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Cherie Anderson^a & Graeme Nixon^b

^a Humanities Department, Bathgate Academy, West Lothian, UK

^b School of Education, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, UK

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The move to faculty middle management structures in Scottish secondary schools: a case study

Cherie Anderson^a and Graeme Nixon^{b*}

^a*Humanities Department, Bathgate Academy, West Lothian, UK;* ^b*School of Education, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, UK*

This article looks at the move from a management structure based on discrete subject departments managed by subject specialist principal teachers within Scottish secondary schools towards groupings of subjects (faculties) with a single manager. This article examines the impact of this change upon the experiences of students and probationer teachers. While the focus group is limited, it is the intention that this research will draw important conclusions about the wider issues involved in adopting flatter management structures, particularly for small subject departments. Relevant aspects of key documents and local authority reviews of management structures will be discussed. The empirical work undertaken to inform this article is a survey of probationer and PGDE (Professional Graduate Diploma in Education) students within the subject RE surveyed in January/February 2008. It is therefore the intention of this article to offer some conclusions about the benefits and flaws of the various models for secondary school management, particularly in the context of small subject departments.

Keywords: Scottish education; middle management; faculties in schools

Introduction

I am worried that, when the offer was given, teachers were absolutely right to throw it out. The restructuring proposals – I am not talking about the money – would have ripped the heart out of Scottish education and out of current schools management structures, and would have replaced them with something untried, untested, half-baked, nebulous and deeply demotivating to the majority of middle management in our schools. (Scottish Parliament 1999, 627)

These words were said by the MSP for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale, Ian Jenkins on 22 September 1999, and relate to the rejection by Scottish secondary teachers of the Millennium Review (COSLA and EIS 1999) which posited a new wage and professional structure. Part of this offer for teachers was to create a new professional leadership post which would effectively flatten school management structures.

At the time Mr Jenkins was speaking, the typical management model in Scottish secondary schools was as displayed in Figure 1.

This meant that there could be six layers of management above the classroom teacher at the ‘chalkface’. In a typical Scottish secondary school there were between

*Corresponding author. Email: g.nixon@abdn.ac.uk

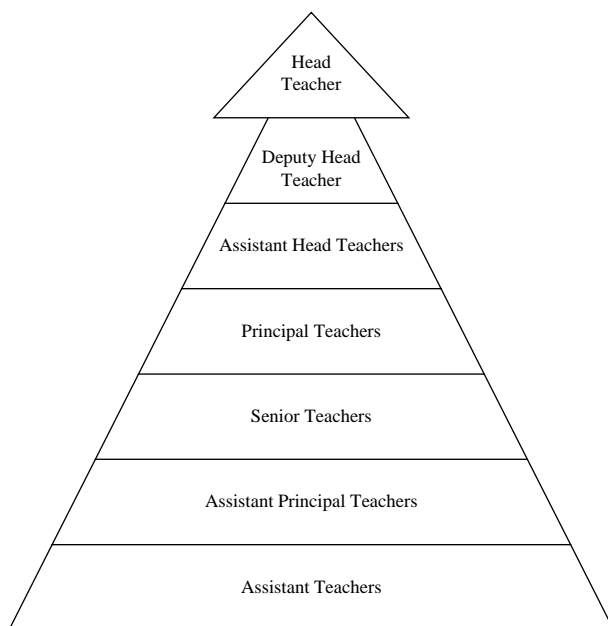


Figure 1. Pre-McCrone management structure.

16 and 20 subject specialist PTs, each in charge of their curricular area. Beyond this level they would have a link person within the senior management team, with a deputy and head teacher beyond that. Principal teachers had reduced classroom contact hours to reflect their role in the middle management of schools.

Throughout the 1990s a number of sources argued that this was a system of management that needed to change. At the time of writing many Scottish schools have moved to adopt a flatter management structure. This article, written nine years after Mr Jenkins' bleak view of such change, reflects on the extent to which 'facultisation' has occurred in Scottish schools and seeks to combine analysis of: key documents relating to this change; local authority reviews of the new structures; and empirical data relating to the experiences of RE students and probationers.

Voices for change

Teachers are a scarce and expensive resource and should be employed where they are most effective – working with children in the classroom. The promoted post structure that we have developed over the years – particularly in secondary schools where more than fifty per cent of teachers are in promoted posts – takes teachers out of the classroom and progressively reduces the teaching they do. That is why the Government intends to review the twin track promotion arrangements for teachers. (NAS and UWT Conference, May 1998)

In this speech Scottish Education Minister Brian Wilson (NAS/UWT Conference, May 1998) captures one of the reasons given for changing management structures in Scottish secondary schools and can be viewed in the context of a decade where there were increasingly loud voices for change. Key documents from the Scottish

Executive, the Inspectorate and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) had proposed that change was necessary to meet the National Priorities for Pupils to cut the costs of administrative tasks, and to make sure that quality teachers were not being distracted from the business of teaching.

These arguments making the case for change can be traced throughout the 1990s. In 1992, the report commissioned by the government to look at revised structures for the senior school curriculum in Scotland, The Howie Report, had argued that Scottish pupils should experience a broad programme which ensured substantial coverage of a whole range of curricular areas. In other words, a less fragmented curricular experience.

A further voice for change came from Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education (HMIE). Two publications, both from 1999, are relevant here: *Targeting excellence – modernising Scotland's schools*; and *Time for teaching: Improving administration in schools*. In both of these reports it was posited that able teachers should be encouraged to remain in the classroom 'without them having to move into a management grade' (HMIE 1999, 2). HMIE also argued that teaching would be improved, and costs cut, should teachers have less management and administrative expectations placed upon them: 'Teachers' time should be protected as far as possible to allow them to focus on professional activities central to teaching' (Accounts Commission for Scotland and HMIE 1999, 28).

The same document, which also spells out the need to 'improve value for money in the way they (schools) handle administrative tasks' (Accounts Commission for Scotland and HMIE 1999, 1), points out that the seven tier structure (see Figure 1) of school management involved 57% of secondary staff occupying promoted posts (28). The inspectorate therefore recommended that the promoted structure be reviewed and that schools explore flexibility with regards to their management.

During negotiations towards a new pay and conditions deal for teachers (1997–2001) two further documents were central to the later emergence of faculty structures in schools. The first, *Public education in Scotland into the millennium* (COSLA and EIS 1999), or the 'Millennium Review', put forward a new professional leadership role to teachers for consultation. This would involve an individual leading a number of subjects across the secondary curriculum. However, these proposals, and the linked average 14% pay deal over three years, were rejected by 98% of teachers when balloted. One teaching union spokesperson described the Millennium package as '30 pieces of counterfeit silver' (BBC News 1999).

This, in turn, led to the second document, *A teaching profession for the twenty-first century* (Scottish Executive 2001) or the McCrone Report as it has become known. The McCrone Report made no explicit reference to the professional leadership posts put forward by the Millennium Review. However, it did recommend a flatter four tier management structure and a chartered teacher option with enhanced remuneration that it envisaged would keep excellent teachers in the classroom rather than losing them to management and administration. The McCrone structure for school management can be seen in Figure 2.

Other key recommendations from the McCrone Report consider the 'professional autonomy' (Scottish Executive 2001, 2) of teachers, which implied an involvement in areas previously the responsibility of principal teachers, and the flexibility for local authority negotiation of school management structures 'to develop arrangements which meet local circumstances' (Scottish Executive 2001, 18). These would be

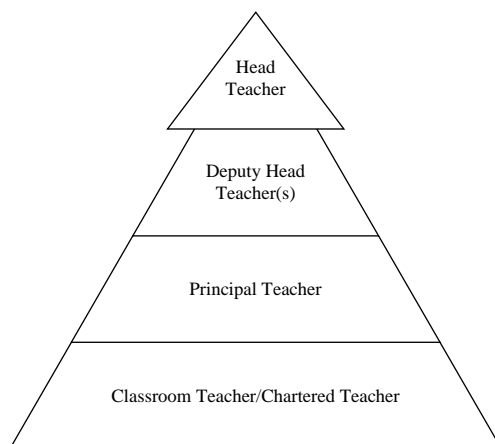


Figure 2. Post-McCrone management structure.

significant recommendations with regards to the later emergence of faculties in secondary schools.

McCrone's recommendations came with a 22.5% pay rise over three years. In February 2001, 80% of Scottish teachers voted for the McCrone Agreement, thereby agreeing to far reaching changes in pay, conditions and structures – some of which, perhaps, were not explicit in the document itself, particularly with regard to the creation of faculties in secondary schools.

The extent of facultisation

Following the changes outlined above, 17 of the 32 local authorities across Scotland opted for the flatter management system. Ten local authorities decided to retain the traditional PT role, while five local authorities gave individual schools the power to choose a management system most appropriate for their specific school.

While the McCrone agreement called for 'simplified career structures' (Scottish Executive 2001, 3), it did not provide any specific instructions regarding a move to subject groupings. In 2003, The Teachers' Agreements Communications Team (TAC) was commissioned by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) in partnership with the Scottish Executive to clarify the practical implications of the McCrone Agreement on management structures in schools. One of the statements made in relation to subject groupings advised that where a PT is in charge of more than one subject area those subjects 'should be cognate and share similar or compatible teaching methodology' (Scottish Executive and COSLA 2006, 7).

However, despite this clear assertion regarding subject grouping decisions, faculty groupings often evolved in response to local circumstances, such as retirement of staff or physical factors including where subjects were placed in the school in relation to other subjects, rather than the assertion that faculties should be cognate. As a result, across Scotland disparity between the subject groupings of faculties exists.

In a later document in 2006, TAC asserted that common faculties/subject groupings found across the country included the following (Figure 3):

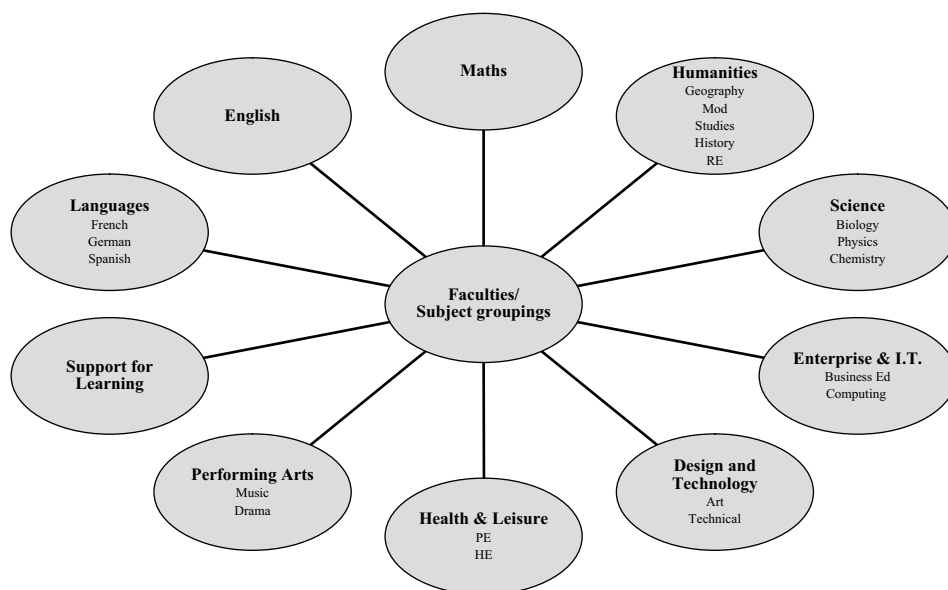


Figure 3. Common subject groupings: faculty model.
Source: Scottish Executive and COSLA (2006, 16).

The response to the McCrone Agreement in 2001 has had a significant impact on the leadership and management within school structures. Throughout the process of gathering recent and relevant data in relation to the implementation of the flatter management structures, it became clear that many local authorities planned to conduct reviews into the impact of the changes within the foreseeable future. Although only three local authorities, Aberdeenshire Council, Falkirk Council and East Renfrewshire Council, forwarded published review documents detailing active research into the impact of the changes within their local areas, these documents are noteworthy as they capture the moment of change. The key findings from these three documents raise some significant issues which identify both the successes, and the areas of difficulty, which have emerged as a result of the changes.

The overall sentiment expressed throughout the local authority reviews demonstrated a general support from existing senior management teams towards the new structure. Many pre-McCrone managers welcomed the new structures, believing they would provide real improvements in the quality of strategic leadership with Scottish schools (Falkirk Council 2005, 10; East Renfrewshire Council 2006, 4).

In the second phase of the East Renfrewshire review class teachers expressed the development of a greater sense of collegiality; a more consistent approach to promoting positive behaviour; a closer collaboration between different subject areas; and a wider involvement in the decision making process as being some of the benefits to the new faculty structure (2006, 2–3). Similar responses emerged from Falkirk Council who interviewed 178 members of staff from a range of different roles within Falkirk secondary schools. Staff concluded that generic issues such as assessment, attainment, teaching and learning and development planning were enhanced by the new faculty structures as more systematic and consistent approaches to quality

assurance were being adopted. In addition, staff believed the new faculty leaders: made cross-faculty observations a reality; encouraged the sharing of good practice across different subject areas; and removed unnecessary duplication in different subject areas. Staff on the whole agreed these changes led to an equal quality of leadership in the subject areas of the faculty head's remit (Falkirk Council 2005, 16).

Aberdeenshire Council staff identified the benefits of the new system as: the enhancement of curriculum support links; sharing of good practice was more regular and therefore of direct benefit to learning and teaching; and finally many staff found the increased number of staff meetings within the faculty more robust in addressing issues (2007, 3).

However, the main concerns identified by the Falkirk and Aberdeenshire Council evaluations regarding the impact of the new management structures were the lack of experienced guidance, support and understanding available from faculty heads, whose subject specialisms differed. Staff in Falkirk Council and Aberdeenshire Council agreed that the reality of faculty heads being effective leaders in all subject areas within their remit was not common and therefore raised serious concerns about the new structures (Falkirk Council 2005, 18; Aberdeenshire Council 2007, 1). A further and significant issue in relation to the main focus of this investigation was raised by Aberdeenshire Council, where staff felt that the differing subject specialisms of the faculty head caused, at times, particular problems in supporting probationers as often class teachers were expected to offer alternative support, which many felt unprepared to do.

McCrone asserted the recognition of 'teachers' esteem, professional autonomy and public accountability' (Scottish Executive 2001, 2), directing teaching towards an enhanced professional model where more responsibilities would be devolved to classroom teachers that would previously have been considered the role of a principal teacher (Falkirk Council 2005, 17). The changes implemented as a result of this expectation led to the identification of a number of issues in the local authority evaluations.

For example, Falkirk Council expressed concern that classroom teachers' workloads had dramatically increased and asserted that the expected change in the role of the teacher required a major cultural change in the way the role of the teacher is envisaged (2005, 10). Falkirk staff stated that the new structures expected this cultural change to happen in an unrealistically short period of time. Aberdeenshire Council expressed similar concerns regarding these issues, but developed the point by arguing that 'blurred allocation of responsibilities' caused serious clashes and confusion as staff did not know which member of staff was responsible for which task (2007, 1). Both Falkirk Council and Aberdeenshire Council reported that the demoralisation of staff was a significant consequence of this.

Other important concerns included the serious reduction in promotion opportunities available within the teaching profession and the adverse effect this might have on attracting new teachers. In addition, many staff commented on the poor decision making related to subject groupings, stating that some subject groupings for the purposes of the new management structure were inappropriate and unsustainable for effective learning and teaching (Aberdeenshire Council 2007, 2).

While the evidence outlined above is only representative of three local authority reviews, each of these authorities conducted extensive research into the impact of the faculty changes and have identified significant factors, many of which are also

reflected in the findings of the TAC team's 2006 document, 'Evolving career structures in the secondary sector'. This document was jointly commissioned by COSLA and the Scottish Executive to investigate the evolution of the implementation of the flatter management structures across Scottish schools. The TAC team interviewed 51 head teachers from 26 different local authorities to establish the progress being made as a result of the new structures.

As with the local authority reviews, this research concluded that many positive outcomes regarding the new structures had emerged, which included: the creation of a more collegiate working ethos; better communications between management teams due to compact manager numbers; enhanced cross-curricular approaches which lead to the loss of subject rivalry and the promotion of sharing common goals; and finally, the majority of head teachers involved in the research believe the new structures resulted in an overall more unified focus on the school improvement agenda (Scottish Executive and COSLA 2006, 22).

However, the emergence of concerns regarding doubts over the implementation of the new structures was equally identified by the head teachers interviewed. The concerns raised included: the impact of the reduction of career opportunities and the impact of this on keeping ambitious teachers motivated; the jump between a class teacher and a faculty head was seen as challenging; the impact of the loss of status for pre-McCrone promoted staff; and the lack of whole school collegiality attributed to the focus on faculty collegiality. In addition the head teachers called for local authority reviews to be carried out regarding the level of support offered for individual subject areas, more specifically the suggestion that the re-introduction of subject advisors was necessary.

However, the evidence from this research also suggests a very important consideration is that any changes to any structures are largely dependent on individual personalities and a firm conclusion that has emerged in relation to the new faculty head position is that where these posts are working well it is largely as a result of the very hard working, highly committed and entirely professional people who have been appointed to these positions.

This finding leads into a more general discussion of research methodology and key findings in relation to the implementation of the flatter management style in Scottish secondary schools.

Rationale for research

This research was carried out using questionnaires for student and probationer teachers of RE in session 2007–2008. The researchers anticipate two questions about the choice of survey group:

- Are any inferences based on such a small scale survey limited?
- Can a meaningful analysis of the changes in school management structures be based on the comments of a group of beginner teachers who have limited experience of Scottish Secondary School Education (beyond being pupils themselves)?

In response to the first question, the researchers would argue that the response to the survey is representative firstly of student RE teachers as the survey enjoyed a high

response rate: 43 out of 61 replied – a 70% response rate from the 2007–2008 cohort. However, the researchers would argue that these responses may be typical of the student and probationary experience for many teachers working in small subject departments. Taken alongside the analysis of key documents relating to the change to faculties in schools, particularly the local authority reviews, the findings can be seen as common to many teachers in similar positions across a range of subjects.

With regards to the question relating to the choice of questioning student and probationer teachers, the researchers feel that these respondents may in fact be in a stronger position to analyse their experiences in schools than teachers of many years' experience. That is, they bring fewer preconceptions and prior judgements to the survey than those who have, for example, experienced working in a subject department and then a faculty. The researchers feel, therefore, that aside from the convenience of surveying an accessible cohort of students within their field, these students may be capable of a fresh and less biased analysis of their placement and induction experiences.

The researchers acknowledge the much smaller return from probationer teachers – only 13% of the 2007–2008 cohort, which is, in part, owed to the delayed responses, and in many cases, lack of responses to the request for local authority permission to survey probationers. This happened despite repeated requests by the researchers for permission.

Methodological considerations

This research project adopted the interpretivist or constructivist approach to human inquiry. Interpretivism is interested in how people engage with the world through their own minds, indicating that realities are constructed by individuals, therefore making a more appropriate outlook for a research enquiry where evaluating the thoughts of student and probationer teachers is paramount. According to this paradigm there is no one way to understand the world as the world is culturally derived and historically constructed by individual minds. Meanings are not fixed as people; in this case the student and probationer teachers will interpret the world around them and then act upon their interpretations. Subjectivity is the way forward for the researchers, in stark contrast to the theories of objectivity proposed by positivists (May 2001, 14). In this study the researcher is reliant on people's actions, and understandings of reality from the perceptions of the subjects themselves.

A mixed methods qualitative and quantitative approach was applied and comprises questionnaires alongside documentary analysis. The statistical analysis of questionnaire responses lends structure to the qualitative analysis. The questionnaires were issued to all student teachers of RE across Scotland, through their various institutions of initial teacher education, who volunteered to be involved in the research, and questionnaires were posted out to RE probationers across Scotland where local authority permission had been received.

In order to establish the appropriateness of the questionnaire it was deemed 'of paramount importance' to conduct a pilot (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2005, 260). Two ex-students currently completing their probationer year were asked to complete the questionnaire in light of their experiences on their first teaching placement as student teachers and four ex-students currently in their first year of full registration were asked to complete the questionnaires, reflecting on their experiences

as probationer teachers. The completion of the pilot confirmed the appropriateness of: the questions being asked; the time predicted to complete the questionnaire fully; and the suitability of the layout and appearance.

The aims of this research project are to address the following questions:

- (1) Where has RE been located within schools who have adopted the faculty structure?
- (2) How has the faculty structure impacted on the experiences of student placement?
- (3) How has the faculty structure impacted on the experiences of probationer teachers completing their induction year?
- (4) How do the experiences of students/probationers working in faculties compare with those working within the traditional subject specific model?

The experiences and perceptions of RE students and probationers

In line with the extent of facultisation in Scottish schools outlined above, this study revealed that 60.5% of RE students surveyed worked as part of a faculty during their first school placement. However, it is important to note that there is significant variation in the students' experiences of the faculty model, for example, 34.9% of students worked within a humanities faculty, where RE was grouped with geography, history and modern studies. All of these students experienced a non-RE subject specialist leader. 11.6% of students surveyed worked as part of a non-cognate group of subjects where sharing similar or compatible teaching methodology is less easily imagined (Scottish Executive and COSLA 2006, 7). For example, modern languages and RE (Questionnaire 24); art and RE (Questionnaire 6); and technical, computing and RE (Questionnaire 38). The survey demonstrated that in many schools the process of facultisation was underway with 11.6% of students indicating that while they were working within a faculty they had a conserved principal teacher (PT) of RE as their immediate line manager. Only one student out of the 43 surveyed was working within a faculty where the faculty leader was an RE specialist. These statistics are therefore in line with the findings outlined above that 22 out of the 32 local authorities have opted for the new flatter management structure. However, 39.5% of the students surveyed experienced the traditional model of a discrete RE department with an RE subject specialist leader and in some cases a conserved PT of RE working within a newly established faculty.

The evidence presented above from local authority reviews and the TAC team evaluation of the flatter management structures confirms many of the strengths and issues identified by the student teachers surveyed in this research. For example, where students felt the faculty system was working positively they identified: the strong provision of cross-curricular approaches, 'Cross-curricular provision was also good, in this respect the management structures was good for communication' (Questionnaire 3); generic support in relation to observed lessons and the provision of useful feedback (Questionnaires 3, 6, 9, 18, 26, and 30), 'Support within social subjects was good ... the faculty head (history) was interested in my progress' (Questionnaire 18); timetabled weekly mentoring meetings with faculty head to discuss progress (Questionnaires 9 and 30); and the new system provided clarity with regards to a point of reference and identification of the immediate line manager

(Questionnaire 9). While these are clear areas of strength in relation to the new flatter management structures, the statistics highlight that the disappointing reality is that only 34.6% of students working within faculties thought the system was working positively for them (see Figure 4).

In contrast only three of the nine probationer teachers surveyed worked as part of a faculty, two of which did not identify any strengths of the faculty system in relation to their probationer year experience (Probationers 6 and 8). However, one probationer outlined a positive experience of working within a faculty system, stating that lessons were observed and useful feedback was provided by the faculty leader who provided an overall 'high level of support' (Probationer 2).

Despite the aforementioned benefits of the new structure, 38.4% of student teachers working within faculties concluded that this system 'was working positively for them' in stark contrast to 69.5% of student teachers working within the traditional discrete subject model who claimed this system 'was working positively for them'.

The students identified a number of areas of concern; many students outlined the lack of profile or respect given to RE, a smaller subject, within the faculty system (Questionnaires 14, 15, 21, 22 and 40), 'Within the school RMPS (RE) was not taken seriously by many teachers' (Questionnaire 15). Some students developed this point further by complaining that the faculty head's lack of RE subject knowledge raised issues relating to their ability to lead an RE department effectively (Questionnaires 19, 36 and 37):

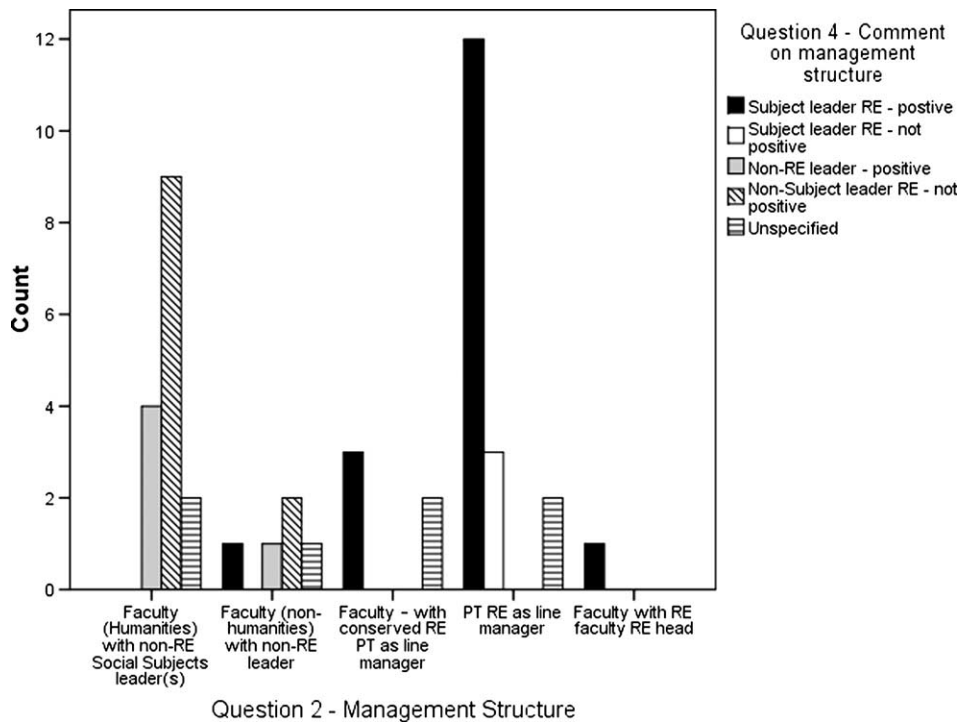


Figure 4. Students' responses to Question 4.

It would have been nice to have a PT in RE who felt in charge of me and who would or could have given me direct advice on subject teaching. As it was, the two RE teachers probably felt it wasn't their remit and the PT wasn't interested in the subject. (Questionnaire 31)

Several key themes in relation to having a faculty head as immediate line manager have been identified throughout the research data: for example, four students felt that their experience of the faculty leader was very limited. They felt that, on the whole, communication between them and the faculty head was poor (Questionnaires 22, 24, 31 and 39), 'I had no involvement with the faculty head' (Questionnaire 39).

Another student complained specifically that the faculty head did not observe them teach or offer them any advice regarding their progression as a trainee teacher (Questionnaire 17). Many of these concerns appear to be in line with HMIE comments regarding leadership in Scottish Secondary schools immediately following the release of the McCrone Agreement:

65% of the departments without a Principal Teacher, showed important weaknesses, often associated with lack of experience or lack of subject qualification' which is in line with the characteristics for an effective leader as defined by HMIE as having 'a clear vision for the subject and its benefits for pupils'. (HMIE 2001, 17)

A number of student teachers felt that the faculty system was not working in practice because the RE department still operated as a separate department (Questionnaires 21, 33 and 39), meaning that the faculty head had little understanding about the daily activities within the RE department (Questionnaires 15, 27, 31 and 40), 'The RE department seemed to be out on a limb operating on its own within a faculty' (Questionnaire 21). One student pointed to the fact that in reality the un-promoted RE teacher was fulfilling the role of a principal teacher without receiving the monetary advantage:

I found nothing positive in the faculty structure. The main teacher was doing all the work of a PT without credit for it and the faculty PT had no idea what the RMPS classes were doing or should be doing. (Questionnaire 15)

This is a situation Probationer 7 appeared to be familiar with also:

I felt it was highly unjust that the head of department received no remuneration for effectively managing the department as this was the only way RE could ensure its viability as a separate subject. The alternative was to be subsumed with social subjects with a faculty head who was very unsympathetic towards RMPS (RE). (Probationer 7)

The concerns identified throughout the student questionnaires raise important issues in relation to the credibility of the flatter management system. The majority of the students working within a faculty system involved in this research did not have a positive experience.

In contrast the students and probationers working within the traditional model, where their immediate line manager was an RE subject specialist, believed the level of support they received was very good and concluded that the discrete subject management system worked positively for them.

I found the management structure worked well because it was clear and ordered, because the PT was a subject specialist he was able to offer me the appropriate level of support at all time. (Questionnaire 5)

A majority of students working with a discrete subject manager described the level of support they received as most appropriate and often related this directly to subject knowledge (Questionnaires 5, 13, 20, 23, 35 and 42), 'Having a subject specialist as a PT I didn't have any problems when discussing issues or asking for advice about our subject area' (Questionnaire 13). It also emerged that support was often more readily offered simply because the PT was accessible on a daily basis and therefore, when required, immediate support could be accessed (Questionnaires 1, 23, 28 and 38): 'With having a PT in the department at all times I found the support I was given to be incredibly efficient' (Questionnaire 32).

These comments were fully supported by the responses given from the probationer teachers involved in the research as they also highlighted the level of support received as appropriate and beneficial to their development as fully registered teachers (Probationers 3, 4, 5 and 9).

As my mentor is my PT RMPS (RE) I have had a very close working relationship which has meant she has almost always been available to discuss any problems/issues that may arise and/or need discussed. (Probationer 3)

In agreement with Probationer 3, another key area of strength acknowledged by the student teachers within this survey pointed to the forming of positive and professional relationships with their PT subject (Questionnaires 2, 6, 23 and 32); as a result of the daily contact they felt comfortable with their PT and able to raise any concerns they had (Questionnaire 11).

Therefore the evidence presented from the student and probationer teachers surveyed with experience of working with a discrete subject system differs greatly from the comments highlighted above regarding the level of support offered within a faculty.

However a number of students felt that working within a discrete subject department was difficult as they only had contact with one other member of staff (Questionnaire 34) and where the department was poorly organised and led, this resulted in a limited experience for them as a learner (Questionnaires 23, 25 and 28):

... it depends (the extent to which the management structure in place worked for them) heavily upon the RME (RE) PT, so if the PT isn't too supportive, as I experienced, then it can be quite a discouraging environment. I would benefit from a less specific structure. (Questionnaire 34)

Another issue identified by one student indicated that the level of involvement within wide ranging cross curricular activities and the life of the whole school was limited because of the discrete subject management system in place (Questionnaire 29).

Conclusions

This small scale research project provides a degree of insight into the mechanisms of educational policy change and the role played by key organisations such as the

Inspectorate, COSLA, local authorities and teachers in the process. The empirical data has revealed that RE may be undergoing possible marginalisation with regards to faculty line management structures and, though not the scope of this study, one can speculate that this may also be the case for similarly sized departments elsewhere in the secondary school.

This research has also revealed that, in many cases, faculties are non-cognate; thereby ignoring Scottish Executive and COSLA (2003) recommendations, and that there is a tension (not quite a contradiction) between the recommendations from HMIE (Standards and Quality in RME 2001; Time for Teaching 1999; Targeting Excellence 1999) in that the first document highlights the need for a subject specialist leader with a clear vision for the subject and the others recommend that there are fewer managers in the secondary school.

This article also demonstrates that key documents in the period which witnessed the change to faculties show that, though there was no hidden agenda to create faculties, it was certainly masked in McCrone. In other words, the move to change structures so evidently on the negotiating table in the Millennium Review was placed below it in the McCrone Report.

In the sample, the traditional model is working for the majority of RE student teachers and probationers with regards to support, subject expertise and communication. For many within the faculty model the converse is the case. Furthermore, in the experiences of a number of those surveyed there are a number of extremely dedicated and conscientious faculty managers who are committed to this structure and the subjects within their faculty grouping.

In 2008 Scottish Education is in a situation during the implementation of the 'Curriculum for Excellence' where cross-curricular experiences and cross-cutting themes are on the agenda (Learning and Teaching Scotland 2008). There is no doubt that this can be facilitated by cross subject management structures and this is perhaps one of the most compelling arguments for facultisation. However, this is an argument that had little space in the key documents leading up to the creation of faculties; where the main arguments given were in terms of giving effective teachers fewer management responsibilities. The irony here, outlined above, is that many unpromoted staff now have more management responsibilities.

This research has also revealed a consonance with the views of those chemistry teachers surveyed by Buchanan (cited in Bryce and Humes 2008, 39): 'The general tone ... was profoundly negative. Some respondents suspected that the faculty system was little more than a money-saving exercise'.

Buchanan goes on to state that one of the main areas of anxiety regards the inability of faculty managers to oversee national qualification procedures when they have no subject expertise (2008, 39).

Humes (Bryce and Humes 2008, 40) perhaps summarised many of the points made in this article when he suggested that, 'it might be that a longer timescale is needed for such a major change to show signs of effectiveness; but the lack of positive reactions from the classroom is striking'.

A further absence demonstrated by this article is that of educational research into models for managing the secondary school, either comparatively, or in pilots conducted and reviewed within Scotland. Nixon (2008, 560) argues that, 'in the eyes of most teachers, educational research and HMIE recommendations have had little input into the drive for faculties in Scottish schools'.

As indicated above, the majority of Scottish secondary schools have moved to faculties, or have initiated the change to this structure. It is important that research such as this is ongoing to monitor the effectiveness of this change while the memory of the discrete subject model still persists.

Notes on contributors

Cherie Anderson has taught religious, moral and philosophical studies in a number of schools where she progressed from classroom teacher, to Assistant Principal Teacher of Guidance to subject department head. In 2005 Cherie was appointed lecturer of religious education at the University of Strathclyde where she worked for three years. During this time Cherie's research interests included: an investigation into the relationship between interactive teaching methods and motivation; learning to teach through modelling of good practice; and latterly the effects of changes in school management in Scotland. Cherie left the University of Strathclyde in August 2008 to take up her current post as Head of the Faculty of Humanities in Bathgate Academy in West Lothian.

Graeme Nixon worked for 10 years as a religious, moral and philosophical studies teacher and departmental head in Scottish secondary schools. For the last five years he has worked within the School of Education at the University of Aberdeen, lecturing principally in religious and moral education, and thinking skills. Graeme's research interests include: the emergence of philosophy in Scottish schools; criticality in education; thinking skills; and the effects of changes in school management in Scotland.

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