned that they would feel as comfortable about the interview as possible. In the final analysis, I had taped nine interviews of the fourteen carried out in the three secondary schools, one of the two Field Officers and both of those interviewed from the schools run by the Religious Order. This was sufficient, I felt, to cross check the material contained in my notes.

4.5 Data Analysis

"Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts (notes)........., to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others"[94].

My approach to data analysis is guided by the need to learn about the activities, knowledge, skills, opinions, experiences and attitudes of those interviewed in relation to networking/collaboration and to describe what is learned with the minimum of interpretation. Statements of fact were inductively derived at through the rigorous and systematic coding and analysis of data. The main emphasis was to stay close to the interviewee's feelings and thoughts through their words.

4.6 Preparation of Data for Analysis

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[94] Bogdan, R.C. and Biklen, S.K. (1998) Qualitative Research in Education. p157. Allyn and Bacon U.S.A.

I numbered each interview, as a code under which I could later fill in the information from that interview on to the master sheets for co-ordinating the information. I prepared A4 pages, dividing them into columns under the questions previously mentioned in paragraph on "Aspects of the Study". I read through the interview notes many times, going over those received from one school a few times before marking the activities engaged in in that school in the margin. I then listened to recordings I had taped of interviewees in that school to make sure I was recording the information as it had been stated by the interviewee. I also used this to check the fullness of my note taking against the recordings to ensure the accuracy of the notes of interviews for which I did not have back-up tapes.

4.7 Unitising the Data

I then filled in all the relevant columns on the master sheet ruled out for each school. I proceeded in that fashion to co-ordinate the information from all of the interviews within the five groups i.e. the three secondary schools, the field officers and the religious run schools, on to A4 sheets. At this stage, all interviews were recorded separately so that through their coding I could recheck information where I felt it might be necessary.

4.8 Categorising the Data

At this stage, I decided to use key words of the questions as headings, under which I could categorise the factual data. Though this was possible in relation to all interviews I felt it did not capture all information received through the interviews so the four aspects of the study previously cited namely;

- To ascertain behaviours in second level schools to see if collaboration is practised, in other words what teachers do and how they do it?
- To establish the attitudes and dispositions of both Principals and teachers to collaboration, is it desirable and to what extent is it supported?
- To identify the skills, knowledge, qualities and competencies of teachers if collaboration is to be established in schools.

- What support systems would help and how can this collaboration be developed?

would be used to categorise other important information.

4.9 Validity of the findings

Qualitative research by interview is always subjective to some extent, relying as it does, on the openness and confidence of the interviewee to be comfortable enough with the topic and the situation to speak as unreservedly as is possible, and also the open-mindedness of the interviewer to listen without presumptions or judgements to collect data without interpretation. "The qualitative research approach demands that the world be examined with the assumption that nothing is trivial, that everything has the potential of being a clue that might unlock a more comprehensive understanding of what is being studied" [95]. "Qualitative researchers are concerned with what are called participant perspectives" [96]. This of course raises questions about the validity of the study.

I engaged in a number of different practices to increase the likelihood of validity of data. Firstly, I believe the manner and atmosphere of the interviews added to the guarantees of confidentiality given to the interviewees, enhanced the likelihood of data being valid. Secondly, I used the tape recordings of the interviews as a third person with whom I could validate data. I taped twelve of the eighteen interviews, so that for these twelve I have both interview notes and accurate recordings. After the interviews I read through my notes to make any additions remembered which had not been recorded. I then took the notes and recordings of interviews, for which I had both, studied them carefully to ascertain the irrelevance of the cassette recordings, through the sufficiency and completeness of the notes of the interviews to yield the fullness of information, without any further material being necessary to be taken from the tapes, so establish the quality of my note taking for all eighteen of the interviews as valid for use in my study.

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[95] Ibid. p.6.
[96] Ibid. p.7

5. Summary

This chapter has described the methodological approaches used in this study in two sections, namely, Research Design and Research Methods. The design included the aspects of the study, key areas of enquiry and the design of the research tools. The methods included the piloting, the initial contacts with the people involved and how the interviews were conducted. This also includes the logging of interviews, the coding and the analysis and the precautions taken to ensure the validity of the material. It now rests with me to move on to the findings of what that analysis has shown.

Chapter 4.

The Presentation and Analysis of the Research Data

1. Introduction

In chapter 2, I reviewed in the literature the value of sharing in the teaching profession, the importance of collaboration / networking as an enriching culture, creating centres in which an openness to learning makes it a possibility for everyone. Let me now look at the sense of collaboration, as I found it to be, through the interviews in the chosen establishments for my research. I propose in this chapter to present the findings and analysis of this research study.

The basis of the interviews was really to find out what kinds of activities were taking place in schools that teachers got together to work on collaboratively as groups. Once people started talking about the activities the conversation unfolded relating how these activities were initiated, what helped to develop them and what benefits they were and to whom. As these interviews were interactive they did not follow the same pattern. Yet you will see how they provided very similar findings. The general thrust in these interviews was, of course, the same in each case.

2. Findings from the Three Secondary Schools.

2.1 Table 1. Collaborative activities engaged in and information surrounding them.
This table shows the activities groups of teachers worked on; the percentage of teachers who spoke of the activities, what facilitated them, whether engaged within only or across schools, and what these activities influenced.

Shared activities	%	Facilitated by	area of collaboration	influencing
Home/school Liaison	19%	Schs. privately	within school	behav.of students
New Courses	81%	DES.,NUIM(scd)	within&across schs.	Teaching/learning
Ex. Curricular Act.	44%	Schools	within&across schs.	Relationships
Sch/Curriculum Dev.	100%	NUIM.Schs.DES	within&across schs.	Teaching/learning
School Plan	44%	DES.,NUIM(scd)	within school	Policies
Subject groups	44%	Schs,NUIM(scd)	within school	Teaching/learning
Comenius Project	25%	EU funding	within&across schs.	EU networking

In order to ascertain not only the information that might be deemed obvious from the above table but also the reality within the schools that became clear through the interviews as hidden realities enriching the whole concept surrounding the above facts I would like to write a brief note on each of them and then discuss them from the point of view of collaboration.

2.1.1 The Home/School Liaison Project

The first of these is the Home/School Liaison project. The Home/School Liaison possibility for a school depends on that particular school meeting the criteria laid down by the Department of Education and Science for the appointment of such personnel. One element is that the school be officially designated a "disadvantaged school". No one of the schools in the research study would have qualified to employ officially appointed personnel under the Home/School Liaison scheme. However, all schools in the study spoke of how inadequate this scheme is, in that it was felt that every school has a certain cohort of pupils who are, for whatever reasons and there are many differing ones, disadvantaged pupils. Two of these schools have appointed a suitable person privately, through their Boards of Management, to a position of Home/School Liaison officer.

2.1.2 New Courses.

The second item relates to the New Courses brought on stream by the Department of Education and Science (the D.E.S.). The courses referred to during the interviews were the Transition Year Programme (Trans.Yr.), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (the LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate

Applied Programme (LCAP). These new courses are possible options in schools for students who have completed their Junior Certificate course. They contain varying elements allowing for creativity both among staff and students

2.1.3 Extra Curricular Activities.

The third listed activity is that of the extra curricular activities. These are to be found in all schools researched to a very high degree, though they vary to some extent from one school to another. As these are, to a great extent, engaged in voluntarily by the teaching staff, the scope of these activities depends to a degree on the gifts and interests of staff members.

2.1.4 School and Curriculum Development Initiative

The School and Curriculum Development initiative was already mentioned in Chapter 2. as an initiative in a group of second level schools in Counties Carlow and Kildare. Its aims were twofold: to improve collaboration between teachers and thus to enhance the teaching and learning in the classrooms of those schools participating in the initiative.

2.1.5 The School Plan

Next is the School Plan, as legislated for in the Education Act 1998, to be put in place by every school, with the co-operation of all the partners in education.

2.1.6 Subject Groups

These are groups of teachers formed around the subjects they teach who have initiated meeting together to discuss items of interest to each of them regarding their subject disciplines.

2.1.7 The Comenius Project

The last of these is the Comenius project. This is a project linking schools within the European community to implement ties through suitable project work and through the use of the internet, to the educational enrichment of everyone concerned. All three schools researched for this study are involved with this initiative. It was noteworthy how enthusiastic those who spoke of the project were and how interesting they are finding it.

Of the seven activities mentioned above only one was in place in schools traditionally, that is the extra curricular activities. All of the other six are recent initiatives/ schemes/ projects or legislative requirements, which have come on stream within the past six years at most. This is an indication of the volume of change in the educational system at the moment. There is a dynamism and development in education involving course content, projects to deal with changes and difficulties in society, and initiatives to enable the teaching profession, not only to cope with these but, to grow through them to an improved level of professional capacity. But these changes are only in their infancy and need to be nurtured into acceptance and development. Three of the above activities, those of the home/school liaison, the school plan and the subject groups confine themselves to teachers within the school of the activity itself. The other four, those of the new courses, the extra curricular activities, SCD and the comenius project, three of which are recent initiatives, form groups of teachers both within and across schools.

3. Findings in relation to the Schools of the Religious Order

Probably the greatest difference between the two sections of the research study is that the three secondary schools referred to above are all separate institutions and the schools involved in this section are schools established and run by one religious order.

I approached my interviewees in this instance in the same manner as I did the previous ones. I was searching to discover what activities were developing in schools on which teachers were working together, sharing ideas and expertise –

how these were happening, what had initiated them and what effect were they having.

3.1 Table 2. Collaborative activities engaged in in the schools.

This table outlines the areas of shared activity, who/what has put these in place, whether the activities were within one school or shared across schools and what influence these activities had on what areas within the institutions.

Shared Activities	Facilitated by:	Area of Collaboration	Influencing
School Plan	B. of Governors & others	within school	Policies
Active Learning Project	NUIM. & Education.Officer	within & across schools	Teaching/Learning
Transition Year	NUIM.& Positive Staff of 10	within school	Teaching/Learning
Applying Principles	Educ. Officer & Teachers	within & across schools	Teaching/Learning
New Teacher Induction	Educ.Officer & Teachers	within & across schools	Teaching/Learning
EU Networking	Educ.Officer & Principals	within & across schools	EU Networking

3.1.1 The school plan

There was a tradition of a formalised school plan in the religious order run schools, unlike a lot of schools in the country, prior to the legislative demands of the Education Act 1998. The school plan was put in place primarily by the Board of Governors, there were some teaching staff, parents, and other "outsiders" whose expertise was considered to be of benefit to the deliberations of the group, who worked on the putting together of the plan.

3.1.2 The Active Learning Project.

The Active Learning Project is quite similar to the SCD Initiative in that it works across five schools as a cluster, there are facilitators in each of the schools and the focus is on subject disciplines. This is working well to date.

3.1.3 The application of teaching principles

The next item on my listing is the application of teaching principles drawn up by the Religious Order. In 1993 there were in-service courses run to reflect on these and their application in the classroom.

3.1.4 Transition Year

In May/June 1999 one of the five schools decided that their Trans. Yr. was causing concern and therefore needed particular attention. It was discussed with the Maynooth co-ordinator of the Active Learning Programme and it was agreed to start a separate initiative to look at possibilities for introducing collaborative teaching with Trans. Yr. in this school, as a separate entity to the five schools programme.

3.1.5 Induction for new teachers

The system of induction for new teachers in the schools of this Religious Order were welcoming and supportive. On appointment each teacher receives a letter of welcome to the community and a considerable amount of literature to familiarise him with the beliefs and values underpinning all activities undertaken by the Order both in the field of education and outside it.

3.1.6 EU Networking

The final element on the list is the EU Networking. Once again this is an initiative undertaken within the Religious Order and is not attached to the Comenius European funded scheme which was the case with the other schools in this study. It is in its initial stages, having invited all Principals of their schools to its first gathering in October '99 in Rome.

4. The significance of collaboration.

When one considers the isolation of teachers historically, how, once they received their initial training, it was considered to equip them for the entirety of their teaching career, it is interesting to see to what extent there is a renewal of an ethos of learning amongst teachers today. This is no different for teachers than it is for society as a whole. It is, nonetheless, interesting to witness the enthusiasm with which these innovations are being taken on board by teachers and the value they are attributing to the sharing of their expertise.

"When fusion occurs it produces five times the energy. Fusion is about joining, coming together, creating connection"[97].

In the Religious Order it was in the formulating of the "living and learning environment" section of the school plan that the need to introduce changes in the study practices of the students arose. In order to facilitate this group work at study time it was decided that teaching methodologies should be looked at with a view to bringing them into line with students of today's society.

Regarding the qualities and competencies necessary to build a collaborative environment, and to so improve the teaching and learning in the classroom, the following are those that emerged through the interviews;

An interest in learning – workshops were well attended and materials circulated were found to be helpful. Those interviewed found it very encouraging to learn from colleagues.

patience, as the process is so very slow. This was said twice by the facilitator in the religious run school.

respect for opinions, with the development of confidence a respect for others, their opinions, their work and their practices also developed.

an ability to communicate, to share and a belief in its value. The common link was subfect based and this helped relationships with colleagues in and across schools through SCD.

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[97] Daft,R. and Lengal,R. (1998) Fusion Leadership, San Francisco, berrett-Koehler. P15.

the confidence to be humble; as sharing was encouraged and became part of the workshops in SCD, teachers felt less threatened than hitherto by it and it developed their confidence.

an openness to change. Those interviewed were interested in new ideas, in how others worked, and this enabled a sharing of experiences and an interest in new courses and trends.

These were, in fact, all present in varying degrees and thus the process is progressing. This concurs with Nias et al. In Ch. 2 based on the "shared belief that existed in all schools that practice could always be improved and hence that professional development was a never –ending process, a way of life"[98].

5. Teacher empowerment.

5.1 Positive Attitude of Teachers

Teachers interviewed were without exception, intrinsically interested and involved in the holistic development of their students. This was evident in the scope of the discussions about what is happening in schools and the positive attitude of teachers to developments both within and outside the classroom. There is, for example, a great variety of extra curricular activities engaged in by teachers in all schools It appeared through this study that the level of across school collaboration in relation to extra curricular activities has increased through the relationships built through the SCD Initiative. For example it is only since teachers have worked across schools with SCD, that two schools in particular have joined to co-produce their annual musical and they are also co-ordinating events across the schools for "Seachtain na Gaeilge" from 10 to 17 March. This concurs with the findings of R.J.Starratt in chapter 2 "by discussing ideas, sharing experiments, and pooling resources, an empowered staff can generate extraordinary energy and enthusiasm". These extra curricular activities were stated throughout the interviews to be of

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[98] Nias,J. et al. (1989) Staff Relationships in the Primary School, London, Cassell. P72.

great importance in the building of relationships and collaborative cultures among the staff within and across schools and between staff and students within schools.

There is great interest among the staff interviewed in relation to these courses, particularly the Trans. Year and the LCAP. It was acknowledged in interviews that the teacher support systems of SCD i.e. promoting more teacher collaboration at subject level and across schools was a resource and support in the case of both Trans Year and LCAP where teachers and students need to draw up plans of their courses. This concurs with the findings of P. Archer (1994) in relation to SAL. Through SCD, it was stated by teachers that they immediately turned to getting together and collaborating, sharing expertise and ideas in the formulating of these courses. It was stated that they felt comfortable about taking on new courses knowing that they could draw on support which was put in place by the School and Curriculum Development Initiative, and they are in fact involved in using the SCD network as a resource for implementing at least one new course, that of the LCAP. Some schools in the network have experience of that course and the schools committed to starting it in their schools have recently asked that the experienced schools will get together with them to share their experiences and help them start the course well.

What is important here is the culture of collaboration that is building, however slowly, as a result of the SCD Initiative. Teachers, having become accustomed to working together on their subjects, get together quite easily now to develop other areas in the school as a result.

It is felt that the SCD initiative has enabled teachers to work together in groups. The fact that there were facilitators in each school trained to lead , encourage and coax through the implementation of change has emphasised the possibilities for staff in contributing to change. It has made it easier for them to form working committees for the school plan, a group for the home/school liaison, and groups around subjects for the new courses that would not otherwise have been the case for them. The initiative was unanimously acclaimed as being beneficial. The following are direct quotations from the interviews;

"Up to four years ago, I knew no teachers in other schools. Now I know many and can give them a ring and ask, if something crops up they could help with".

"It is very good for teachers to learn with and from one another".

"SCD was the kick start for lots of things", we now work together on quite a number of activities.

Experiencing collaborative activity has lead teachers to valuing and now creating such possibilities for themselves in their work is.

There is evidence of subject groups forming within schools agreeing texts, levels and content to be covered in particular class groups and common examinations, so that teachers of a subject know at what stage a class is at in a course at the end of any year. Methodologies are being looked at and discussed following workshops through the SCD initiative on mixed-ability teaching. There is one example of very good group work taking place in one school in relation to the Transition Year programme where topics are chosen and teachers across subjects decide on a common approach to the teaching of that topic. In another school there is twenty minutes set aside each week for group work. However, this is for exploratory work only, decisions are not made at those meetings, as attendance is not compulsory.

That some of the items, e.g. the Home/School Liaison or the Comenius Project, were mentioned by few could mean that there were particular people working on those schemes. Though both of these had great benefits for the schools involved not everyone interviewed was equally aware of their value because, it seemed they were not personally involved with them.

5.2 Benefits

Working together with other teachers, sharing ideas, experiences and materials with them builds a great support within the profession and also develops

confidence in teachers. The greatest benefit mentioned in the interviews was the support teachers felt was in place for them through the shared activities of the SCD Initiative. Learning from other teachers enriched the experience of those present and teachers also gained confidence through working together. It seemed to give them a collective strength, an enthusiasm and courage to take on the challenges of the teaching profession today. It ties in with the findings of Starratt R.J. mentioned in chapter 2, "a process that involves mutual respect, dialogue and invitation; it implies recognition that each person enjoys talents, competencies, and potentials that can be exercised in responsible and creative ways within the school setting for the benefit of children and youth".

6. The implementation of collaboration in schools

There are many interesting items showing up on the charts earlier in this chapter. For example, the two that rate highest and are way above all others, namely New Courses and the School and Curriculum Development, are the two activities that deal most closely with work in the classroom.

6.1 Targeting subject Areas

The interviews and findings of this research highlight that targeting the subjects being taught in the classrooms is a supportive, non threatening way and fundamental place to work to order to optimise the numbers of teachers, who will be interested in being involved in a collaborative initiative. We will look at the findings again in relation to areas dealing directly with subjects, as taught in the classroom. In the first study, that of the three secondary schools, of the seven areas of collaborative activities listed, three deal with subjects, namely, "new courses", "subject groupings" and the "school and curriculum development initiative".

That new courses are coming on stream means, that teachers need to become familiar with the content of these and how best they can be brought to life in the classrooms

There are subjects groups meeting, from time to time, in all of the three schools researched, though these are happening in some subjects more than others. The existence of these subject groups was also directly attributed to the SCD Initiative as an offshoot of subject group workshops held within that initiative over the past few years. "Its focus and its structure had definite positive affects" in the schools was stated by one Principal interviewed. The focus is the improvement of teaching and learning in the classroom through the development of a collaborative culture. (Fullan, M. 1993 as in Ch. 2). The structure is that of clusters of schools working together, through commitment from the schools themselves, facilitators in the schools to keep it on target there, field officers visiting the schools informing and encouraging progress, and a steering group leading, managing and organising the initiative. The approach underpinning this entire initiative is and has been one of an invitation to schools to participate, the laying out of the structure required and the seeking of commitment to that. Schools therefore have chosen to be involved and this is evident in the level of commitment and enthusiasm towards it. Schools on the other hand welcome the level of support which permeates this initiative and has been particularly encouraging to them.

Throughout the interviews it was frequently clear how privileged teachers felt to be part of this initiative, evidenced in the following quotations from the interviews:

"SCD has had a major impact, it has shown what can be done",

" we have had very good in-service initiating development in school such as student achievement, absenteeism and causes",

" SCD has improved the climate in all schools. The general thrust has been very good and very importantly, it has brought teachers together. They are certainly more co-operative within and across subjects. It has done great work".

"That SCD was subject based was very important, other topics were well done also e.g. discipline, attendance",

"through SCD there is a group being formed to pool experience of LCAP",

SCD has been successful in varying degrees in the different schools. This success is due in no small way to the work of Mr. Jim Callan, from NUI Maynooth College, who co-ordinated this initiative since its beginning. However, it is the "modus operandi" he engaged that facilitated the progress among teachers and in the schools, namely;

(1) inviting schools to participate in the initiative,

(2) working through subject disciplines, and

(3) establishing structures so that schools worked in clusters first and subsequently organising workshops within their own schools. This has contributed greatly to the building of working relationships among teachers, the effects of which have been seen to overflow to the benefit of other activities in the schools, for example the forming of groups to work on the school plan. The training of teachers in each of the schools as facilitators for the initiative, the appointment of field officers to work between schools encouraging, guiding and supporting the work of both the facilitators and the teachers in the participating schools is important in that it gives an example of a framework that is having considerable success as found in the research. (Archer, P. 1994; Callan J. 1999).

This concurs with the findings regarding the learning consortium, a group of schools with the support of a university, arrangement in Ontario, Canada, as found in chapter 2, "The learning consortium has been successful in mobilising large numbers of school and district personnel in voluntary, co-operative action to improve the learning environments of both teachers and students".

The "applying principles" and "new teacher induction"initiatives involved the Education Officer of the Order and the attending teachers. In the month of February of the first year of teaching all new teachers to their schools are invited to a one day seminar, to which they bring some of their own class notes as a basis for discussion. This affords them the opportunity to get to know their colleagues. It is also an opportunity for reflection with the Education Officer on the

application of values and principles in the teaching of their classes, affording an opportunity to colleagues to share experiences, encourage one another and to build relationships. The numbers were small at these courses but the evaluation of them was 100% positive. These did not generate the same level of interest across the board as did the Active Learning Programme which came on stream some years later and to which it gave pride of place.

The Active Learning Programme was set in motion by the Education Officer, facilitators in each school and the initiative co-ordinator from NUI Maynooth. Some subjects disciplines worked better than others. It was the case that to work across the schools proved to be easier than working within one's own school. It is interesting to note that both interviewees from the Order mentioned how it was easier to engage teachers in workshops across schools rather than within a school,

"it is difficult within the school".
"there is a vulnerability about exposing yourself among those you know well"

This concurs with what has been found with the SCD Initiative, witnessed in the interviews for this research.

It was noted during the interviews that the Trans. Yr. programme is the only one of the recent DES new courses to be undertaken in the religious run school reviewed. It had the financial and time support that was deemed necessary. It was decided that although almost all staff in the school teaches the Trans. Yr. only those members of staff who were very positive towards the initiative would be involved. That resulted in there being ten members of staff and six subject areas working within the initiative.

The Transition Year Programme is on its first year and is centred within a school rather than across schools. It is felt to be working very well in some subjects "Collaboration within some subject areas, namely, Science, English, French and the Social Awareness programme are good". (from interviews) though progress generally is slow. Those involved are positive and well disposed to the

programme. Both of these programmes are being co-ordinated by Mr. Jim Callan NUIM. It is the case in these schools that there is a cohort of teachers interested and positively working to create a culture of openness in relation to teaching and learning in the classroom. It is also evident that there are members of staff, even of subjects included in the projects, who have not yet come on board.

6.2 Home/School Liaison

Every week there is a meeting held for a group in two of the schools comprising the Principal, Deputy Principal, Home/school Liaison Officer, Pastoral Care teacher and Guidance Counsellor to decide on those students in need. The home/school liaison officer then looks after the needs of these particular students, building relationships with themselves and their families and so enhance the educational opportunities of these students. Members of staff are kept informed and collaborate, through sharing information on students, agreeing strategies for dealing with these students both within the school and through home visits, to make this scheme work.

6.3 Cluster workshops

As was customary for the D.E.S. there were in-service courses organised for teachers on the introduction of new courses. However, what is interesting recently is the change in the format of these in-service courses. The D.E.S. changed from the didactical style course to running these in the style of workshops with facilitators appointed, both to run the courses and to visit the schools in their appointed region, to be of assistance to the co-ordinators running the courses on a day-to-day basis in the schools. This was the style of workshop used in the "Schools for Active Learning" (SAL) programme, which had proved to be so successful, and which continues to be used in the "Schools and Curriculum Development" initiative. The collaborative inclusive format of the workshops for teachers was a major difference to the old style in-service, in that it afforded teachers the opportunity to contribute.

What is of particular interest to this study is that, in the discussion on the new courses during the interviews, it was widely acclaimed that the SCD initiative had a major influence on the implementation of the new courses in the schools. Some of those interviewed talked of not only having good teamwork in place but that they could see definite possibilities both for team-teaching and theme teaching in the Transition Year programme. Thirteen of those interviewed spoke highly about the focus and structure of this initiative leading to developments in the schools. The level of friendships and contacts that have been built across the schools was mentioned by many of those interviewed.

The hope was expressed, in one instance, that the structure of the SCD initiative could be applied by them in their deliberations on the school plan so that progress would be achieved.

The EU connection is creating the possibility for the establishment of a network between these European schools, to make possible an enrichment and sharing between them.

7. Collaboration in teaching and learning - towards a community of learners.

7.1 Facilitating a collaborative culture

Let me take a critical look at the columns on the areas of collaboration encompassed by these activities and the resulting areas being influenced by them. There is in fact a considerable amount of collaboration taking place over all activities. Two of these, namely, the School Plan and the Transition Year programme in Table 2, involve the staff within them working together in different groupings. The other areas involve staffs not only within schools but also a sharing across schools. Looking at the areas influenced by these initiatives it shows up a very interesting development. The School Plan formulates the policies of the school. The EU Networking and Comenius project, though they have the potential subsequently to be a wide resource of expertise and through that an enrichment to all participants, it is too early in the initiative to attribute influence other than the enabling of EU contacts to them. The other activities engaged in all

have a direct influence on teaching and learning in the classroom, through discussion on materials and methodologies and the sharing of experiences and expertise.

Those interviewed who mentioned the H/Sc. Liaison were high in their praises of its value for the students concerned, and felt that the real benefits will be immeasurable as they affect the very core of the lives of these people.
It was clear that through the focus and structure of SCD teachers had learned how to work together, to share ideas and to pool resources. This is evidenced in the manner in which teachers are forming groups within their own school e.g. the subject groups, and across schools e.g.the groups for both the Transition Year and the LCAP. This concurs with Archer, P. 1994 and Newmann and Wehlage 1995 as reviewed in Chapter 2.

In the religious order run schools in 1993, teachers came together and shared their application of teaching principles to the classroom situation. Attendance was low but evaluation was positive. In 1997, new teachers to their schools that year were invited to get together for a day in February to meet one another and review how they were applying the principles in their classes. This went well and is continuing on an annual basis, but the population changes from year to year. Both of these initiatives were focussed on teaching in the classroom, "on strategies and methodologies applied. Those attending spoke and shared how they worked". These were found to be helpful to those attending, but the numbers attending were always low, and they lacked continuity as groups.

7.2 Relationships through extra curricular activities

In the other three schools researched, it was also evident that teams or groups of teachers worked together on some of these activities e.g. in the training of sports' teams, the arranging of leagues and use of pitches, and in the preparation of the school musical production had teachers collaborating in a wide range of activities based on their own talents and interests to perfect the performance, building the collaborative culture between those involved. Every element of school life is

enhanced through these relationships. It was evident in the research that not all of those teachers interviewed were involved in extra curricular activities sufficiently to mention them. However, those who did consider them, thought them crucial to the well being of the school. What was abundantly clear in every school was that there was a huge amount of voluntary activity engaged in by staff members over and above their primary role as teachers in the classroom. In relation to sports, teachers worked together to time the use of pitches and a considerable number of teachers collaborated in areas of their own talents and interests to produce the school musical.

7.3 School Planning an opportunity for community collaboration

"This process of planning offers an excellent opportunity for engaging the board of management, the principal, staff and parents in a collaborative exercise"[99].

The number who mentioned the school plan, in the three schools, as an activity involving a group of people from both the school and the wider community was, surprisingly, only seven. That was slightly less than half of those interviewed. Those who did mention it over two schools, were pleased with the manner in which teachers were forming committees to work together on the different elements of the plan.

There was a tradition of a formalised school plan in the Religious Order schools. An interesting point is that "outsiders" were always included in the drawing up of these plans. So partnership in education demanded of all schools now by law is nothing new to these schools where they always had collaborative community involvement.

8. Constraints in the implementation of collaboration

8.1 Fragmented in-service

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[99] "Charting our Education Future", White Paper 1995, p159. Government Publications, Dublin.

As with all innovations there were constraints to be contended with in the schools involved in these developments. During the interviews it was stated that the DES in-service courses are very scrappy, in that teachers of the same subject do not go together to courses but rather one goes one day and one another. The fact that in-service courses for each subject are run on more than one occasion in the same area, is making it possible for all teachers to avail of the opportunity to go to the courses and still allow schools to remain open with a minimum of staff absenteeism. That is an understandable arrangement from the DES point of view, but does not encourage collaboration among teachers of these subjects.

8.2 Time, resources and substitution.

The areas of most difficulty regarding the implementation of developments in the three secondary schools were

Time is the element in short supply in every school, "there is a real problem with having sufficient time to meet often and give the initiative the commitment it deserves" was stated by interviewees in each of the schools in question.

Resources, other than time, were reasonable in all schools but teachers are not demanding and it is felt that finance if available could be put to good use.

Substitution, especially when teachers are at in-service courses, is really something that causes concern to teachers.

In two cases it was stated that there is a need for an obvious appreciation on the part of management for what is happening on the ground in the schools.

In the schools of the Religious Order the constraints mentioned were;

- encouragement and interest on the part of management is not obvious. If this were there, it might broaden the interest on staff among those slow to recognise the need for change,

- time and resources were mentioned but did not seem to be in such short supply as in the other schools.

8.3 Managerial apathy - support needed

Management in schools could be more supportive by enquiring from staff how activities are progressing, as R.Starratt has written and is found in chapter 2 section 3.2 "through encouraging the sharing of ideas and criticisms and through acting on the suggestions of teachers". They are generally supportive in terms of welcoming innovations in the school but they do not seem to enquire from teachers how developments are progressing or to show an interest in progress. All teachers need to feel supported in their efforts to change. The level of interest in change by management is not evident other than providing time, finance and resources for it. A personal interest in needed. Teachers need training to contribute to the workshops and to sustain the connections through a networking system at other times.

An awareness of a network of these institutions of this Religious Order was constant. The Irish schools were not in isolation. They were part of a bigger scheme of things. But with all that, the problems of teacher isolation were to be found in these schools in the persons of teachers who preferred to remain in their traditional style of teaching and as in other schools around the country, the combating of this isolation is a slow process.

This concludes my presentation and analysis on the findings of my research, which shows an encouraging level of activity in schools creating possibilities for interaction among teachers, and establishing an openness to improving the teaching and learning possibilities in our schools.

Conclusions

This study seeks to examine the level of collaboration with respect to three frameworks and to draw conclusions from them:

- The role of collaboration today
- The research literature on the topic
- Qualitative study of teacher collaboration in a range of activities in schools.
- Conclusions to be drawn from this study.

It is now time to draw the elements of this study together to present the conclusions which have emerged through it.

Establishing collaboration

Change is necessary to provide for students in today's world, as has been shown in both "the need for change" and "society's demands" in chapter 2.

Teaching and Learning in the classroom is the area to target for results most fundamental to teachers and students and therefore most inclusive of all teachers in the school. This is evidenced in SAL (Archer, P. 1994) and the findings of the SCD initiative (Callan,J. 1999) and the interviews for this research.

The establishment of a collaborative culture is what best facilitates the change required in providing support for teachers and in the creation of an openness to the philosophy of life long learning. This is evidenced in the activities engaged in through SCD and the empowerment of teachers to initiate these activities.

The creation of a collaborative culture is less threatening for teachers if they work initially across schools and subsequently within schools. This was found to be the case in the research for this dissertation as is quoted earlier in this chapter.

The aspects of this study listed in chapter 3 have been dealt with in this research. The areas of collaboration present in second level schools and the practices of teachers in relation to these, namely their meeting in groups, teasing out materials, sharing time, expertise and experiences and planning together have been visited. The attitudes of school staffs to collaboration, how it has been found to be very

helpful and therefore desirable and the varying levels of support in schools have been examined. The qualities and competencies needed if collaboration is to be established have been enumerated earlier in this chapter. The importance of support and some strategies useful for the implementation of collaboration have also been referred to.

Possible Strategies to aid Change and the Implications for ongoing Support.

While I recognise that these findings are valid in relation to the schools researched and may not be equally applicable to other schools, there are elements here which teachers in other schools will recognise.

There is a significant shift towards collaboration/networking in and across the schools involved in the SCD Initiative, in particular, and there is nothing to suggest that it will not continue. It has been suggested to me during one of the interviews that to sustain and increase the level of collaboration /networking already in place perhaps an outside organiser will be needed. It is also clear through my research that there are still teachers who feel they are managing in their isolation to the extent that they do not feel the need to consult or share expertise themselves or even give the example of such openness to their students.

In the area of education, where the philosophy of life long learning has become so prevalent, it seems strange, that those expected to transmit a love for, and interest in learning to their students, could be bypassed. As courses and resources updated over the years, teachers developed the skills needed to use tape recorders, overhead projectors, photocopiers and more recently computers. Communication, teamwork, collaboration and networking are as necessary today as the tape recorder was years ago. Teachers need to be trained in the skills that will facilitate this collaboration / networking, in order to facilitate their own ability to eternally update their classroom materials and methodologies in the knowledge and support of their colleagues. This ties in with M. Fullan's findings "The real world demands collaboration, the collective solving of problems.....learning to get along, to function effectively in a group, is essential", (chapter 2). It was also found according to McCarthy in the Accelerated Schools programme "teachers must

work in highly interactive and collaborative ways in new structures, that cluster students, team teachers, provide common planning time, link to parents and community, and participate in wider networks of learning" (chapter 2,) And this, it seems from this research, is easier to accomplish across schools initially rather than within one's own school.

<u>Who will address this issue of change?</u>

The question undoubtedly arises as to who exactly is responsible for the promotion of this positive attitude towards openness among teachers? If it is teachers themselves are responsible there will definitely be casualties, for who would avert them to their needs, who would promote the change, create the image that would highlight the value of collaboration? If schools are responsible, then someone within each school must take responsibility for establishing the needs of staff, organising suitable courses, both internally and externally, with regard to the time factor which is always relevant, and frequently a constraint, in schools. Hence the need for leaders which "involves influencing others by persuasion or example or by tapping inner moral forces"[100].

If responsibility for this lies outside the schools, then the agencies most likely to be to the fore are the Education Departments in the Universities, the Department of Education and Science, the National Council for Curriculum Assessment and/or the Education Centres throughout the country. With meaningful co-operation, it is possible they could combine and provide the necessary resources. Or perhaps Education Officers or Co-ordinators could be appointed to take responsibility for the establishment of a culture of collaboration, within particular areas. There are possibilities. Who will take it up and run with it?

This study has been undertaken with commitment and excitement. The culture of collaboration/ networking is bubbling with potential for the teaching profession. With it, education can lead into the future with an ever shared cauldron of hope,

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[100] Sergiovanni, T.: 91996) Leadership for the Schoolhouse.Chapter 8, p88

expertise, self-esteem, support, humility and confidence to open up the whole educational scene as a source for learning for all ages, for all times —where everyone can update their learning through and with one another. As Nias et al. concludes that whole school curriculum development is inherently complex, that individual and shared concerns must co-exist in dynamic tension and that under these conditions continuous learning is the key ingredient for development.[101]

"No one person in the education system has a monopoly on wisdom. No one person can face the challenge of change alone. However, working in harmony, recognising our interdependence, respecting and hearing each other's insights we can and must succeed"[102].

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[101] Fullan,M. (1997) Change Forces. The Falmer Press. P66.
[102] Bhreathnach, Niamh. (1995) Minister of Education: Issues and Strategies in the Implementation of Educational Policy. Maynooth Cardinal Press.

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Appendix 1

Teachers' interviews

What developments are happening in your school at the moment?
e.g. school planning
      behavioural policy
      discipline policy
      homework policy
      teaching methodologies

In what way are you involved with these developments?

How do you feel about these developments?
      Are you challenged, interested, uplifted, overburdened?

Have you changed in relation to your subject?
      Is there more support between yourself and other teachers of your subject
      than heretofore?
      Are you experimenting with methodologies?

What are these experimentations?

How did they come about?

Did you have workshops/staff development in relation to these changes?

In what way were they helpful?

Did these workshops affect your work in other ways?

How was this evident?

What activities do you engage in that you might not have done prior to these workshops?

Appendix 2

Facilitators' interview

Are there a number of facilitators in your school?

How do you work with the other facilitators in your school?

What kinds of activities are engaged in by teachers in your school?

How have these activities come about?

What activities are you engaged in as a facilitator in your school?

Do these activities involve all members of staff or groups of staff members?

Tell me, how involved are the teachers who participate in these activities?

As facilitator in the school, how often do you communicate with the Principal / Deputy Principal in relation to these activities?

How important or otherwise is it to meet with the Field Officer?

How significant are these meetings?

How important are the facilitators cluster meetings to you?

Has the SCD Initiative changed the working relationships between teachers in your school?

How has this been evident?

Appendix 3

Field Officers' interviews

What exactly do you do as Field Officer?

How often would you visit facilitators and schools?

What significance has the work of the Field officer been for school personnel?

What percieved benefits do you feel school personnel obtain as a result of your visits as Field Officer?

Are you aware of staff developments in schools where school staffs are engaged in working together?

Could you give examples of these?

What specifically has promoted such work practices? Is it leadership? Engaging facilitators? Outside support? Other?

What kinds of exchanges are happening between schools?

To what extent are these happening?

What has facilitated these happenings?

Has the role of field officer been important to these exchanges?

Appendix 4

Principals' interviews - also used for Education Officer

What is occurring in the area of staff development in your school?

What other developments are happening in your school?

Is there staff engagement in these developments?

Who is involved in these developments?

Is this involvement of an interactive nature?

What role do the facilitators play in these developments?

What kind of communication have you had with the facilitators in this regard?

Are there other members of staff who play significant roles in the developments?

What are the enabling factors for these developments?

Have these developments been helped through your involvement with SCD?

Are you aware of engagements between teachers in your school working in the same subject area?

In what ways does this happen? How is it managed?

Do teachers in your school have contact with teachers in other schools in relation to areas of development in your school?

How is this obvious?

What has encouraged this linking?

Has involvement with SCD facilitated teachers working together in your school, and with neighbouring schools?

Appendix 5

Arrangements for the interviews

1. Initially I spoke in person to each of the Principals of those schools I wished to include in my research. Not only were they willing to allow me to interview in their schools but they undertook to arrange with the personnel the date and times that would be most suitable.

2. Letter to Principal.

<div align="right">
Address of own school.
Date
</div>

Address of school.

Dear Principal,

Many thanks for the possibility of talking to yourself and some of your staff on _____. I need these interviews as part of the research I need to do for my M. Ed. in School Leadership. The title of my thesis is "Collaboration/networking in education , its contribution to schools". In the findings based on the interviews there will be absolutely no reference to or mention of schools or individuals by name of inference. It is important that this is understood by all of those with whom I will be speaking, in terms of the validity of the material.

I understand that I also need to state that this year I am chairperson of the Steering Group for the School and Curriculum Development Initiative.

Míle buíochas arís,

_____.

3. Having completed all interviews I sent a "Thank You" to all those who gave so generously of their time and opinions.