NEW COMMUNITY SCHOOLS IN SCOTLAND: ISSUES FOR INTER-PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION

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ABSTRACT

The issues raised for inter professional collaboration are reviewed through data derived from a case study of a Scottish 'New Community School' cluster. The attitudes of staff from Nursery, Primary and Secondary schools to collaboration are examined and differences discussed. The findings show that there were generally positive attitudes to collaboration but secondary school staff saw themselves as having the least to gain. In general staff need continuing support from managers and funders as well as persistence and patience in building up their work over time. In practice, however, both these criteria were difficult to fulfil. This suggests that it is better to go for small achievable gains as part of an overall longer-term strategy rather than big objectives that are difficult to reach. However, it was found that respondents were set major tasks to achieve and links were not made between the macro and micro levels of activity. It is suggested that collaboration is only one of many solutions to the problem of delivering effective services and there are a number of circumstances when it is best avoided. Such situations include when resources of time, energy and money are extremely limited, when organisations are unstable, when organisations have very similar functions or when continuing support is unavailable.

INTRODUCTION

New Community Schools in Scotland have evolved from the 'Full Service School' model which originated in the USA in the late 1980s to address problems of deprivation and alienation in centres of urban and inner-city decay. The aim of the model has been to provide education as well as other supportive health and welfare services to parents and children in one institution through extended opening times throughout the year. Working *with* rather than *on* parents and children through the collaborative effort of different agencies and professionals groups is central to the philosophy and success of this model. In just over ten years from its inception the initiative which developed in New York City, it has spread to over 600 schools in fifteen US states as well as to other countries such as Australia (Baron, 2001; Semmens, 2001).

The long-term objective of Scottish policy in relation to preventing social exclusion is to develop ways of working 'which integrate programmes not just within Government, but at all levels of action right down to local neighbourhoods and communities' (Scottish Office 1999b:1). Thus schools are expected to work with other agencies both to prevent social exclusion taking place and to help reintegrate those who have been socially excluded into mainstream society. Historically, targeting resources on the most disadvantaged has been an approach implemented to tackle the effects of economic and social disadvantage, for example, Educational Priority Areas and Community Development Projects in the UK (Halsey, 1972). More recently, governments in the UK have focused on raising educational achievement particularly in geographical areas characterised by severe socio-economic deprivation. It has long been recognised that agencies must work in close co-operation if they wish to provide an effective seamless response to the needs of socially excluded communities (Dyson, *et al.*, 1998; Tett, *et al.*, 2003; Webb and Vulliamy, 2001). Such "joined up" thinking lies behind a number of international educational initiatives such as inclusive schools, full service schools and Education Action Zones (see Dryfoos, 1996; Campbell, 2002; Power, 2001). In the UK schools are envisaged as playing

a key role in the current government's policies to promote social inclusion among children and young people in particular and in tackling social exclusion in general. In Scotland the 'Social Inclusion Strategy' document stresses that: 'the Government is investing heavily in programmes to promote inclusion among school-age children, including New Community Schools, Early Intervention Schemes, Alternatives to Exclusion from School and Family Literacy' (Scottish Office 1999a:7). Furthermore it is recognised that schools on their own cannot solve the problems associated with social exclusion.

Research has shown (Atkinson, *et al.*, 2001; Ball, 1998) that multi-agency projects, especially those which are based outside any one school, have been able to provide a structure where take up of services can be addressed and encouraged. Projects that have involved social and health services, housing, police, community education and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) collaborating together with parents and schools, focussing on providing integrated services at the point of need, have been shown to be the most effective (Semmens, 2001; Whitty, *et al.*, 1998). New Community Schools (NCS) aim to 'provide integrated, school based health and social services as a means of supporting individuals and families in combating educational underachievement in disadvantaged areas' (Scottish Office, 1998:21). A case study of one New Community Schools cluster therefore provides an opportunity to examine the perceptions of a group of professionals to partnership and collaboration.

The focus on inter-professional collaboration should also be seen in the context of earlier attacks on the motivation of professionals. During the 1970s and 1980s, these attacks came from two distinct quarters. Those on the left suggested that, whilst pretending to operate as benign agents, professionals were reinforcing social inequalities and extending their empires (Weatherley, 1979; Lipsky, 1980; Wilding, 1982). However, those on the right mounted stronger attacks because they wished to reduce expenditure on welfare. Adopting the arguments of the left, it was suggested that professionals, far from being neutral, were driven by ideology and self-interest. Not only providing poor value for money, it was suggested that their system of self-regulation resulted in corruption and inefficiency (Deakin, 1994). To bring these wayward professionals into line, it was argued, they needed to be subjected to the disciplines of managerialism and the market. Within the context of the market (Le Grand, 1991; Glennester, 1991), professionals should be responsive to rational client choices and should adapt their services to meet client needs. Mangerialism dictated that professional performance should not be judged by internal standards, but by externally imposed and objectively measured targets. In the NCS context the managerialist agenda is addressed partly through output measures of governing arrangements via 'the audit and review of existing inter-agency work against NCS aims and objectives' (Sammons, *et al.*, 2004:10). It is also addressed through 'the management structure [that]… includes a single reporting and accountability framework… for all the core services involved' (Scottish Office 1998:9).

The operation of NCS therefore provides a useful focus for studying a range of issues in relation to the efficacy of inter-professional collaborative approaches and the difficulties that might be experienced in achieving changed attitudes and action. To this end data derived from an evaluation of an NCS project for a Scottish Local Authority afforded the opportunity to study professionals' perceptions of collaboration in one socio-economically excluded area. Before we discuss our findings we provide a brief account of the NCS initiative.

NEW COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

The promotion of New Community Schools in Scotland in 1999 was one of the flagship policies of the newly devolved Scottish Parliament which is expressly committed to the theme of Social Justice, and to the objectives of Social Inclusion, Lifelong Learning and Active Citizenship (Scottish Office, 1999a). The development of NCS was initiated

in 1998, when it was argued that this initiative of 'integrated provision of school education, informal as well as formal education, social work and health education and promotion services will require a new approach and level of inter-disciplinary team working' (Scottish Office, 1998: 8). Research commissioned by the New Labour Government showed that many children and young people were underachieving in schools and at risk of becoming 'socially excluded' from society (see Baron, 2001). It was decided to implement a NCS programme which would aim to meet the needs of 'at risk' children and families. They should:

> focus on the individual child, his or her family and the community; the aim is to meet each child's needs in the round; the key is integrated provision of services – teachers, social workers, community education workers, health professionals and others working together as a single team. (Scottish Office, 1999c: 2)

The NCS approach is very much part of New Labour's modernising agenda where accountability is to the fore and the delivery of public services should meet the needs of the citizens and not the convenience of public service providers (Riddell and Tett, 2001). The approach also recognises the need to work co-operatively together to overcome social and educational exclusion by exploring and overcoming professional and institutional boundaries of service providers.

NCS were defined as having the following essential characteristics,

a) A focus on the needs of all pupils at the school;

b) Engagement with pupils;

c) Engagement with wider community;

d) Integrated provision of school education, social work and health education and promotion services;

e) Integrated management;

f) Arrangements for the delivery of these services according to a set of integrated objectives and measurable outcomes;

g) Commitment and leadership;

h) Multi-disciplinary training and staff development (Scottish Office, 1998:7-8).

In addition to this, there were other criteria which would reflect a NCS, including Health Promoting School Status, extended family childcare and engagement with informal and formal adult learning. A key area was the introduction of Personal Learning Plans (PLP), in which each pupil would set their own learning targets, supported by the class teacher. These PLPs would then become the mechanism for involving parents/carers in their child's learning (see Elliot, *et al.*, 2002).

Semmens (2001:71) argues that the NCS approach is a very practical response to 'at risk' students because 'schools are usually located in accessible places, and services can be delivered either at school or through school acting as the referral agency'. In addition, the strength of this way of working is that no one agency is expected to deal with the complex range of difficulties such students face. The multi-agency approach offers 'joint consideration of individual children's needs and joint action to address these' (Scottish Office, 1998:4).

There was no overall 'model' of NCS promoted by the initial pilots based in each Scottish Local Authority. Some were based around a single school, others around a nursery and a few primary schools, whilst others were clustered around a secondary school and local feeder primaries. How NCS projects operated also differed greatly. Some local authorities chose to use NCS funding to restructure Children and Families

Services whereas others used the funding to identify and deliver services to meet the essential characteristics of NCS and to meet their own priorities. This flexibility has been encouraged because approaches have been sought which were:

> radical and designed to secure a step change in the attainment of children. Key to this will be integrated working focussing on the needs of pupils at the school. Successful pilots will therefore be innovative; bringing together a number of services focused on the needs of the child and engaging with families. (Scottish Office, 1998:1)

From the broad policy context we now turn to an examination of the specific features of the NSC project studied including the socio-economic context within which it operated.

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

The New Community School project studied comprised a geographical cluster of three schools – a nursery, primary and secondary school. Almost all children in the nursery school moved on to the primary school but there was a choice of two secondary schools within the catchment area. The alternative secondary school was popular with parents since it served a less socio-economically disadvantaged area and was higher up the 'league tables' than the designated one. This meant that those parents that had access to transport, time and the capacity to 'choose' sent their children there.

It is important to take account of the socio-economic context in which the NCS studied was operating. The area was ranked fourth out of ninety-two wards in terms of an 'index of need' that takes into account a range of factors. These include the number of adults on various forms of welfare support, health indicators such as premature mortality, the number of properties in the lower council tax bands and the numbers of children receiving some form of care. It is well established that poverty and social inequality are the most important determinants of health and account for enormous differences in child well-being (see McCally, *et al.,* 1998). Levels of unemployment were above average for Scotland (4.3%) with one ward at 14.7% and the other at 10.9%. This partly reflects the decline in the traditional industries of the area, although a strong tradition of manufacturing industry remains and employs about 30% of the population (as opposed to the national figure of around 20%). Another key indicator of socio-economic status is home ownership: in this area, at 38%, home ownership is significantly lower than the national average for Scotland, which is 52%.

Whilst these figures tell us something about the nature of the area in which the NCS is operating it would be a mistake to read into them too negative an account of life in these communities or the people who reside there. Although the mining industry that sustained areas such as these has now gone, the culture of resilience and social support typically associated with these communities still appears to linger. Whilst the various indicators provide important information they can lead to negative stereotyping and a deficit view of people as 'in need', with professional agencies and groups elevated as the 'need meeters'. Such accounts merely compound the problems that people living in such communities face, and paint a distorting image of professionals having the answers and people in communities as having problems they cannot solve without external intervention. An important aspect of the NCS approach to these issues of socio-economic disadvantage was to see the people in the area as a resource rather than a problem.

Before considering the approaches and attitudes to co-operation in the NCS studied as part of this research, we will first consider the literature on inter-professional collaboration and partnerships.

Collaborative partnerships have long been considered an important way of working in education (see Dyson and Robson, 1999) but collaboration can be difficult because of a number of inherent hazards, such as inter-professional rivalries or unrealistic expectations (Huxham, 1996). The research team defined collaboration as a continuum. At a minimum this means that individuals in one organisation are working with other individuals in another organisation in order to achieve some form of mutual benefit. At a maximum it implies many organisations working together in harmony. Collaboration can be said to be taking place when a change in process, product or output takes place that requires contributions from all the organisations involved (Tett, *et al.,* 2001a). Not all organisations or professionals will contribute equally but they will be adjusting their decision making to take account of each other.

Research (Hardy, *et al.,* 1992; Scottish Executive, 2000; Tett, 2000; Wilson and Pirrie, 2000) has identified a number of barriers to collaboration including:

- Boundaries that are different

- Differences in funding mechanisms and bases

- Differences in aims, organizational culture and procedures

- Lack of appropriate accommodation and resources

- Differences in ideologies and values

- Conflicting views about user interests and roles

- Concern for threats to autonomy and control and having to share credit

- Communication difficulties

- Lack of organisational flexibilities

- Differences in perceived power

- Inability to deal with conflict.

From the point of view of individual organisations, collaboration may pose a *threat*. Firstly, each agency loses some of its freedom to act individually when it may prefer to maintain control over its own affairs. Secondly, each must invest scarce resources in developing relationships with other organisations when the potential return on the investment is often unclear and intangible. Collaboration can also mean having to share the credit for particular achievements or even letting another organisation take all the credit.

The search for collaboration requires organisational flexibilities in the construction of joint agendas (thereby surrendering a degree of definitional power), joint resourcing (surrendering a degree of resource control) and joint working (surrendering a degree of control over staff time, energy and organisational loyalty). At the same time organisations face other pressures to tighten control in the pursuit of their own strategic objectives, greater resource efficiency and greater organisational commitment from staff.

It appears (see Pratt, *et al.*, 1998; Riddell and Tett, 2001; Wilson and Pirrie, 2000) that collaboration is facilitated when:

- Areas of independence and interdependence are identified by the collaborators

- There is an agreed legitimate basis for collaboration

- Partnerships are fit for their intended purpose

- Collaborating organisations are stable.

Collaboration thus involves firstly, being clear about the purpose of the joint project and enabling staff to work together to develop a common sense of purpose that they are committed to implementing. Secondly, developing and sustaining shared ownership by front line staff coupled with robust and coherent management arrangements. Finally there needs to be developed an organisational commitment to learning and change (Scottish Executive, 2000; Wilson and Pirrie, 2000).

So far our examination of the research literature has shown that collaboration is difficult despite the fact that there are many claims made that it has enormous potential. There is a tendency in official government literature on the merits of partnership, to present an idealised model that assumes that achieving consensus and collaboration is relatively unproblematic. For example, one claim is that collaborative partnerships can create a more inclusive education system especially when the different contributions of the partners are recognised (Scottish Executive, 2000). It is therefore important to see how inter-professional collaboration is perceived in practice : this was the context in which we examined the attitudes to collaboration of staff from the three NCS project schools.

METHODOLOGY

To assess staff attitudes to collaboration questionnaires were derived from the literature reported on above. The sample for this study was the staff from the Nursery School (11), the Primary School (30) and the Secondary School (66). Respondents included support as well as teaching staff since the NCS initiative emphasises the importance of including all staff. Percentage responses varied from 100% from the nursery staff to 50% from the primary staff to 35% from the secondary staff. The questionnaire was derived from an earlier version devised by the evaluation team for a similar study in another NCS project in a different Local Authority area and was then piloted with two school staff to refine its content and utility.

The core of the questionnaire consisted of thirty-six attitude statements balanced to reflect both positive and negative attitudes to collaboration, thereby militating against any response bias. A five-point scale was used ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' and staff were asked to respond on the basis of their own current or recent experiences of collaborative activities in relation to the NCS. In addition staff were asked to comment on the advantages and disadvantages of the collaborations in which they had been involved in relation to the NCS. There was a space for any additional comments. Almost 90% of our respondents provided further comments as well as responding to our attitude statements. Data were also obtained from written reports of meetings of the NCS management group and the annual reports. Finally individual interviews were undertaken with the 'Integration Manager' of the project and the designated contact person in each school.

A factor analysis was undertaken and identified four distinct factors that were seen as reasons for, or problems with, collaborative partnerships. These were: enhanced services to the schools and their communities; increased mutuality in relation to partners; concerns about roles and priority setting; and problems in relation to the management and assessment of collaborative partnerships. We have grouped these into the three categories of benefits, barriers and rivalries since factors one and two both reflected the benefits of collaboration. *Benefits* comprise the positive outcomes that are identified for the participants and the intended recipients of services. *Barriers* refer to the structural and organisational issues that can impede collaboration. *Rivalries* refer to those active practices and attitudes that reinforce a non-collaborative culture.

FINDINGS

Generally, the overall pattern of respondent replies to our survey was that two-thirds of the items were answered in ways that indicated a positive attitude to collaboration and partnership. That is, either in agreement with positive statements

or in disagreement with negative statements about collaboration. First the results of the attitude statements from all the schools are presented and then these are followed by a comparative analysis of the three schools.

Table 1: Benefits

Percentage Agreements	
It is worth collaborating with other partners to secure greater resources.	94
We have a lot to offer in collaborating with other agencies.	92
Partnerships between agencies provide a broader curriculum for learning.	87
Collaboration is essential for achievement of our working objectives.	84
We achieve more by sharing resources with other agencies.	82
The NCS project brings specific benefits to the local community.	82
There have been mutual benefits for everyone in working together more closely.	80
We are enjoying working with a much wider range of professional groups.	80
We are adding value to the efforts of other groups in the area.	69
Work in a multidisciplinary setting provides additional staff development opportunities for us.	61
Broader networks are enhancing our work.	61
The NCS project has an impact on my day-to-day work.	57
Collaboration has enhanced our own professional competence.	57
Collaboration creates a greater degree of flexibility in our work.	51
The NCS project has made substantial changes to aspects of my work.	45
Percentage Disagreement	
The findings of collaboration are not justifying the time and effort being put in.	69
We could achieve just as much by acting independently of other agencies.	71
The benefits of greater collaboration are unclear.	49

Based on the above responses it is clear that a positive attitude towards the process and strategy for achieving good collaboration exists. In the written comments and the interviews various types of benefits were seen to accrue from collaboration. These included the sharing of expertise and resources which included broadening the learning curriculum, knowledge and understanding, methodologies of work, physical resources such as buildings and staffing, and financial resources. These were all seen as positive outcomes of fruitful collaborative work. In addition, working with new partners and other professional agencies could be a process of learning for those involved and lead to informal processes of professional development. Respondents were rather more ambiguous about whether the NCS project had made changes to their work or increased flexibility but this may have been due to the use of 'substantial' when changes were more marginal. Moreover, they were also somewhat divided about what the benefits of collaboration were and we will return to this later in the paper.

Table 2: Barriers

Percentage Agreement	
We have been involved in devising indicators of collaborative success.	20
Percentage Disagreements	
Our collaborative networks are too unwieldy to be of practical benefit.	53
Collaboration involves managerial arrangements that are too complicated.	41
Many collaborative initiatives do not reflect local priorities.	39
The indicators of collaborative success are often inappropriate ones.	22
Difficulties result from the different local boundaries of various agencies.	18
Collaboration initiated voluntarily is always more successful.	14

As reflected in the literature reported on earlier, collaborative projects are often vulnerable because they operate outside of any one organisation's boundaries and could be perceived as a threat to the status quo. In order to minimise such risk, respondents suggested it was necessary to be clear about the purpose of the collaboration and to enable staff to work together to develop a common sense of purpose that they were committed to implementing. This shared ownership should be coupled with robust and coherent management arrangements as part of an organisational commitment to learning and change. Administrative processes were also understood as subtle forms of power that could hinder or help joint working strategies. Recognising these, and a willingness to work through such difficulties, was seen as essential.

Whilst respondents claimed that the best forms of collaboration occur when it happens spontaneously the need for managerial support and support in policy were also seen as crucial. Those initiatives backed by policy were more likely to attract the resources that helped make it worthwhile. Quite a substantial minority (39%) thought policy initiatives did not reflect local priorities so there was clearly work to be done in ensuring an articulation between needs and interests. Whilst starting with the commitment of those working on the ground was seen as important, the involvement and support of higher levels of management had to occur at some point in the process.

In the questionnaire returns the issue of evaluation was seen as problematic. Involving collaborative partners in an ongoing cycle of review, monitoring and evaluation of the work was cited as a way of valuing the role and contribution of different partners to a project. However, the demands for short term indicators of success which may arise from political pressure or to satisfy funding requirements may not sit well with work whose benefits may be more difficult to make concrete or only show fruition after a longer period of time. Moreover, criteria of success that relate to processes, rather than specific outcomes, tend to be given less status.

Developing appropriate ways of evaluating work was clearly a problematic and contested area which had an important bearing on the experience of collaboration and its success - or otherwise. It was suggested that, where possible, the identification of indicators of success had to emerge collaboratively amongst the parties involved in a joint undertaking. Each collaborative partnership, respondents suggested, should have mechanisms in place to measure its performance. It must know how and whether it is helping to make change happen. But this raised challenges and constraints too

for our respondents. In particular they identified difficulties about how to develop performance indicators that do adequately measure *process* in partnerships and community development, as well as providing indicators of *outputs* that were more easily measurable.

Table 3: Rivalries

Percentage Agreements	
Sharing our values with other professions is mutually beneficial.	92
Staff development should include different professional groups.	78
Bonds of trust are being developed through working more closely with others.	73
Inter-professional rivalries are being reduced.	37
Percentage Disagreements	
We are in danger of losing our professional identity.	78
Our professional role is being eroded.	73
We have been forced into particular collaborations for which we are not suited.	65
Our professional autonomy is being compromised.	57
We have a unique set of values and a different ethos from those of other professions.	45
We are not receiving as much credit as some other agencies.	39
We ought to have greater control over our own affairs.	22

It would be highly surprising if the issue of collaboration did not raise the possibility of some rivalry occurring between different professional groups. If this is so then the responses we received were, overall, very positive in that apparent threats to roles that might ignite rivalries, were largely absent. Staff seemed secure in their professional identity and confident that they were deployed in appropriate collaborations and had control over their professional activities. Even more positively, the experience of collaboration was reported as leading to the development of trusting relationships (73%). However, the respondents were clear that rivalries had not been greatly reduced (37%) as a result of the NCS initiative. This issue clearly needs to be addressed if the benefits of inter-professional collaboration are to be realised.

These generally positive approaches to collaboration of the whole sample, however, hide some interesting variations between schools as can be seen from the following table:

Table 4:
Experiences of Collaboration within the New Community School Project

	Nurs	Prim	Sec	F	sig
Mean Scores for Nursery, Primary and Secondary School Staff. Mean Scores (higher scores represent higher agreement with statements) (n=49 school staff). Differences between school means tested by analysis of variance for which F value statistical significance at 5% level is printed in the two right hand columns ('ns' is at 5% level).					
1. We could achieve just as much by acting independently of other agencies	1.8	1.9	2.3	1.2	ns
2. Difficulties result from the different local boundaries of various agencies	2.5	3.0	3.5	6.5	.003
3. We have a unique set of values and a different ethos from those of other professions	2.5	3.1	3.01	.3	ns
4. There have been mutual benefits for everyone in working together more closely	4.3	4.1	3.81	.0	ns
5. We are adding value to the efforts of other groups in the area	3.9	3.8	3.6	0.4	ns
6. We are in danger of losing our professional identity	1.9	1.7	2.2	0.8	ns
7. Inter-professional rivalries are being reduced	2.8	3.5	3.2	1.5	ns
8. Our professional role is being eroded	1.9	2.0	2.5	1.4	ns
9. Staff development should include different professional groups	4.5	3.9	3.7	2.9	ns
10. We have been forced into particular collaborations for which we are not suited	1.9	2.2	2.9	4. 5	.02
11. We are enjoying working with a much wider range of professional groups	4.6	4.1	3.4	8.4	.001*
12. We achieve more by sharing resources with other agencies	4.5	4.1	3.6	4.0	.02
13. Partnerships between agencies provide a broader curriculum for learning	4.5	3.7	3.4	5.5	.007*
14. We ought to have greater control over our own affairs	3.3	2.9	3.4	1.2	ns
15. Our professional autonomy is being compromised	2.4	2.3	3.0	2.1	ns
16. The benefits of greater collaboration are unclear	2.5	2.3	3.3	3.9	.03
17. We are not receiving as much credit as some other agencies	2.5	2.7	3.1	1.5	ns
18. Collaboration creates a greater degree of flexibility in our work	3.9	3.3	3.3	2.2	ns
19. It is worth collaborating with other partners to secure greater resources	4.4	4.1	4.1	0.6	ns

	Nurs	Prim	Sec	F	sig
20. Collaboration involves managerial arrangements that are too complicated	2.4	2.9	2.9	1.8	ns
21. Broader networks are enhancing our work	4.3	3.5	3.3	4.2	.022
22. Collaboration initiated voluntarily is always more successful	2.8	3.3	3.5	2.7	ns
23. Many collaborative initiatives do not reflect local priorities	2.8	2.5	3.0	1.7	ns
24. Our collaborative networks are too unwieldy to be of practical benefit	2.4	2.3	2.9	2.8	ns
25. The Findings of collaboration are not justifying the time and effort being put in	2.6	2.5	3.1	1.6	ns
26. The indicators of collaborative success are often inappropriate ones	2.7	3.3	3.5	2.9	ns
27. Sharing our values with other professions is mutually beneficial	4.2	4.3	3.9	2.2	ns
28. We have a lot to offer in collaborating with other agencies	4.5	4.3	3.9	3.6	.03
29. Collaboration is essential for achievement of our working objectives	4.5	4.1	3.7	3.5	.04
30. Collaboration has enhanced our own professional competence	4.2	3.7	3.1	4.1	.02
31. The NCS project has made substantial changes to aspects of my work	3.5	3.6	2.8	2.6	ns
32. Work in a multidisciplinary setting provides additional staff development opportunities	4.4	3.9	3.0	8.2	.001*
33. Bonds of trust are being developed through working more closely with others	4.1	3.9	3.1	4.9	.01
34. We have been involved in devising indicators of collaborative success	3.5	2.9	2.2	12.5	.001*
35. The NCS project has an impact on my day-to-day work	3.5	3.7	2.9	2.9	ns
36. The NCS project brings specific benefits to the local community	4.5	4.4	3.7	5.9	.005*

This table shows the differences in attitude particularly from the secondary school where staff are significantly less positive about the benefits of collaboration. Secondary staff emphasise the barriers to collaboration rather than its benefits much more than other groups of staff but do not have strong views about the rivalries between the differing groups. This is not a surprising finding and confirms other work carried out on collaboration between schools and community education (see Tett, *et al.*, 2001a) that found similar differences in attitude between primary and secondary school staff. The professional training and socialisation of secondary school staff lays emphasis on the importance of expertise derived from subject knowledge and specialisation rather than the expertise derived from a broad knowledge of individuals, families and the community. Thus they are unlikely to feel that they have much to gain from

the expertise of others, or from being part of broader networks of other professions, nor see the value of benefiting the wider community.

Overall school staff had a very positive attitude to collaboration and this must stem in part from the successful multidisciplinary working and enthusiasm of all those involved in the NCS initiative as previously evaluated by Taylor, *et al.,* (2002). Benefits identified by staff varied between the three sectors. Secondary school staff particularly highlighted the 'Lunchtime Club' that aimed to promote social interaction and activity in a safe environment for young people who had difficulties with relationships with peers. One suggested that the 'benefit for the young people is the relationship with the adults involved and the opportunity to form peer relationships'. The main benefits highlighted by the Primary staff were focused on the more troublesome children. This was because 'the tasks involved in working with children are now shared amongst a group of professionals so the families concerned may not have to deal with as many people'. This meant that the 'input can be more focussed and sharing information makes decision making more effective'. The nursery staff focused most on the developments around the 'health promoting school'. They were particularly pleased with an initiative that had promoted exercise and health awareness in children and their parents. One suggested 'this was beneficial not only for parents and children but also for all the professionals involved'. All staff highlighted the extra resources that being part of the NCS had brought. These included: 'ideas and activities otherwise out of reach could be attempted'; 'increased levels of awareness of ICT and use of ICT by all staff'; 'increased community access to school facilities' and 'children would not have benefited from as many outdoor education programmes, breakfast clubs or study support'.

Some of the secondary school staff, however, had a number of concerns. These included a lack of information: 'not enough publicity of events, developments, initiatives to indicate to teaching staff the success rate of NCS projects' and some were 'not really aware of initiatives taking place within the project'. They also expressed concerns that 'many teaching staff do not see the benefits of the NCS project permeating through to their classroom with regard to pupil relationships etc' and felt that 'the raised expectations amongst many youngsters for the extra services [would be disappointed] when the extra funding is withdrawn'. As we have outlined earlier staff are often resistant to change particularly when they feel, rightly or wrongly, that an initiative has been introduced without thorough consultation and has some potentially negative impacts such as 'the policy of no permanent exclusions is undermining discipline in the school'.

DISCUSSION

There will always be tensions and rivalries between partners about their professional knowledge because such specialisation helps to distinguish one profession from another (Nixon and Ranson, 1997). It appears that these tensions arise both from the different priorities that agencies establish and the different definitions of pedagogic purpose and practice that govern their work. There are limited opportunities for members of different professions to learn together during their initial training when professional identities and stereotypical views of other groups may be formed. This leads to different professional partners having divergent views about what collaboration means (see Blair, *et al.*, 1998; Dyson and Robson, 1999). For example, our research has shown that, from the perspective of the different schools studied, effective collaboration stems from the capacity of other partners to add value to the schools' efforts. Schools were more likely to welcome collaborating partners in areas that they saw as beyond their own expertise such as health education. In areas that were seen as 'core' activities such as the teaching of specific subjects in the secondary school then the focus was more likely to be on funding for additional

resources that would enable them to teach more effectively (see also Ball, 1998; Tett, *et al.*, 2001b). As has been shown when there was a conflict between the target of raising achievement and the target of reducing exclusions classroom teachers were concerned that the latter would effect the former.

Collaborative partnerships are generally characterised by plural sets of values linked to different forms of expertise (Wilson and Pirrie, 2000). In the study reported here, staff regarded partnerships as effective where they were able to develop shared aims and objectives as in the health education initiative that was highly regarded by the nursery school. In addition, our respondents suggested that the more transparent the aims of the collaboration were to all the partners the more likely they were to be effective. Again the data from the secondary school shows that many staff there did not feel they had been involved enough in decisions about the project. On the other hand, where all partners participated in the process of planning and sharing ideas and adopted new working methods in the health initiative in the nursery school, this led to effective collaborative work. High levels of professional expertise and commitment from those involved at the local level and in the managerial levels of the partners were also seen as important. It was reported that such professional development had been encouraged by members of collaborative networks sharing insights with others in a variety of ways. These included shadowing each other's work, taking time to discuss issues and problems and also working together to sort out commonalities and differences.

The literature suggests (e.g. Hardy, *et al.*, 1992) that there needs to be sufficient trust between agencies to initiate co-operation in the first place, and a sufficiently successful outcome to reinforce the trusting attitudes that underpin more substantial collaborative activity. A theme from this research was that trust is often a by-product of personal connections and friendship particularly where key decision-makers at the local level have some knowledge of each other. It also showed that success breeds success since the more that collaborative ventures worked, the greater the likelihood they would continue to develop in the future. Persistence and patience in the pursuit of common objectives over a long period seem to be necessary if strategic change is to be achieved (Nixon and Ranson, 1997; Wilson and Pirrie, 2000). Our respondents suggested that they needed to be clear about their values and purposes in collaborating and take a long-term view about how and when they would be achieved. This was particularly true of the head-teachers who reported that they had been involved in the project for the long-term and did not expect to 'see immediate results especially in terms of raising attainment'.

Conflict and tension is inevitably part of the collaborative process and partnerships may be seen as a threat rather than a benefit (see Pettigrew, *et al.*, 1992). Different partners bring differential forms of power and some have greater control over the change process as a result. In this context Mordaunt (1999:4), has shown that partnerships are not necessarily between equal bodies and are concerned with trade-offs and compromises. She suggests that '*inequality within a partnership, far from being a bar to a fruitful alliance, is actually common to most partnerships*'. Of much greater significance than inequality, she argues, is the recognition of the unique contribution each partner brings to the relationship. Collaboration does not necessarily require equal partners but a significant point from our respondents was that it is important to be clear about those areas that are going to be undertaken jointly and those that are best undertaken by one organisation.

Our data showed that organisations and teams needed continuing support from managers and funders as well as persistence and patience in building up their work over time. In practice, however, both these criteria were difficult to fulfil. This suggests that it is better to go for small achievable gains as part of an overall longer-term strategy rather than big objectives that are difficult to reach (see Bryson, 1988). However, many respondents found that they were set major tasks to achieve

and links were not made between the macro and micro levels of activity. At the micro level they were able to negotiate achievable gains with other agencies such as those outlined earlier but these did not necessarily link up with the macro aims of achieving 'social inclusion' or 'community capacity building' set by funders such as the Scottish Executive (2000b).

The literature suggests that collaboration requires the recognition and nurturing of individuals who are skilled at identifying and developing useful networks, and have good social and inter-personal skills (e.g. Hudson, *et al.*, 1999). However, although committed individuals play a key role, they need to be seen by others as having sufficient legitimacy to assume the leadership role. Our respondents saw the role of the 'Integration Manager' for the project as crucial in bringing together the different professionals and ensuring that they worked together. As one respondent put it 'sometimes she [Integration Manager] had to wield the big stick and at other use a softly-softly approach but she did get us working together in the end'.

CONCLUSION

This paper has demonstrated that there are many barriers to collaboration, and conflict and tension between professionals are inevitably part of the process. Inter-professional collaboration may be seen as a threat rather than a benefit especially when core aspects of people's professional competence may be questioned. This issue seems to have impacted on a number of secondary school staff who felt that their subject specialisms were sometimes affected detrimentally by having to collaborate in keeping troublesome children in school. The NCS approach is very much part of New Labour's modernising agenda where accountability is to the fore, with the goal of delivering public services which meet the needs of the citizens rather than the convenience of public service providers (Riddell and Tett, 2001). Professionals must be clear about how they are constructing the needs of citizens especially in relation to local communities that are disadvantaged. The deep-rooted cultural differences between professional groups, vested interests in maintaining school and departmental boundaries and statutory restrictions may undermine efforts to engage in partnership working that includes all the community.

The time, effort and resources that must be put into any collaborative partnership if it is to be effective mean that change can not be accomplished quickly. Change also requires resources, especially of staff time and the value and purpose of committing these scarce resources must be clear if inter-professional collaboration is to achieve its aims. However, these conditions are rarely met especially as politicians seek to introduce new initiatives quickly and want to have immediate results. This is particularly true for pilot initiatives such as this one where immediate achievements are expected even when project staff are engaged for a limited time.

Given the particular emphasis in UK government policies on the value of inter-professional collaboration, it is important to remember that this is only one of many solutions to the problem of delivering effective services and there are a number of circumstances when it is best avoided. Such situations include when resources of time, energy and money are extremely limited, or when continuing support is unavailable (see Hudson, *et al.,* 1999; Huxham, 1996; Tett, *et al.,* 2003). If collaboration is the way forward then it is important that the partners in it are clear about what they wish to achieve through their joint efforts. Thus the NCS funding and philosophy appears to have successfully supported the integration of different initiatives in health that all partners were agreed about and thus acted as a catalyst to promote change more effectively. It remains to be seen whether the reduction in targeted resources that will be inevitable as the NCS initiative is rolled out across Scotland (Elliot, *et al.*, 2002), will enable the continuation of the current positive approaches.

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