

Professional conceptualisations of communities: some implications for community-oriented schooling

**Colleen Cummings, University of Newcastle upon Tyne
Alan Dyson, University of Manchester
Liz Todd, University of Newcastle upon Tyne**

**Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference,
University of Manchester 16-18 September 2004**

Contact:

c.l.cummings@ncl.ac.uk

d.a.dyson@man.ac.uk

liz.todd@ncl.ac.uk

or

Professor Alan Dyson
School of Education
University of Manchester
Oxford Road
Manchester M13 9PL
Tel 0161 275 8290

Professional conceptualizations of communities: some implications for community-oriented schooling

1 Background

Area disadvantage and the problems of the negative interactions between area disadvantage and educational attainment are long-standing concerns of national and local policy. Since coming to power in 1997, the 'New' Labour government has launched a range of area based initiatives and a National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (SEU, 1998, 2001a) aimed at tackling the problems in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. As one of a range of factors impinging on the life chances of individuals, education has been identified as having a pivotal role to play in raising the attainments of low-achieving pupils in these areas and otherwise contributing to tackling disadvantage (SEU, 1998, 2001a, 2001b; DfEE, 1999). As part of the development of the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, a 'Schools Plus' Policy Action Team was established to explore the contributions which schools might make in disadvantaged areas (DfEE 1999). Subsequently, and a 'Schools Plus' initiative was developed by the Local Government Association in six Local Education Authorities. More recently, the DfES launched an Extended Schools initiative, produced guidance to support schools in developing services for students, families and communities over and above standard educational provision (DfES, 2002) and removed some of the legislative barriers which schools faced in developing these services.

The latest phase of the extended schools initiative has taken the form of a 'Full Service Extended Schools' programme aimed at the establishment of at least one such school in each Local Education Authority by 2006 (DfES 2003). Full Service Extended schools will offer a range of 'extended' services to their pupils, families and the wider community and will make services from other statutory and community agencies available on the school site through co-location or sessional provision around health, social care, childcare, adult and family learning, family support and access to sport, arts and ICT. Such schools are expected to link with strategies around behaviour and educational inclusion and will be expected to marry with a range of newly emerging policy initiatives such as Children's Centres, to provide a better response to meeting the needs of vulnerable children (DfES, 2003, 2004). Tackling barriers to learning and raising levels of educational attainment are the key aims of the initiative with improving community cohesion and meeting community needs featuring amongst a plethora of associated aims.

There is little doubt that these developments offer exciting opportunities to schools, particularly in disadvantaged areas where the attempt to raise standards of attainment has sometimes seemed like an uphill struggle. However, taking on an 'extended' role also creates challenges. It is, for instance, not entirely clear whether schools are being encouraged to engage with families and communities as part of an attempt to raise standards, or as a contribution to the renewal of disadvantaged neighbourhoods, or as part of a wider civic duty which applies in all areas and communities. If the aim is to raise standards, what forms of family and community engagement are most likely to achieve this? On the other hand, if the aim is to contribute to a regeneration or community agenda, what resources can schools bring to the table and where can they make the most telling contribution? Put simply, schools developing an extended approach have to come to some sort of

view of the characteristics and needs of the students, families and communities they serve, of the role of the school in relation to students, families and communities and of the most effective way for discharging that role. These questions are difficult enough to answer in respect of students with whom schools have daily contact. However, they are much more difficult to answer in respect of families and communities where contact is necessarily more limited.

Currently, the government materials cited above are arguably more helpful to schools in setting out a range of possible activities than in offering guidance on questions of underpinning rationale. Moreover, although there is a good deal of international experience of community-oriented schools and, specifically, of full-service schools, it too is of only limited use in resolving more fundamental questions. In essence, it seems that individual schools tend to go their own way in response to local circumstances and opportunities rather than following any clearly-worked-out blueprint. There is, in consequence, little convincing evidence about long-term outcomes from one or other 'model' of extended schooling (Wilkin et al., 2003b). It would appear that much the same is currently happening in England (and, indeed, in Scotland where there is a parallel, but slightly longer-established 'community schools' initiative (Sammons et al., 2003, Wilkin et al., 2003a). There is a good deal of activity, but the nature of that activity differs from place to place and, it seems likely, so do the fundamental conceptualizations of community and school role on which it is based. The obvious danger is that some at least of this activity will be ill-focused and the considerable energy and resource being expended by schools – supported by LEAs and central government – will fail to deliver aims which are themselves not properly thought through.

In this situation, this paper analyses the way in which schools are currently conceptualising their 'extended' roles vis a vis the families and communities they serve and, therefore, how they characterise and understand those families and communities. It does so by drawing on three research studies focusing on schools which were either developing extended roles or served areas where the role of schools in relation to local communities was a salient issue. It concludes by considering the basis for an alternative conceptualization of this role which might inform the many developments in community-oriented schooling that are currently taking place.

2 The studies

The three studies are referred to here as the 'Regeneration', 'Demonstration' and 'Pathfinder' projects. The first of these, sponsored by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation explored the role of schools in contributing to area regeneration (Crowther et al., 2003). The fieldwork was conducted during the period September 2000 until November 2002 and focused on two areas in Northeast England which had been subject to regeneration initiatives in the past and on nine case study schools serving these areas. Interviews were conducted with school teaching and support staff, pupils, parents, community members and representatives from the Local Education Authority, the Local Authority and community and statutory agencies. During the course of the study more than two hundred interviews were conducted with stakeholders and a portfolio of evidence was collected on issues including perceptions of community and community need, theories of regeneration and theories of schools role in regeneration. Data were also collected and analyzed on school recruitment patterns, school-level destinations data, post code level attainment data at Key Stage 2

(Maths and English) and at Key Stage 4 and value added data for key stage 2 to 3 and key stage 3 to 4.

The evaluations of the Extended Schools 'Demonstration' and subsequent 'Pathfinder' project, funded by the DfES, ran in succession from February until May 2002 and from November 2002 to December 2003 (Cummings et al., 2004, Dyson et al., 2002). The Demonstration project supported developments in some thirteen schools across three LEAs. The Pathfinder project, involved participating schools in twenty-five LEAs. The numbers of schools in each LEA ranged from one to twenty-eight. For evaluation purposes, visits were made to all LEAs and to a sample of up to six case study schools in each. Individual and group interviews were conducted with LEA officers, school staff, pupils, parents, community members and partners from a range of agencies serving the area. These interviews focused on aims and rationale, activities, process issues including leadership, consultation, inter-agency collaboration and whenever possible on outputs and evidence of outcomes for students, families and communities.

All of the schools in these three studies were aware that they needed to define their role at least in part in relation to the families and communities they served, often because they were working in areas of significant disadvantage where family and community factors impinged on the daily life of the school. Most of them, therefore, developed a range of activities designed to offer additional services over and above teaching students within the curriculum. These included establishing breakfast clubs, developing childcare facilities, setting up schemes for learning disabled adults or unemployed mothers, opening school facilities for community use, hosting adult education provision, making extra-curricular provision for disaffected young people and so on. In many cases, schools (and their LEAs) were able to offer a coherent rationale for the activities they undertook. However, even where this was not the case, it is clear that such activities implied a view of the communities, families and children served by the school, the needs of those groups and the role of the school in meeting those needs. It is these views which we wish to explore in this paper.

3 Analytical Dimensions

Beneath the diversity of activities in schools and of the very different rationales through which these were sometimes justified, we were able to identify a more limited number of dimensions along which school approaches to their roles varied. We identified six major dimensions:

1. The way in which the task of the school in relation to students, families and communities is defined; specifically, what sort of changes is the school seeking to bring about.
2. The way in which local communities are viewed; specifically, what is taken to be the school's 'community' and whether the community is viewed from a deficit or other perspective.
3. The scope of action undertaken by the school; specifically, whether action is taken in response to some immediate opportunities and pressures or as part of some overarching strategy.
4. The locus of control of that action; specifically, how far it is controlled by professionals in and beyond the school and how far by community members.
5. The nature of the relationship between the school and other community agencies; specifically, how far action is centred on the school and how far school action is embedded within wider area approaches.

6. The nature of the relationship between the school and other schools; specifically, whether the school is acting alone or as part of a cluster or other school collaborative.

These dimensions are presented in table 1 below and in the sections which follow we illustrate how they operated in practice.

Table 1: Dimensions of school role

| Dimension | Options |
|--|---|
| What is the task of the school in relation to that community? | Resourcing/enhancement Individual transformation Contextual transformation |
| How is the community defined? | Deficit vs. non deficit Geographical vs. customer base vs. faith Homogenous vs. diverse |
| What is the scope of action? | Opportunistic vs. strategic initiatives |
| Where does the locus of control of action lie? | Professional control vs. community consultation vs. community 'empowerment' |
| What is the relationship between the school and other community agencies and the LEA/LA? | School-centred vs. area-based involving a range of agencies |
| What is the relationship between the school & other schools? | Cluster vs. non cluster |

4 The Regeneration Project

4.1 Tasks of schools & nature of anticipated change

Differences in schools interpretation of their role was clearly apparent amongst schools in involved in the Regeneration project. However, it was possible to identify three major conceptualisations. These were:

Community resourcing - an approach which saw the school as a repository of resources which could and should be made available to communities so that the quality of life within them was maintained or improved. These resources might be in the form of physical plant (meeting rooms, gymnasia, ICT suites and so on), of expertise (for instance, as educators or advisers) or of connectivity (by signposting community members to other sources of support). As one elected member put it:

Schools are the most valuable resources in a community and they should be developed as a community resource.

Individual transformation - an approach which saw the school's role as being more or less exclusively concerned with driving up levels of educational attainment. This was because the acquisition of skills, knowledge and credentials was seen as the best way of improving the employment prospects – and hence life chances – of young people who might otherwise remain in the cycle of low attainment, unemployment and low aspirations which was held to characterize local communities. Efforts were therefore focused on teaching students as effectively as possible within the confines of the prescribed curriculum. This left little room

for more explicitly community-oriented activities. In the words of a senior local authority officer:

The authority concentrates on attainment. This may divorce the school from its social milieu and mean that schools are not seen as a community facility. However, this should work at the macro level.

Indeed, the perceived low expectations and low levels of engagement with education in disadvantaged local communities were seen as further disadvantaging young people, who had, therefore, to be insulated from them. In the words of one comprehensive school headteacher:

The school aims to provide a different sort of area for pupils in which it imposes a strict uniform and discipline code...The school is a safe haven and provides an alternative to the community...The number one priority is raising attainment as that is what it [the school] is accountable for...the priority is to teach pupils to read so that they can get their exams and leave [the area], so they can get out of there.

Contextual transformation - This approach was as concerned with transforming the life chances of young people as the individual transformation approach and also saw education as crucial. However, its proponents believed that an exclusive focus on attainment was too narrow. As one headteacher put it:

... while the prime role of school is to educate, it is not going to be possible to drive up attainment without engaging fully with the community.

Engaging with the community was therefore seen as a precursor to raised levels of student, parent and community aspiration and increased levels of academic attainment:

By working with parents and community members to raise aspirations and see the value of education, the school will be in a stronger position to raise standards and levels of aspiration in the school.

(Teacher)

4.2 Views of community

The common view of disadvantaged local communities held by education professionals was somewhat negative, regardless of how they conceptualised the school's role. The view of one headteacher was typical:

In general, pupils from [name of area] have very low aspirations. Very few aim for or get to University. Education is not seen as a priority.

They were, therefore, keenly aware of risk factors at work in communities and families.

There is a very high risk of some male pupils turning to crime and some female pupils falling pregnant before they complete their education... Peer group pressure is an enormous influencing factor, as is family life.

(Headteacher)

However, by no means all schools served a single identifiable community. In one of the two case study areas in particular, schools drew their students from a range of communities with very different socio-economic characteristics. Although, therefore, they might be concerned about the most disadvantaged of these communities, they did not necessarily see themselves as having an exclusive relationship with them and, indeed, might find themselves caught between the needs (as

they saw them) of such communities and the different priorities of more advantaged communities from which others of their students came.

4.3 Scope of action

Schools' responses appeared to be influenced significantly by the policies of their local authorities in respect both of education and of regeneration. Schools in one of the two areas tended to adopt more elements of an individual transformation approach and were given little encouragement by their LEA to broaden their role. Schools also reported few, if any, opportunities to engage with the local regeneration strategy. The regeneration work in this area had a particular emphasis on housing-led initiatives and schools reported a lack of any educational component:

As a school we were excluded from all of the work of the regeneration of that area. We weren't allowed to be in meetings when it was talked about...Regeneration then was looking at - well, my understanding was that it was looking at regenerating the fabric of the area which had nothing to do with the ethos of the community, but that is only my perception as I was not included in any of the discussion.

(Headteacher)

The second area, however, was characterized by a local authority a strategy around early intervention support for young children and their families which linked to a long-term strategy for regeneration through investment in human and cultural capital. As a local authority officer explained:

The Council has a big agenda and they very much want to develop links with communities. Parental involvement is vital to this; they need to involve parents in their children's education. [The Authority] has traditionally been an area with high provision of pre-school education...childcare is also part of economic regeneration.

4.4 The locus of control

Although there were some variations in the extent to which school initiatives formed party of a wider local authority strategy – and then the extent to which that strategy arose from community consultation – it was clear in every case that the real control of what schools did in relation to families and communities remained firmly in the hands of the school itself. More specifically, the Headteacher was the dominant figure in determining how far and in what ways the school would develop a community role. As a regeneration officer in one of the local authorities told us:

Where I've ever worked with schools it has required there to be a particular Headteacher or senior teacher there who has actually got a degree of vision and recognized that schools are more than just nine till three...they can actually see what the role of the school is in the community...some do and some don't'.

The approach taken by a school was vulnerable, therefore, to changes in headteacher or other key staff. The same officer acknowledged:

Each headteacher is their own emperor of their school and the culture of that school is very much linked to the particular teacher and if the teacher changes often the attitude does...a change in staff can result in a change in the interface with the community.

Indeed, we ourselves witnessed schools reversing their stances on community involvement as one Headteacher left and another was appointed. As the representatives of a wider community interest it could be argued that governing bodies ought to have been able to damp down these oscillations and given the schools a more considered community orientation. However, as an LEA inspector told us, ...the governors may not necessarily be representative of the community as a whole and their aspirations for pupils and the community may not necessarily be universal.

4.5 Relationships between schools, community agencies, the LEA and LA

Stakeholders outside of schools frequently articulated a view that schools must begin to make a concerted effort to engage more with the community and the professionals serving the community, if they want to attempt to combat the negative influence of the communities or the families of which their pupils are a part:

{Schools} are seeing the children and they're seeing the immediate results of the way those children are parented. If they want to make a difference to their entry level and their assessments as the child goes through school and develops, if they really do want to turn those children out as more capable, more confident children, they've got to start thinking 'we are part of this community, what can we do in partnership to develop that?'

(Community worker)

However, the experience of non-education professionals was that schools on the whole were reluctant to play this wider role and were more likely to pursue their own institutional agendas, regardless of the consequences for the wider community. As one community worker put it:

Schools are like a monster, they eat everything in their path, then spit it back out again...Schools are like a secret society. They make plans that involve others but the others are always the last to know. Others are used by schools for their own ends; they're self-interested.

This view that schools were territorial and interested only in engaging agencies to help meet the aims of their own agendas was shared by officers in the local authority.

Each school is its own little empire and they don't tend to take kindly to, lets say, encouragement for overarching type solutions that they don't think of.

(Regeneration Officer)

Schools were under no obligation to link with external agencies or work with wider LA strategies designed to tackle disadvantage and did not, therefore, regard partnerships working as a priority. Those schools that made genuine efforts at community engagement were constrained by a range of contextual factors, not least the dominant standards agenda and the relatively small amounts of resource that could be diverted to this work. Inevitably, therefore, schools were restricted to rather small-scale efforts that seemed unlikely in themselves to have much impact on structural disadvantage.

4.6 The relationship with other schools

Schools in one of the areas, which were located within close proximity physically, were working co-operatively as part of their involvement in an EAZ. The cluster was referred to by school and

LEA staff as a 'family of schools'. This arrangement was relatively new and there was evidence that the message had not yet filtered to parents or the wider community. However, the commitment from schools in the area was clear:

There is a very strong concept of family, they really do operate as a family...I see everyone quite altruistically saying that it is in all of our interests to operate together.

(EAZ Director)

This was a deliberate attempt to aid transition, reduce the impact of parental choice and to encourage families to see schools in the 'family' as offering a reciprocal service:

We are providing the same vision to the children, providing them with the same opportunities so we can have seamless transition and we are not seen as separate schools.

(Headteacher)

Schools in the other area were not working closely together and some schools expressed concerns about competition for numbers. However, the newly appointed head at a secondary school was considering becoming part of a 'federation' of three secondary schools which could serve a much wider area than any one of them alone.

On the whole, therefore, there was some evident willingness on the part of schools to work together. This was in part due to the structural facilitators of collaboration (notably EAZs) that had been put in place. However, by no means all schools viewed these forms of collaboration positively and even for the most committed they did not yet amount to collective control over significant areas of the schools' activities.

5 The Extended Schools Demonstration and Pathfinder projects:

5.1 Tasks of schools & nature of anticipated change

The extended schools operated within a common 'territory' in terms of targeted groups - children, families and/or communities - and the domains across which they seek to impact upon - learning issues, social issues and/or health issues. However, the extent to which they worked across the whole of this territory and their approaches to do this differed considerably. Some schools focused on students, others targeted students, parents and the wider community. Likewise, whilst some schools aimed to impact upon the range of domains, others adopted a more focused approach, concentrating their efforts on learning issues. There was also variation in the extent to which extended schools aimed to enhance existing community provision (in line with the community resourcing model outlined above) or to bring about long-term transformational change to the culture of the community (as in the contextual transformation model). By definition, schools which had opted into the extended schools programme ruled themselves out of a purely individual transformation view.

Transformatory goals were ambitious. For example, some schools set themselves aims of changing a culture of low aspirations, increasing the value attached to education in disadvantaged areas, developing community cohesion, increasing opportunities for employment and impacting

significantly on a range of deep-seated underlying issues affecting disadvantaged areas. As the head of an extended school explained:

One of the things that we've going to have to look at through this, how we change the culture of the whole community...I want them to have different aspirations than they had when I came here [as head]...I think it'll take another generation for that bulk of people to actually change it for their children. So it is this long-term change that will make this biggest impact...If there are these small pockets that seem to be intractable then it's going to be long-term policies and long-term changes that'll change them rather than the short term.

Projects aiming to impact in this way identified opportunities to adopt strategic multi-agency and multi-initiative approaches which would be most likely to have sustained and substantial impact.

As the Project Officer in one LEA maintained:

In the long term it is about changing the culture and this will be a hard and laborious task. But, with the vision and commitment to work as a collective we think we can do it.

The views expressed by most schools and LEAs visited aligned most closely with the contextual transformation model which sets out school-community engagement as a precursor to raised attainment and increased social capital. Comments such as these were common:

We can't raise attainment without extended schools...It is all about giving children experiences they might not otherwise have had. It enables them to see that things can be different. They can lead very narrow lives and we are giving them a vision of what they can achieve. We are raising their self-esteem but our ultimate aim is to raise attainment...We have third generational unemployment and we need people to realise that there are some opportunities. We must help them to help themselves...Schools seem like the only focal point of the community.

(Headteacher)

...it's about helping to get children into classrooms in a better position to succeed and achieve. You may have a child at a non-extended school who goes into a lesson and the teacher does all of the right things, but because of the fact that they haven't had any breakfast...after school they have not got anywhere to go, or they're not well but no-one has time to take them to a doctor, or they're depressed or bullied, whatever it is. If that same child is going to an extended school, some of those needs will be met...It's about getting children into a condition to learn more effectively by supporting their families. We have so many in poverty. To try and do something about addressing those needs is important.

(LEA Officer)

In reality most extended schools aimed to bring about both long-term transformations and short-term enhancement of existing provision for their pupils and for families and communities, although a few schools saw little need for a wholesale transformatory approach. These schools, which were those serving less deprived areas, tended to identify gaps in provision for young people and the wider community that extended schools could fill or attempted to make the school a focal point for the community by opening its doors to the wider community and offering community use of provision. Other projects limited themselves to short-term enhancement goals due to the short time scales of the DfES Extended School Projects.

5.2 Views of community

Drugs, drink, crime, housing, health all link to children's attendance and behaviour and attainment

(Headteacher)

Comments such as this were typical. Communities were frequently defined in terms of their status on deprivation indices. Whilst acknowledging that communities suffered from the intractable problems associated with socio-economic disadvantage, it was not uncommon for professionals to point to the negative impacts of community on young people's aspirations, motivation, self-esteem and their ability to learn. Despite this, it was also to the community that they looked in order to improve these factors:

We had major problems that when children come here they have exceeding low self esteem and we can only attack that one by getting the community involved

Likewise, it was not unusual for professionals to conceptualise communities in terms of what it was lacking or what its inhabitants were lacking. Schools holding deficit views of community saw it as their role to educate community members about how to grasp opportunities that present themselves. For instance, a headteacher explained:

We have third generational unemployment and we need people to realize that there are some opportunities. We must help them to help themselves. Also there are lots of pressures on children; lots of drugs, crime and lack of work opportunities. We must get children into nursery and get parents in at that point and keep them on board, give them parenting skills.

The same headteacher also stressed, however, that structures to support parents and young children have been severely lacking until very recently.

Schools and LEAs which perceived or conceptualised the community as being stigmatised, lacking cohesion or displaying fragmentation saw the school as a source of reconciliation and pride and an investment in the community:

There was segmentation and fragmentation and therefore the need for a focal point, a 'heart' of the community, where people can congregate.

(LEA project officer)

5.3 Scope of action

The scope of a project's action and its inclination to interact with other initiatives tended to be related. Developing a strategic multi-agency and multi-initiative approach was seen as the best way to ensure constructive planning of services, effective delivery, increased resources and the regeneration of disadvantaged communities. Most (though not all) schools took the view that adopting an embedded approach broadened a schools capacity to intervene:

The more we can embed initiatives into funding and planning the better... We have created a framework with a range of initiatives and they will make a big difference collectively.

(LEA Officer)

As this comment suggests, schools' commitment to a more strategic approach may have been a consequence of funding for the extended schools initiatives being channeled through LEAs. However, we did encounter at least one instance of an LEA simply dividing up the available funding between all those schools which expressed an interest rather than in line with any strategic plan.

The work of extended schools was reported to complement that of a range of educational initiatives such as, Excellence in Cities, Behaviour Improvement Programme, Specialist Schools and Early Excellence Centres, aimed at addressing the difficulties experienced by children and young people in disadvantaged areas. It was also usual for projects to interact with initiatives undertaken by statutory, voluntary and community agencies. Indeed, some professionals regarded extended schools as a vehicle through which to engage in and develop effective 'joined up' thinking, planning and delivery

5.4 The locus of control

The role of the LEA in distributing funding meant that in most projects there was a degree of leadership at LEA level. However, schools were active partners in steering the majority of projects and in six of the projects schools took the dominant role. Clear management structures were a feature of all projects and were comprised of some degree of LEA and school co-ordination, oversight by the school's senior management team and reporting to a multi-agency steering group. The role of school based co-ordinator was seen as crucial in developing an extended school and, as with the Regeneration project, the drive and vision of the individual headteacher was crucial.

On the other hand, there was limited evidence of genuine community involvement in the formulation and establishment of activities although many schools aimed to involve community members in the management of extended facilities once they were established. One project did, however, involve community members from the outset as a way of ensuring the provision was well received and used.

It is only going to be successful if the community want it and are on board...The fact that it's the community on the steering group, the partners are on the steering group and the community and the partners are constantly involved in everything and that is why it's successful today

(LEA Officer)

One project involved the co-location of services in a 'one stop shop' facility on the school site and the impetus for this came from the residents of the estate themselves, though this also was consistent with a long-term council led regeneration strategy. The school was a very active partner but the project was described by a local authority representative as, '...led by the community with the support of officers', and the community testified to this.

5.5 Relationships between schools, community agencies, the LEA and LA

As we have seen, extended school projects commonly operated within the context of a wider LEA (or wider local authority) strategy to develop extended schools and/or to help tackle educational and social issues in their areas. It was also the case that the strategically orientated projects endeavored to forge close working links with a range of other agencies, thus widening the scope of their work, ensuring effective planning and delivery, increasing resources such as staffing and funding and helping to secure sustainability. For some projects, developing a culture of multi-agency collaboration was a fundamental priority.

It is about developing strong partnerships in the first instance, as if these are in place you have sustainability.

(LEA Officer)

There was an understanding that schools alone could not make the kinds of transformation changes needed to improve the life chances of children and their families living in disadvantaged communities. As a headteacher succinctly put it:

In the end, we either work together or go down together. It's no use me just trying to do things for this school, we work collaboratively in this area.

Full service provision, involving the co-location of community services other than education on the school site, was an aim of only a small number of the extended school projects. For the community, such provision offered easier access to services and opportunities for earlier intervention and crisis prevention. Schools aiming to tackle barriers to learning could operate more proactively by drawing on the expertise of professionals working in the school. For agencies, involvement in an extended school offered better access to local populations than they could achieve in isolation:

If we can put something in there that gets to a larger community or hits one of our targets or gets to the young people then whatever it is then we will seize that opportunity.

(Primary Care Trust)

Projects set about developing links in a range of ways. Frequently the LEA took the lead, or, in schools with designated extended schools co-ordinators, links were often instigated and/or developed by them. However, there were only a few examples of agencies approaching schools. Once established, developing strong networks with partners involved a careful process of trust-building where different agencies and services seek to understand each other's aims, priorities and working methods. As one headteacher put it:

Trust is key...We need to learn about other people's agendas as well as our own.

In some projects, interagency collaboration was a component of the management structure, and frequently this took the form of a multi-agency steering group.

5.6 The relationship with other schools

Clustering was a feature in approximately half of the LEAs. In some, schools operated in what was described as a hub and spoke approach with one school, or schools in one community, taking the lead in the initiative and other schools linking strategically with the work of schools in the hub. Such an approach aimed at widening the coverage of the initiative. There were many examples of a secondary schools working closely with feeder primaries to ensure smooth transition and to help foster a culture of early intervention. Sharing resources was a further feature for schools operating in formalized or informal clusters or federations. There were examples of support staff working across schools, particularly where schools were part of BIP or EAZ initiatives and examples of schools using extended schools funding to appoint specialist staff to work across the cluster.

6. Towards a rationale for Extended Schooling

Looking across these studies, there are a number of features that are striking. The first and most obvious one is the diversity of activity and underpinning rationale in the participating schools. In

terms of our dimensions, we see schools which see themselves as having a key role in contributing to their communities, others which seek to enlist communities in support of their own agendas and others again which see their task as to insulate students from the negative influence of their families and communities. Some, therefore, see communities as partners, some as supporters and some, to all intents and purposes, see them as enemies. Some schools are engaged on what they see as a large scale programme of fundamental change in their communities, perhaps as part of a wider local authority strategy; others simply undertake isolated activities. Many work closely with other schools and a few even talk in terms of families, clusters and federations; others work more or less independently.

To some extent these differences are attributable to the different contexts in which these studies were set. The Demonstration and Pathfinder project evaluations dealt with volunteer schools operating within volunteer LEAs and with a degree of LEA leadership. The Regeneration project dealt with perhaps more typical schools which were identified because of the area they served rather than because of any commitment to community-oriented approaches. There were also geographical and demographic differences apparent in this latter study, with schools serving a large, homogeneous area in a somewhat community-oriented LEA more likely to engage with their communities than schools in the other area, which was smaller, where local families supplied only a minority of students in any one school and where the LEA was focused more narrowly on standards. However, it is clear that there are also school-level factors which make a difference to how (if at all) the school relates to families and communities. The most obvious of these, of course, is the position taken by the headteacher.

To this extent, our studies replicate the findings of previous research on community-oriented schooling – that such approaches are characterized by diversity, even where schools are part of an apparently coherent initiative or are badged under a common label. Given the experimental nature of developments in England at the current time, there is a sense in which this diversity is no problem – and, indeed, there is much in the two extended schools projects to suggest that developments are moving in a productive and thoughtful direction.

On the other hand, there are some worrying common features beneath the diversity we witnessed. In particular, it is clear that much of what is happening is rooted in a professional and institutional, rather than a wider community agenda. Even where schools were working in partnership with community members and organizations and sought to make a real contribution to community development, it is evident that the view of communities which dominates their thinking is a negative and deficit-laden one. Communities, to put it simply, are problems for their schools – even though some of those outside education might, as we have seen, think that it is schools which are a problem for their communities. In this situation, schools' actions are shaped largely by the schools themselves, perhaps in dialogue with their LEAs and even local authorities, but with rather little room for community involvement. Not surprisingly, although these actions vary considerably, many of them are oriented towards the school's priorities. There is a tendency to think that the role of the community is to deliver educable children to the school and to support the school's educational efforts. The role of the school is to educate children and work to counter the negative influences that would emanate from the community left to its own devices.

None of this is surprising. In the absence of a clear and consensual rationale for community-oriented schooling at the level of LEAs or central government, we might expect schools to move in different directions, but to do so in ways which reflect their professional cultures and institutional imperatives. Given that these imperatives are particularly strong (and, some would argue, rather narrow) at the present time, it is inevitable that schools will find it difficult to listen to alternative voices and possibilities. It seems to us, therefore, that we urgently need some sort of rationale which can both give coherence to what is potentially an exciting set of developments and which can enable schools – and education professionals in general – to reconcile their core business of educating children with a wider social role.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to establish that rationale in detail. However, we can at least indicate how it might be developed. The fundamental dilemma which needs to be resolved, it seems to us, is implicit in what we called above the ‘contextual transformation’ approach to schools’ relationships with families and communities. Put simply, schools’ core business is educating children, yet children live within a series of family, community and wider social contexts and they bring with them to the educational process what they have learned and continue to learn from those contexts. Schools, therefore, cannot discharge their core business without at the very least taking into account – and perhaps intervening in - those contexts. Currently, national education policy, which exercises a tight grip on schools, seems to be based on a rather narrow human capital view of the purpose of education (Killeen et al., 1999, Wolf, 2002). The emphasis is on giving children the sorts of knowledge, skills and credentials which will make them attractive and, perhaps, productive in the labour market. The emphasis, moreover, has been on improving the effectiveness of schools in this role by paying attention almost exclusively to their internal processes of leadership, organization and pedagogy.

One way to develop a rationale for community-oriented schooling is to draw upon Bourdieu’s (Bourdieu, 1986) notion that capital can take many forms and to consider the other sorts of capital which children and young people need and which schools might potentially develop. For instance, John Craig has recently argued that extended schools are repositories of intellectual, organisational, social and human capital (Craig et al., 2004). We would, whilst acknowledging the problematic nature of these concepts, place our own emphasis on notions of cultural and social capital. Specifically, if we see the skills and knowledge of individuals as interacting with forms of cultural and social capital which extend *beyond* the individual, we have a means of understanding how individual development has to take place within a broader socio-cultural context (see, for instance, Aldridge et al., 2002, Coleman, 1988, Gamarnikow & Green, 1999, Israel et al., 2001, Moore, 2004). Such a view makes it clear that individual development makes little sense without the parallel development of the cultural resources to which individuals have access and of the networks of relationships within which they operate. It also makes it clear that individual students do not enter schools as the empty vessels that what Paulo Freire called the ‘banking’ or ‘alimentary’ concept of education supposes (Freire, 1972). Rather, they come with a rich inheritance of social and cultural capital. By the same token, the families and communities of which they are a part are repositories of these capitals. It may well be the case that schools find it difficult to recognize or mobilise these capitals and it is certainly the case that schools can and should offer different forms of capital. However, this is a very different matter from saying that families and communities are devoid of capital and viewing them only in terms of deficit.

This theoretical foundation, of course, does not resolve some of the fundamental dilemmas which schools face in developing an extended role. It reduces, for instance, but does not entirely remove the tension between a school's work with an individual student and its work with the student's family and community. Currently, moreover, we know little from within education about how schools can most effectively develop, mobilize and connect the different forms of capital. However, it does offer us a framework from within which to address these issues. More particularly, it suggests that these issues are real issues for schools and in schooling – and that they do not simply relate to optional activities which a few schools might choose to undertake. Perhaps most important, it implies that schools can only be effective in their development of human capital if their work is linked to a wider effort across a range of public policy areas to develop the resources of all families and communities.

What is particularly encouraging is that many of the developments which are already emerging on the ground are congruent with the theoretical framework we are suggesting here. In practice, as Craig (Craig et al., 2004) points out, schools already possess, deploy and develop a range of capitals. Moreover, there is no reason to suppose that schools of the (not too distant) future might not lessen some of the tensions which are currently apparent. As the curriculum becomes more flexible, as the aims of education, health and social work move closer together and as schools develop new physical, managerial and funding structures, the possibilities for 'rethinking school' (Moss et al., 1999) increase. Our concern is that these developments might remain rather superficial and might simply embody existing conceptualisations of schooling in new forms. Our argument, therefore, is that any rethinking needs to be profound.

References

- Aldridge, S., Halpern, D., with & Fitzpatrick, S. (2002) *Social Capital: A discussion paper* (London, Performance and Innovation Unit).
- Bourdieu, P. (1986) The forms of capital, in: J.G. Richardson (Ed) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (New York, Greenwood Press).
- Coleman, J.S. (1988) Social capital in the creation of human capital, *American Journal of Sociology*, (94 (supplement)), pp. 95-120.
- Craig, J., with, Huber, J. & Lownsborough, H. (2004) *Schools Out: can teachers, social workers and health staff learn to live together?* (London, Demos/Hay Group).
- Crowther, D., Cummings, C., Dyson, A. & Millward, A. (2003) *Schools and Area Regeneration* (Bristol, The Policy Press).
- Cummings, C., Dyson, A., Todd, L. & with the Education policy and Evaluation Unit, University of Brighton (2004) *An Evaluation of the Extended Schools Pathfinder Projects*. Research Report 530 (London, DfES).
- DfEE (1999) *Schools Plus: Building learning communities. Improving the educational chances of children and young people from disadvantaged areas: a report from the Schools Plus Policy Action Team 11* (London, DfEE).
- DfES (2002) *Extended Schools: providing opportunities and services for all* (London, DfES).
- DfES (2003) *Every Child Matters*. Cm. 5860 (London, The Stationery Office).
- DfES (2004) *Every Child Matters: Next steps* (London, DfES)

- Dyson, A., Millward, A. & Todd, L. (2002) A Study of the Extended Schools Demonstration Projects. Research Report 381(London, DfES).
- Freire, P. (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books).
- Gamarnikow, E. & Green, A. (1999) Developing social capital: dilemmas, possibilities and limitations in education, in: A. Hayton (Ed) *Tackling Disaffection and Social Exclusion: Education perspectives and policies* (London, Kogan Page).
- Israel, G.D., Beaulieu, L.J. & Hartless, G. (2001) The influence of family and community social capital on educational achievement, *Rural Sociology*, 66(1), pp. 43-67.
- Killeen, J., Turton, R., Diamond, W., Dosnon, O. & Wach, M. (1999) Education and the labour market: subjective aspects of human capital investment, *Journal of Education Policy*, 14(2), pp. 99-116.
- Moore, R. (2004) Cultural capital: objective probability and the cultural arbitrary, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 25(4), pp. 445-456.
- Moss, P., Petrie, P. & Poland, G. (1999) *Rethinking School: Some international perspectives* (Leicester, Youth Work Press for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation).
- Sammons, P., Power, S., Elliot, K., Robertson, P., Campbell, C. & Whitty, G. (2003) New Community Schools in Scotland. Final Report. National Evaluation of the Pilot Phase (London, Institute of Education, University of London).
- Social Exclusion Unit (1998) *Bringing Britain Together: A national strategy for neighbourhood renewal* (London, The Stationery Office).
- Social Exclusion Unit (2001a) *A New Commitment To Neighbourhood Renewal: National Strategy Action Plan* (London, Social Exclusion Unit).
- Social Exclusion Unit (2001b) *Preventing Social Exclusion* (London, Social Exclusion Unit).
- Wilkin, A., Kinder, K., White, R., Atkinson, M. & Doherty, P. (2003a) Towards the Development of Extended Schools (London, DfES).
- Wilkin, A., White, R. & Kinder, K. (2003b) Towards Extended Schools: A literature review (London, DfES).
- Wolf, A. (2002) *Does Education Matter? Myths about Education and Economic Growth* (London, Penguin Books).