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Understanding Educational Leadership People, Power and Culture

This book shows how school leaders at all levels – from the most senior manager to the classroom teacher – can help to build learning communities through collaborating and negotiating with their colleagues, students and students' parents and carers, as well as with external agencies and local communities, to sustain and develop the enjoyment of successful learning among the members of a school. It looks at how positive cultures can be constructed that support inclusive and exciting teaching, enthusiastic teachers and engaged students, parents and carers.

Drawing on research, the book examines topics such as the nature of leadership, especially distributed and teacher leadership; the politics of education management; the construction of inclusive cultures in schools; school improvement; and the construction of collaborative and inclusive work groups. It uses a range of critical perspectives to examine processes of change and the relationships of people in school communities to each other and to their social, economic and policy contexts. The book argues that it is essential to develop inclusive education in order to promote student engagement, social justice and equity within formal education.

Understanding Educational Leadership is key reading for teachers, headteachers, school leaders, policy makers, Education students and practitioners, and others who have an interest in improving schooling.

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10 Leading purposeful change in schools:

People, power and culture

Developing school communities to promote student engagement

To make sense of change processes, let alone to enact them successfully, teachers need an understanding of modernist systems perspectives as well as of critical perspectives that explain how people negotiate with each other to implement particular agenda or developments and why some people are marginalized in these discussions. Lukes (1986) notes that understanding how power flows in organizations makes it possible for people to be manipulative of others – projecting power through others rather than using it with them – but it also allows people altruistically to alter systems and process to minimize the marginalization of some groups of people, such as school students from ethnic minority groups in some schools. However, bringing about change successfully also requires participants to understand the cultures of communities in which they are trying to enact change, so they appreciate how the norms and beliefs of those communities can support or hinder change. So change involves leaders and their colleagues creating, organizing, managing, monitoring and resolving the value conflicts inherent in change processes, where values are defined as concepts of the desirable (Hodgkinson 1999) that are used to construct utopian visions (Halpin 2003) to guide practice. It is this political cultural and axiological debate that lies at the heart of developing inclusive schooling.

In the first section of this chapter modernist or systems perspectives on school improvement are interlaced with critical perspectives to make visible the dynamics of managing changes. Change comes about because people espouse and pursue particular agenda and access power in various ways to try to implement them either within existing social (organizational) structures or by changing these or the rules through which these are constructed (Giddens 1984). These agenda are value laden and raise questions about what values should be implemented through schooling and whose interests the change seekers are trying to serve.

The second section of the chapter focuses on the issue of values that might lead to socially just and, therefore, engaging schooling for all students. It asserts that schooling should be based on these values to help students to develop their social capital so that they can aspire to take whatever opportunities are available to them in national or local adult society. It considers how teachers might begin to map and implement an agenda for social justice in schools in order to create genuinely inclusive education that cares and caters equitably for vulnerable, marginalized and challenging students along with those students who already engage successfully with schooling.

The discussion of modernist or systems perspectives is focused on school improvement. The term 'school improvement' is problematic because, first, it assumes that things are always getting better. However, change and development may not benefit all groups in a school equally or indeed at all, and arguably if the implementation of change requires scarce resources it is likely to lead to some groups which are not at the focus of the change being worse off, if only temporarily, even if it is only because teachers spend more time on developing the changes and less time on working with particular groups of students. Second, notions of improvement are culturally located, so what is considered 'improvement' in one culture (and one time and space in history) may not be so considered in another. As there is no absolute definition of what constitutes 'better', whether or not there is improvement will depend on people's value-laden perspectives. For example, in England and Wales in the twentieth century there was a strong move in schools to include boys and girls in the same classes, whatever the age of the boys and girls. Some parents resisted but most parents welcomed this, not least because it seemed to expand the educational opportunities available to girls (women). However, in some parts of the world and among some faith groups in Britain such developments are not considered improvements at all, rather as a threat to established cultures.

This challenges the notion, often asserted by people promoting school improvement, that there is one model for bringing about change that can be used in all places regardless of the cultures in those places. Instead it suggests that processes for bringing about change and development have to be culturally relevant to the sites in which they are being enacted. So it is important to be clear from where particular ideas come and what cultural assumptions are implicit in them before they can be considered suitable for adoption or adaptation at another site.

The underlying five principles of school improvement are said to be:

1. Enhancing the quality of students' learning.
2. The vision of the school should embrace all members of the school community as learners and contributors.

3. External pressures for change are perceived as important opportunities for a school to secure its internal priorities.
4. Schools seek to develop structures and create conditions that encourage collaboration and lead to empowerment of individuals and groups.
5. Schools promote the view that monitoring and evaluating quality is a responsibility that all members of staff share.

(Hopkins *et al.* 1997a: 1)

These principles aim to re-develop the capacity of teachers to evaluate and enhance the quality of learning and teaching in their particular social, educational and organizational contexts, as Fullan (2001) argues, and convert the fragmented and competition-oriented organizational cultures that were encouraged in schools in England and Wales in the 1980s and 1990s back towards collaborative if not collegial ones. The focus on implementing effective teaching and learning strategies and the emphasis on 'all students' points in the direction of inclusive education policies is equally crucial since these are the core processes of the school. But these have to be facilitated by leaders in schools shaping policies, practices and cultures in particular ways. Hopkins (2001) emphasizes the importance of leadership that is largely transformational and focuses on the instructional processes of a school, facilitating effective collaborative working between members of a school (teachers, students, parents and governors).

MacGilchrist *et al.* (2004: 113) develop this into a series of nine intelligences that leaders at any level in a school need to develop with their colleagues and students and their parents:

1. *Ethical intelligence* – justice; respect for persons; inclusion; rights and responsibilities.
2. *Spiritual intelligence* – search for meaning; transcendancy; sense of community; interconnectedness.
3. *Contextual intelligence* – internal; local; national; global.
4. *Operational intelligence* – strategic thinking; development planning; management arrangements; distributed leadership.
5. *Emotional intelligence* – self-awareness; awareness of others; managing emotions; developing emotional literacy.
6. *Collegial intelligence* – commitment to shared purpose; knowledge creation; multi-level learning; trust and curiosity.
7. *Reflective intelligence* – creating time for reflection; self-evaluation; deep learning; feedback for learning.
8. *Pedagogical intelligence* – new visions and goals for learning; teaching for learning; open classrooms; going against the grain.
9. *Systematic intelligence* – mental models; systems thinking; self-organization; networking.

One particular programme for school improvement, IQEA (Improving the Quality of Education for All), grounds school development in teachers creating, in a structured way, a rational and well-researched approach to change that will reduce functional barriers to effective teaching and learning and diminish cultural barriers, too (Hopkins and Reynolds 2001). To coordinate an IQEA project, a school is expected to set up a temporary or task-related organizational structure called a school improvement group (SIG) or cadre which is led by a school's IQEA coordinator, who may or may not be a member of the school's senior staff. The cadre is a steering group of normally six to ten people, composed of a range of staff of different status and curriculum expertise. It is responsible for administering the 'conditions' surveys at the start of a school's involvement with IQEA – which provides a base-line view of the culture of the school from the perspectives of students and staff when it starts its project – and conveying their analyses to staff. These are used to focus a school's development goal and the key steps to achieve it. It is also responsible for developing a strategy of professional development to support teachers constructing and implementing these steps and, later, holding a cross-curriculum workshop where teachers can compare and celebrate their developments (West 2000). However, in the evaluation of IQEA in a large shire local authority in England it was clear that such developments did not work successfully unless they had the support of the school leaders. In other words, for change to be enacted successfully, power has to be used appropriately (Watling *et al.* 2003).

Hopkins (2001) suggested IQEA works because it:

- encourages the questioning of existing practice
- supports a collegiate approach – the cadre
- focuses improvement on the classroom but also acknowledges the need to work on conditions in school – staff development, leadership, planning, etc.
- stimulates ideas
- focuses on the main processes of schools – teaching and learning
- transforms the culture of the school into one that is positive in respecting people and celebrating learning.

This view implicitly asserts the importance of teachers being empowered to take a proactive part in bringing about change in their schools. In allowing teachers to gain a share in the ownership of change, this process encourages them to engage with it because it allows them to implement some of their values for constructing successful learning and teaching to benefit their students. Further, it offers them a range of resources to bring this about, including time for staff development, material resources for curriculum and staff development, and knowledge resources, especially from the teams running IQEA, to help them develop and evaluate relevant changes in pedagogy.

To foster such approaches to change, leaders at whatever level in an organization need to offer their colleagues instrumental and cultural help. Morgan (1986) suggests they have particular functions to perform among their colleagues such as:

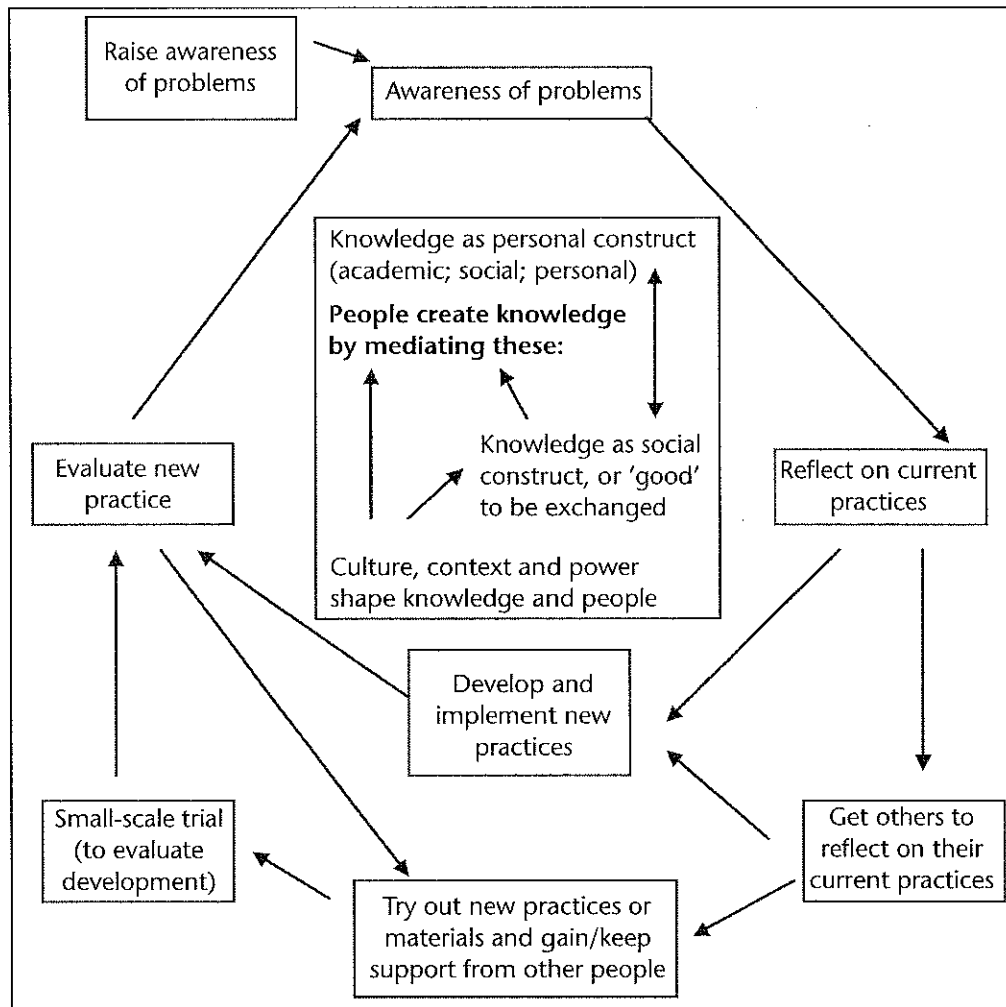
- looking ahead for policy and technology changes, and to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their own organizations or departments compared with others
- identifying problems and opportunities
- finding ways of reframing problems so the negatives become potential positives – new avenues for development
- grasping, shaping and developing these opportunities to implementation.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1992: 112) argue that leaders need to understand the social contexts of change for their colleagues individually and collectively and mediate these to them. They suggest that leaders should:

- understand the culture
- value teachers: promote their professional growth (find something to value and praise in each teacher's work)
- extend what they value (breadth of vision that is inclusive of all good practice, not just including a leader's preferences)
- express what they value (remember the importance of using symbols to reflect values)
- promote collaboration, not co-optation (head teachers do not have a monopoly of wisdom, therefore vision building is a multi-way process with staff, students and parents and other stakeholders)
- make menus, not mandates (offer a choice of ways in which people can engage with teaching, learning and management successfully)
- use bureaucratic means to facilitate, not constrain, people's actions
- connect with the wider environment.

Leaders often need to prompt their colleagues to think critically about a current situation, i.e. to raise awareness of and questions about it, as is shown in Figure 10.1 (page 153), by reflecting with colleagues what are the current problems they and their students are encountering, what are the sources of these problems, how these might be addressed, and what are the particular values that the school wants to sustain, whatever changes it wants to make or is required to make.

Figure 10.1 Leading change through engaging people with learning

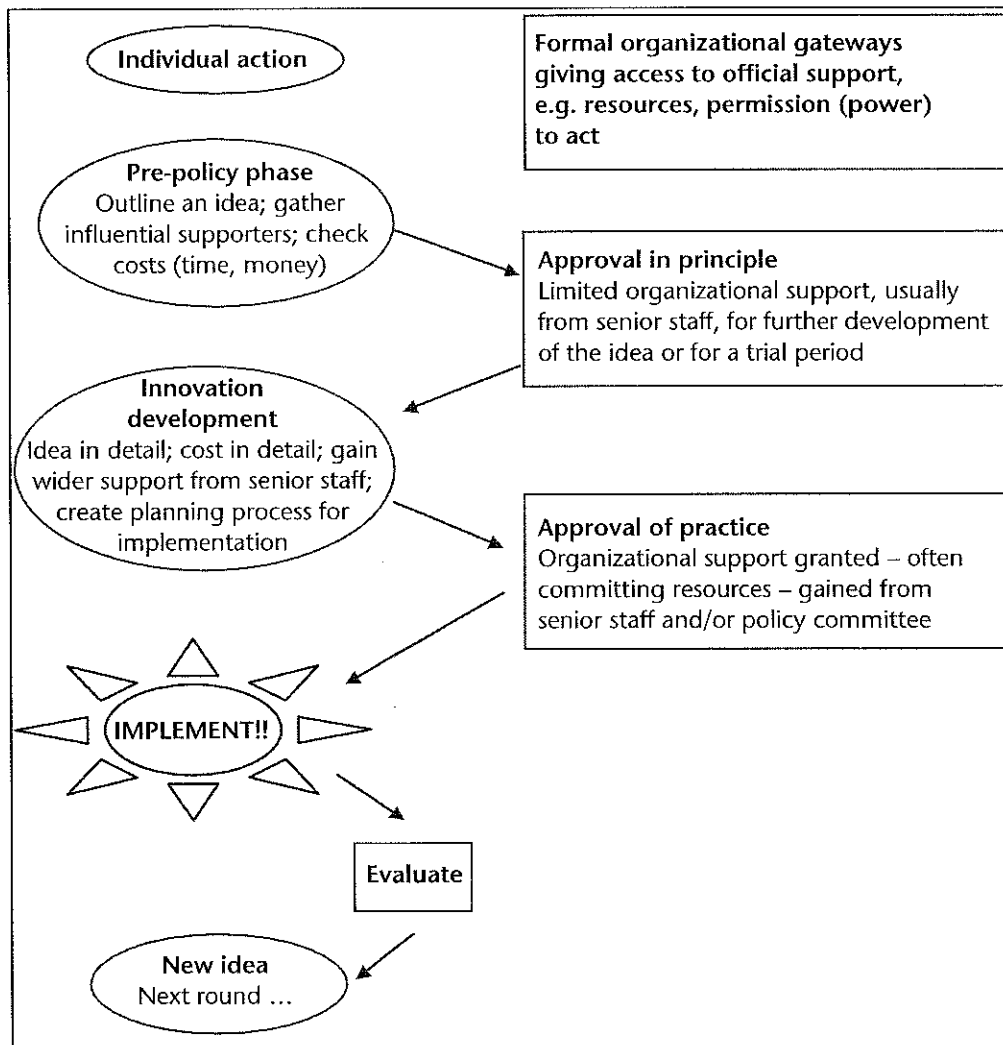


Actually bringing about change can be described through a political model as well as through a modernist or systems model. The former involves leaders in negotiating with staff, parents and students in a variety of transformational and transactional ways to engage them in developing teaching and learning and organizational processes to meet their needs, while at the same time proposing and modifying agenda of changes to policy or practice. To achieve this, leaders need to listen carefully to what other members of a school community are saying about the process of change and the goals they want to achieve and how these can be accommodated within the demands being made of the school by pressures in its external socio-political contexts. Of course autocratic leaders can simply impose changes but this is likely to lead to resistance by other members of a community – as is discussed elsewhere.

Negotiated approaches to change are not a narrowly instrumental process that can be portrayed as a series of steps or stages, but a complex

process through which leaders of change gradually acquire greater access to power through gaining greater support for their proposals from their community, be it a school or a department or a class. As a consequence of this negotiation the original proposals are likely to be reshaped to take account of the interests of the different supporters of it. This is a normal rather than a pathological process, indicating a flexibility by the change leaders to acknowledge cultural pressures and the value of other people's insights rather than an indication of their moral turpitude in abandoning principled ideas. It often leads to them building temporary or longer-term alliances with a variety of people, especially those holding senior formal status, in order to gain access to sufficient power to implement the changes they want. Figure 10.2 tries to capture the major lines of a political model for implementing change.

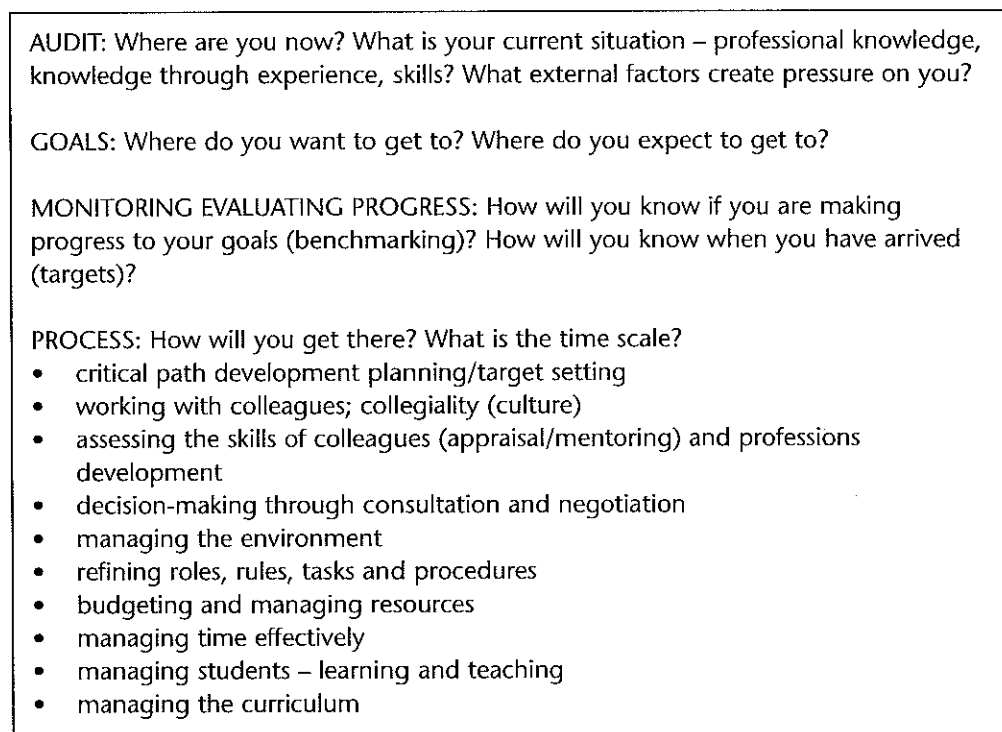
Figure 10.2 Building alliances to implement change



Leaders need to have sufficient expert technical knowledge to guide and help their colleagues to bring about change successfully (Busher and Barker 2003). In this case technical knowledge refers to knowledge about organizational processes as well as about learning and teaching and, where relevant, specific subject knowledge. Reeves *et al.* (2001) point out that an important element of this is knowledge of planning and development processes.

A modernist model of this change process is portrayed in Figure 10.3.

Figure 10.3 A modernist model for bringing about change and improvement

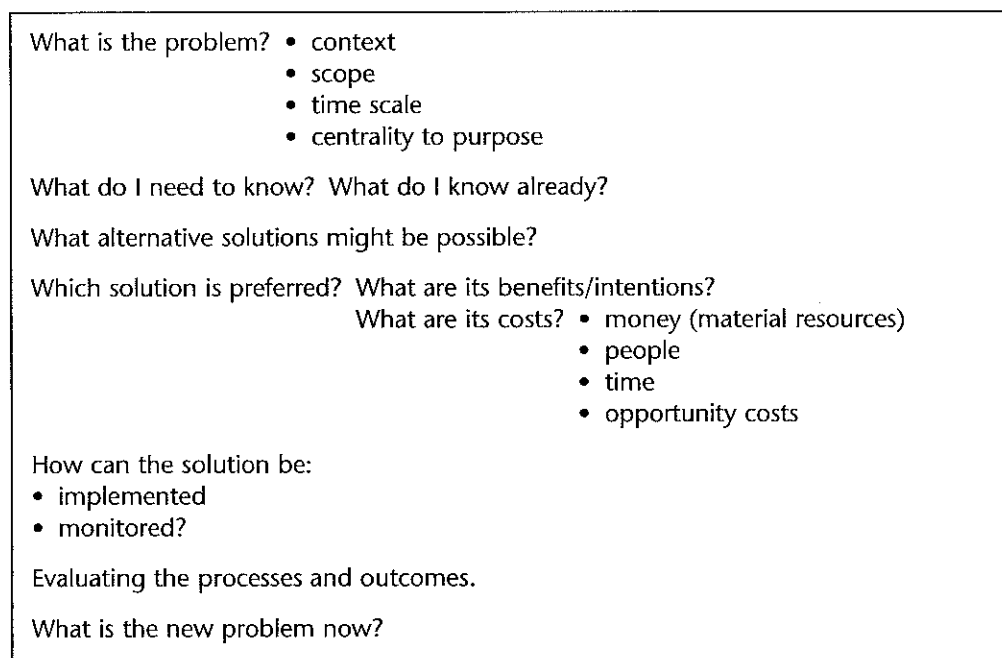


Fidler (1996: 99) locates this process as part of strategic planning in order to emphasize the interactivity between internal change processes in organizations and the external environments of those institutions. He views strategic planning as 'an attempt to impose patterns of order on incremental discontinuities by keeping long term objectives (where are we going?) in view when taking short term decisions (how do we get there?)'. Linking internal changes in a school or department to changes taking place in its external contexts gives criteria of purpose against which strategies of change can be evaluated and helps to avoid introducing changes unnecessarily or inappropriately. Alternatively strategic planning or future scenarios building can be perceived as merely modernist approaches to living with uncertainty and so at best offer a heuristic for exploring different routes that people in a community, school or department might take. None the less, the successful

implementation of change, whether small or large scale, requires a certain degree of planning to establish when and how particular elements of a project will be constructed and implemented and how progress with the project will be assessed, as well as how the success of the project will be evaluated.

Change is costly in a number of different ways, not least in challenging current certainties held by staff, students and parents individually and collectively in a school, one of the reasons that some people resist change, as is discussed in Chapter 6. Leaders need to find ways of helping people to feel comfortable with intended changes and the processes of change in order to decrease the levels of opposition to the proposed developments. This could be described as a subtle or manipulative use of power to construct a supportive arena in which agenda for development can be discussed by departmental or school staff colleagues or students and through which various resources can be made available to support the processes of change as well as the actual intended change itself. One means of doing this is to engage colleagues in helping to evaluate what developments need to be undertaken, as is shown in Figure 10.4, and what priority each has. In many ways this process bears a lot of similarities to action research (Somekh 2000) or action learning approaches to managing change, especially when these are carried out by groups of people where leadership is genuinely collegial rather than hierarchic.

Figure 10.4 Using evaluation to drive change



In IQEA projects evaluation in the form of a 'conditions survey' is a first step in bringing about change to find out whether members of that community find the working environment or culture in a school or department supportive of learning or discouraging (Beresford 2003). This not only helps to diagnose what problems need to be addressed but also where barriers to change might lie. This, in turn, potentially creates an arena into which staff, and students, too, can be drawn to discuss the implications of the evaluation for developing changes in policy and practice, thereby raising their critical awareness of the dilemmas involved in managing the school or department and also giving them an opportunity to share in constructing responses to those dilemmas. It forms part of a process that is discussed more fully elsewhere in this book but can be summed up as:

- developing authentic relationships (Hopkins *et al.* 1997a) includes gaining trust (Blase and Blase 1994; Hopkins 2001) among all participants in a school
- involvement of members of schools and departments, staff in particular but students and parents, too, in policy-making (Wallace *et al.* 1997)
- mentoring, appraisal and professional development (Moyley *et al.* 1998)
- critical self-reflection on practice by teams of teachers (Hopkins 2001)
- distributed leadership (Gronn 2000)
- engaging students actively in the evaluation and processes of change (Pickering 1997; Flutter and Rudduck 2004; Rudduck *et al.* 1996; Fielding 2004)

The construction of particular cultures in a department or school helps staff to collaborate in engaging with the problems they are confronting – even if within those discourses are held asymmetrical power relationships because promoted post-holders have more formal power (authority) than do other members of the group or community working on the problem or considering the possibilities of development.

However, there is another element to collaborative development by support staff and teachers that offers a fertile arena for curriculum development: the cross-school network. Busher and Hodgkinson (1996) point out the positive value that many teachers gave to being able to work together with colleagues, not only in their own schools but across schools to develop elements of the curriculum. The NCSL (National College for School Leadership) for England offers considerable opportunities for this networking for senior and middle leaders in schools. Unfortunately teachers are still reliant for developing such networks on attending courses, part-funded by another central government quango, the Teacher Development Agency

(TDA), at a university or other provider of in-service education, unless their schools happen to be part of an inter-school network, which may be web-based.

One local education authority in England provided inter-school networking for teacher development in various ways as part of a school improvement programme (Watling *et al.* 2003). LA inspectors linked to particular schools helped to run residential courses and workshop sessions for teachers in the programme and acted as critical friends and mentors to individual school improvement projects. The LA set up an inter-school learning network to keep schools and teachers in the programme in touch with each other. This eventually became web-based. As part of the programme the LA sponsored joint staff development sessions for participating schools. These were a notable success because of the high quality inputs from university staff and guest speakers and from experienced school leaders who showed practically how ideas for improving teaching and learning could be applied in classrooms. They also provided an arena in which teachers could share ideas with colleagues from other schools. When teachers criticized workshops, it was for not keeping a balance between new ideas, their practical application, and participant engagement in working out strategies for action.

From the foregoing discussion, then, the key parameters for developing inclusive learning and teaching in schools are probably the following:

- leadership and decision-making – by whom, with whom – and the distribution of power, authority and creativity
- values – for whom are schools being developed and for what purposes – and the impact of government policy and social contexts on schools
- creating a data-rich environment to monitor the success of practice
- organizational cultures – creating inclusive and engaging learning communities through modifying and developing school and classroom conditions
- staff development – sustaining work-related and personal and social growth
- building capacity for academic, personal, social and emotional learning and leading
- partnership with parents to sustain learning
- networking learning – schools and colleges working together to improve learning.

Establishing a culture of inclusion and social justice

This section explores what might be a research agenda for establishing the extent to which an institution can be perceived as providing a socially just environment for its members. It proposes an iterative approach for monitoring the culture of a school to record the extent to which it exhibits attributes of social justice, thereby revealing how power is distributed and used in whose interests in a school. Although this focus is on formal educational organizations, that is not to overlook the importance of carrying out similar monitoring of informal educational processes. Figure 10.5 identifies seven aspects of the processes of education organizations that need to be monitored to sustain the development of socially just education.

Figure 10.5 Seven aspects of schooling to monitor for establishing socially just education

1. How social and organisational systems and structures (Giddens 1984) shape how power (symbolic and physical resources) flows around the social frameworks into which it is locked.
2. Consider whether the policy and social contexts of schooling focus on transforming society or reproducing it and in the interests of whom or whose society/community/culture.
3. Analyse the value frameworks and repertoire of skills that leaders deploy as mediators of policy and social contexts to their staff and students: what is the quality of leaders' relationships with their colleagues, students and parents?
4. Voice and people's identities ... what are members of the school community saying, where can these be heard, and how can their needs be met in terms that are meaningful to them?
5. Evaluating the organizational culture/sub-cultures of a school and how these are manifested in rules, ceremonies and language, and enacted by members of the school community: to what extent is social justice reflected in the actions and processes sanctioned by that culture?
6. To what extent/in what ways are participants in a school encouraged to engage in decision-making at many levels by asserting their voices, identities and agency?
7. Leadership ... and therefore issues around power and how it is used and distributed in organizations (e.g. different types of leadership).

Social justice can be enacted in a variety of ways in a variety of situations related to education according to work by Cribb and Gewirtz (2003), Tett (2003), Riddell (2003) and Vincent (2003). These ways can be categorized as creating the following:

- distributive social justice – allocating goods/services on an equitable basis
- administrative social justice – bureaucracy – operating systems 'fairly'

- associative or affiliative social justice – right to form groups without hindrance
- representative social justice – right to voice views freely and to have them heard
- cultural social justice – acceptance of difference without discrimination.

Riddell (2003) argued that administrative or procedural justice has several different facets, some of which are in tension with others – see Table 10.1 – which she developed from the work of Mashaw (1983) and Kirp (1982). Work carried out in a school by staff and students could be considered in the light of these models of procedural justice to evaluate how well it met these criteria and what aspects of it needed further development.

Table 10.1 Six normative models of procedural justice

<i>Type</i>	<i>Decision-making</i>	<i>Legitimizing goal</i>	<i>Mode of accountability</i>
Bureaucracy	Applying rules	Accuracy	Hierarchy
Professionalism	Applying knowledge	Public service	Collegiality
Legality	Weighing arguments	Fairness	Independence
Managerialism	Focus on organisational needs	Effectiveness	Performance
Consumerism	Active choice	Consumer satisfaction	Codes of practice
Markets	Price mechanism	Profit/efficiency	Commercial viability

(source: Riddell 2003)

The following table (Table 10.2 on page 161) takes the categories of types of social justice and suggests how they might be applied to different aspects of schooling in order to help members of a school community consider the extent to which they are constructing socially just education.

Depending on how participants experience school processes from their own perspectives, actions that might seem quite reasonable to one group of people in a school could be perceived as unjust forms of control/discipline (Foucault 1977) to others. So, for example, procedures for countering truancy may be experienced as a means of control by students and parents – being forced to comply with bureaucratic procedures and legal rules from which they feel alienated – and not as a socially just way of supporting society's needs or those of other members of the school community, although the teachers managing these processes may perceive themselves as having acted fairly (justly according to the rules prescribed by the macro-society and institutional policy).

Table 10.2 Social justice and education: welcoming the marginalized

<i>Types of justice</i>	<i>Relationships with</i>	<i>Pedagogy</i>	<i>Pastoral care</i>	<i>Curriculum</i>	<i>'Budget'/ resource allocation</i>	<i>Administration</i>
	students					** student grouping
	staff					
	parents					
Distributive* justice						
Cultural* justice						
Associative* justice						
Representative social justice						
Administrative** justice						

Notes: * These aspects are derived from Gewirtz (2002)

** This aspect is derived from Riddell (2002)

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At the core of understanding how people work together in school communities and sub-communities are their interactions individually and in groups to implement values that they consider important with whatever resources they can lay their hands on. How they gain access to resources or prevent other people gaining access is a matter of the politics in which people engage in support of their interests and those of others and agenda in the framework of the cultures of the communities of which they have membership. These cultures represent the core values that those communities have constructed for themselves to define and identify their members as separate from other communities or sub-communities. Discussions of change and social justice seem to bring these issues to the fore as they highlight the asymmetrical power relationships that are embedded in organizations and raise questions about in whose interests is power used in those organizations. Such concerns are not only of key importance to leaders of schools and departments but also to those who, in some way or for some reason, are marginalized in the social and curriculum processes of schooling. Leaders of schools at whatever level, from classrooms to governors' meetings, who fail to address adequately such issues leave schools continuing to reproduce the existing injustices and inequalities of society, if not making them worse, leaving new generations of some students to feel as equally disaffected as their parents, and new generations of teachers coping with the same confrontations and socially unacceptable behaviours from some students as have their predecessors.