SCHOOL GOVERNANCE:
PHASES, PARTICIPATION AND PARADOXES

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This dissertation is a report of an investigation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Murdoch University
March 2004
DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work, which had not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary educational institution.

Signed

Murdoch University

March 2004
ABSTRACT

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE: PHASES, PARTICIPATION AND PARADOXES

This research analyses the governance structures and processes of thirteen independent primary schools in Perth, and one state primary school in Western Australia termed an ‘alternative’ or ‘lighthouse’ school. More in-depth case studies were undertaken at five sites with participants from different time periods. All the schools had a school council or board since their foundations and notably all schools had their origins in the period of the alternative school and community empowerment movement of the 1970s and 1980s.

In an era of market reform and the corporatisation of schools, the critical areas of focus for this research were: how community expectations and school identity were maintained within council-governed schools; how democratic imperatives compete with professionalism and school improvement issues; and how schools confront dilemmas of governance. Three frameworks, Phases of Development, Community Empowerment and Dilemmas, were employed as useful means to discuss school governance. The results revealed changes in governance over time. Schools began to envisage themselves less as communities and more as businesses. The emphasis was away from parent involvement and towards efficiency and commercial practices. Tensions and dilemmas arose out of these changes.
The thesis concluded that it was not the structures or individuals that were crucial in governance processes but the playing out of particular tensions and dilemmas. Principals and councils have to acknowledge the dilemmas that arise from competing values systems and make choices based on a clear understanding of these dilemmas.
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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

In a doctorate course at Murdoch University, Professor David Andrich asked us to identify what it was that really ‘bothered’ us about our research area. If we did not care deeply about what we were doing, he warned us, it would be difficult getting through to the end. So what was it that ‘bothered’ me about school governance and drove this research to its completion?

The answer certainly lies in my past experiences and present milieu and while not wishing to unduly personalise this research, I believe it is important to foreground a few details about my personal and professional life and to recognise the place of reflexivity in interpreting my research findings. Not only did my values and ideology influence my choice of research but also how it was done and the conclusions drawn (Usher & Edwards, 1994). The representations made in this research are inevitably the outcome of my construction of a particular kind of text, an academic text¹. They are a reflection of

¹ The text is presented with Australian English spelling, except for quotations and titles and words that are formally used in another form, eg. program instead of programme. The referencing is inserted with use of the Endnote database and in the APA 5th style.
how I, as researcher, am also part of the text. This is what Usher and Edwards call the ‘sub-text’ of the research (p. 149).

Reflexivity highlights how the tools of research, the frameworks, methodologies, and interpretative strategies, are embedded within my professional discourses and paradigms. These tools are also problematic in that the way the research is written, the ‘pre-text’ (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 150), shifts the focus away from the construction of the text to what the text is about. A further element of any research, say Usher and Edwards, is the situatedness of the researcher and also the reader. Their historical and socio-cultural influences will affect the outcomes of any writing or reading of the text. Significations such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity and class are part of the construction of the self as text and consequently contribute to the formation of the overall interpretation. Usher and Edwards call this the ‘con-text’ of a text (p. 153). The following is a description of my personal ‘con-text’. The reader will have to consider his or her own.

I was born of Anglo-Saxon descent into a relatively privileged farming family in a small country town in Western Australia. Certainly privileged in that we lacked for little in the way of material wellbeing, emotional support or community respect. While financially not affluent, we would have been considered middle class by virtue of my father’s family. The family was a pioneering and land-owning one; it reflected the conservative values and attitudes of the 1950s in Australia. Education, however, came in second for my father to the need for his labour contributions to the farm and he returned from a private boy's school in Perth at the age of fifteen. My mother, on the other hand, came from the city and working class roots. Her family was still transforming itself into being
self-employed and middle class and she continued further with her schooling. Education was highly valued by my mother, even for girls. Drawing on the uncertainties of life during the Second World War, she stressed to my sister and me the need for a good education and career.

My siblings and I did well at school. All three of us were elected Head Girl or Head Boy of the local district high school. However, by then our family farm was divided between my father and his brothers and this, along with reducing wool prices, meant finances became more difficult. This also meant that there was not enough money to send any of us away to private schools. At the end of primary school there was usually quite an exodus of children from more affluent families to schools in the city. For me in particular, this was pivotal in my development as a learner and leader. I went from being in the top twenty percent of the class to being the top student literally overnight. Despite my awareness at the time that the departure of those more ‘privileged’ and ‘brighter’ than I may have created this situation, I became more confident and began to see myself as a leader. I was able to carry this increased self-assurance with me the rest of my life, although lurking in the background was often the fear that the foundation of my self-confidence was false and I might eventually be ‘found lacking’. I went on to matriculate, become a librarian in charge of local government libraries and eventually, after a career change and time spent in state education, a principal of a small independent school.

In the 1970s, my experiences as a student and then a teacher in state education schools led me to look for alternatives for my own daughter. I was drawn to the community-driven alternative schools being founded in that period. Excited by the possibilities for
more innovative practice for myself, I left the state system to work in my daughter's school. These events were critical in shaping my interest in this research. Having been brought up in a small country town, I understood well the politics of living or working in small communities and with organised groups of people. In the independent school where I was principal, the school council and I were convinced we understood the problems and had the means to prevent them. We felt that we had learnt the lessons from the tragedies and mistakes of others and had strategies and structures in place to ensure we could avoid them. In hindsight, I see it was a case of over confidence.

Indeed, the school managed its decisions well for fifteen years. Eventually, however, the school suffered the very fate we had tried so hard to avoid. A power struggle developed between some of the staff, the governing council and me. There were clashes over who made decisions regarding the performance of other staff and this spread to a more widespread loss of trust and questioning of boundaries. Parents became involved and split into factions and some of these groups left the school. I was both wounded personally and confounded professionally and also left the school. How had this come to pass? We had surely done all the right things. We had followed best practice. We had an established structure and had clear procedures to follow. Roles were clearly defined and we were professional and strategic in our planning. How was it that we had suffered the same fate as other schools and been led to conflict and imminent self-destruction?

What really bothered me was that we had failed. Our careful, rational efforts had not prevented any of this. I also knew that in this we were not alone. Other schools and other groups seemed successful and unified and then suddenly became unstable, dysfunctional and sites of power struggles. I wanted to know why. How could these
conflicts be avoided? Were there lessons here for other governing groups? I did not question that I lived in an inherently logical social world ruled by reason and that I could find some systematic directions to follow in response to my questions. I was a product of the 1960s and Enlightenment sensibilities. I believed strongly in liberalism, progress and emancipation.

Looking back now it seems I was, and probably still am, unconsciously operating within a paradigm of critical modernism (Hassard, 1993). I was shaped by the ideals of enlightened rationalism, individual freedom and benevolent change. Therefore, I sought reasons and solutions in my experiences. Was it the structures or the people who failed? Had we not achieved a balance between professionalism and parent empowerment or had we not drawn the boundaries clearly enough? Was it simply the force of personalities at work? What other factors or unforeseen complications might be involved? I set out on this quest to discover some governance structures and strategies that could be more effective and assist others to avoid the failures I had experienced.

IDENTIFYING A PARADIGM

The idea of an objective research paradigm has been challenged in recent years by various epistemological arguments that question the idea of a stable objective reality. Instead there are said to be multiple truths and realities, and meaning is something that is socially constructed (Lather, 1991b; Usher & Edwards, 1994). Postmodernism proposes plural understandings and postmodern writers take the view that it is a researcher’s perceptions, experiences and culture that shape the political and ideological perspective of reality that they bring to their work. What is presented as meaningful or
true will depend upon assumptions, often implicitly held, about what ‘knowing’ is and what social processes are best used to talk about this knowledge (Dachler & Hosking, 1995; Lyotard, 1993; Shapiro, 1995). For postmodern and poststructuralist researchers there is general agreement that all knowledge is contextual, historical, and discursive (Usher & Edwards, 1994 p. 24).

The challenge here is that educational theory and practice are founded on the discourses of modernity. Education has been the agent, the purveyor of grand narratives, particularly Enlightenment ideals of critical reason, individual freedom, progress and positive change. In its humanist form the rationale for educational processes is based on the ideas of individual agency and the autonomous, self-motivated and rational subject endowed with a stable ‘self’ (Lather, 1991a). Thus education is seen as having “a key role in the forming and shaping of subjectivity and identity” (Usher & Edwards, 1994 p. 25). In contrast the postmodern emphasis on the decentred and inscribed subject constructed by language and other discourses, and on the displacement of grand narratives with multiple contested texts, contradicts the very basis of much educational activity. This makes schools sites of conflict as they struggle to come to terms with the paradox between education’s historical past and its postmodern present (Lindgard, 2001; Usher & Edwards, 1994).

Critical & neo-Marxist positions challenge schools to examine their roles as part of positivist ideologies, enmeshed in the language of technical rationality with its commitment to efficiency, competition and meritocracy. They see science and modernism as having lost their connection with ethical and Enlightenment ideals and, instead, promoting the technocratic values of the marketplace and managerialism. For
critical theorists the study of culture, with an emphasis on individuals, is central to shaping the possibilities for economic, political and social change (Symes & Preston, 1997).

Not only are schools traditionally viewed from positivist paradigms, organisations in general and school organisations in particular, are anchored in modernist, structuralist beginnings (Clegg, 1990). Most of the various critical theory and postmodern positions are still very new to management and organisation studies. Alvesson & Deetz (1996) claim that this is not surprising when modernist assumptions and positivist views are embedded in the very foundations of the research traditions of the field. However, many theorists, from both educational and organisational perspectives, are now calling for researchers to focus on postmodern themes such as culture, identity, leadership, and subjectivity (Alvesson & Deetz, 1996; Clegg, 1990; G. Morgan, 1997). These appeals come from a disillusionment with grand narratives and education’s apparent failure to achieve its goals (Usher & Edwards, 1994). This research, while having Postmodernism as a point of reference, will also consider the problems for schools placed within their modernist and Enlightenment discourses.

Carr (1995) urges us, as educational researchers in postmodern times, to take up a distinctly modern task: “to expose the tensions and contradictions between emancipatory educational values and prevailing educational policies and practices in order to indicate how contemporary educational institutions may be reconstructed.” (p. 127). Usher (1994), citing Derrida, suggests that “the meaning of education is not to be found in the ‘outside’ but the ‘inside’, in the stories told for and about education” (p. 145). This research will look for meaning in the narratives of people involved 'inside'
particular school sites. To do this we must understand, as Clegg (1990) points out, that organisations are human fabrications and “are concocted out of whatever recipe-knowledge is locally available” (p. 153), and that any knowledge of the social, grounded in people’s experiences, is simply a place to begin inquiry (Smith, 1999).

The methodology chosen for this research is qualitative and the presentation of people’s stories offers one route to reality. Such narratives are immersed in the realism of the culture they come from, presenting meaning as singular and certain and subjugating other meanings and, more importantly, the textuality of the writing itself. The interviews, which form the basis of this research, should be ‘read’ with this understanding. To gain an appreciation of the issues of school governance, therefore, this study aims to gain some insight into the complexity, historical contingency and “recipe-knowledge” of particular schools and their organisation. It relies on the possibility that various truths can emerge from these accounts.

AIMS AND SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

Key Terms

*Independent Schools*

Independent schools are those that are not directly managed or controlled by government. The term independent covers private, non-government, religious, alternative and parent-run schools. These terms are used interchangeably in the literature and in this paper. Kane (1992) gives six characteristics of independent schools in the United States. They are self-governing, have self-defined curriculum, self-selected students, self-selected teachers, are self-supporting and small in size. Although this definition was originally applicable to independent schools in Australia,
with the acceptance of partial government funding and increased regulatory mechanisms, governments have placed limitations on this independence and even gained a measure of influence, if not control, over these schools. For example, all schools in Western Australia, including all independent schools, must now be compliant with the Curriculum Framework document\(^2\) (Curriculum Council, 1998), which places limitations on the curricula these schools implement. National Benchmark testing further constrains the curriculum.

Independent schools are self-governing; however, they must operate within the parameters of government regulations imposed through corporations’ law and through their registration as non-government schools. Teachers are self-selected but are now required to have qualifications acceptable to the state. Nearly every independent school in Australia receives some degree of government funding, often around sixty percent of their incomes or more, so they can no longer be said to be really self-supporting. Schools still have considerable control over the selection of students, although there are obvious financial limitations and with the advent of anti-discrimination legislation, this selection must not be discriminatory. Students can no longer have their enrolments rescinded for any discriminatory reasons (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992). As for small sizes, there are many large, independent schools; however, the majority of independent schools in Australia have under 300 students (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002).

\(^2\) There are similar compliance documents in the other Australian states.
Alternative Schools

This term is generally used to refer to schools or other formal educational structures that are an alternative to the state-provided or mainstream education system, although in this study the government school included in the study termed itself an ‘alternative’ school. The term ‘alternative’ attached to schools or education is interpreted differently depending upon the motivations of those involved. Fizzell (2002) suggests "it is a problem of people doing different things and calling them one name" (p. 1).

Fizzell (2002) identifies three main but sometimes overlapping motivations behind the alternative school movement. One comes from concerns about traditional schooling itself, which is seen as stifling children emotionally, creatively and academically. Alternative schools are then seen as improved versions of schooling, allowing children to develop at their own pace and to follow their own interests. The second set of motivations emerged in the 1970s and early 1980s and focused on the issues of choice. The belief is that there needs to be a variety of schooling opportunities for parents to choose from, variations in the way of structures, types of schools and pedagogies. The third motivation is concerned with the education of ‘at-risk’ or difficult students. Here parents or educators see a need to educate these students differently, although often with the idea of helping them cope with the ‘traditional’ system when they return to it. There may be aspects of all these different concerns within the various groups that make up a school and within their expectations of how this is then translated into school programmes.

In Australia it is the first notion of alternative schools, schools that offer what is seen as improved versions of schooling and which allow children to develop at their own pace and follow their own interests, that are generally termed ‘alternative’ and have been
predominant in practice. These schools usually have a focus on parent empowerment and sometimes adopt highly specific educational approaches, such as those informed by the philosophies of Montessori or Steiner. Other schools, while not adopting such specific sets of methodologies, have their roots in the same era as Montessori and Steiner schools, in the Romantic philosophies of individual development, child-centred curriculum and more flexible and innovative programmes.

_Lighthouse and Charter Schools_

Lighthouse schools are either government schools or non-government schools that are allowed to operate outside the usual constraints of government regulations in order to undertake innovations and be models for others to follow. One of the schools in this study was seen as a lighthouse school when first established but receives little attention now from those promoting school councils. Early charter schools in the United States often began as lighthouse schools. According to Gannicott (1997), charter schools³ are schools that are publicly owned and publicly financed, but are self-governed under the terms of a performance contract. In the United States of America Charter School legislation allows “parents, teachers or any qualified group to start schools on their own and to be freed from the regulatory and administrative constraints that burden most public systems” (p. 139).

_School Council or Board_

As will be discussed in the next chapter, governments around the world are increasingly asking volunteer governance groups to be responsible for reform imperatives and to be

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³ In Victoria, Australia, the term 'Charter' refers to the agreement between the school council, the principal and the department and identifies how the school will deliver education services during a three year period.
answerable to the community for meeting national and social goals. *School Council* and *School Board* are the terms used for governing structures of schools that are made up primarily of volunteers. Other terms sometimes used for similar bodies are *Management Committee* and *School Decision-Making Group*. These groups are variously made up of parent representatives, community members, usually principals and sometimes other staff members (Summers & Johnson, 1996). In general those calling themselves school councils tend to have mostly elected members and those calling themselves boards consist mostly of nominated members. This is not always the case and the terms are used differently in many contexts. The degree of power and responsibility a governing body has varies, depending on the particular council or board. In this study the terms 'council' and 'board' are used interchangeably. The particulars of the governing structures of the schools relevant to this research are described in detail in Chapter 6.

**Scope of the Study**

This research analyses the governance structures and processes of thirteen independent primary schools in Perth, Western Australia and one primary school in the Western Australian State school system termed an ‘alternative’ or ‘lighthouse’ school. Five of the independent schools were Montessori schools and one was a Waldorf school, the remaining seven were other small independent schools. All the schools have had a school council or board since their foundations and notably all schools had their origins in the period of the alternative school and community empowerment movement, which created many small alternative schools in Australia and overseas in the 1970s and 1980s (Angus, 1998). Five of these schools were selected as case study schools for more in depth investigation. The government school is the only government school in Western Australia that has been operating with a school council for more than twenty years and
it also has the greatest level of parent involvement in its management and curriculum (Angus & Olney, 1998; Wilson, 1993).

These schools offered the opportunity to investigate how the ideals of parent empowerment and greater responsiveness were implemented in particular settings. I investigated the ideologies and values behind how these schools came to have their present governance forms. From these understandings, the relationship between changes to these values and changes to structures were postulated. Further, these case studies illustrate how the conflicts, tensions and dilemmas that emerge as a consequence of greater parent involvement create changes to the schools’ expectations and identity.

Several researchers write that independent school governance is an area worthy of study (Aitken, 1992; Angus & Olney, 1998; Chubb & Moe, 1990; Hakim, Seidenstat, & Bowman, 1994; James & Levin, 1988). However, very little research has been undertaken at the individual school level studying the dynamics of governance. Exploring the governance of such schools over time contributes to an understanding of the processes and dynamics of change and how these differ for people involved at different times and in different contexts (Aitken, 1992).

This study proposes that schools cannot rely simply on technical, economic and managerial solutions to the issues and problems they face today. They need to acknowledge the dilemmas that arise from competing value systems before taking action. In an era of market reform and the corporatisation of schools and commodification of education, the two critical areas of focus are: how community expectations and school identity are maintained within council-governed schools; and
how democratic imperatives compete with professionalism and school improvement issues. Finally I examine the dilemmas that those involved in school governance must confront as they try to balance “the conflicting imperatives of stability and change, central strategic leadership and bottom-up entrepreneurship, individual autonomy and collective cooperation” (Meyer, 2002, p 549).

For the purposes of this research, community expectations are understood as what people have come to assume about the way a school operates, what it values or what it provides. These core expectations and values can be changed gradually over time without any recognition or acknowledging of the merits of this change, or change may occur suddenly. When articulated for the first time, it may then become apparent that not everyone has the same viewpoint. School identity is established by those stabilised attributes of actions, beliefs, people or symbols that distinguish one school from another (G. Morgan, 1997). An unanticipated or uncontained crisis may challenge these attributes and, therefore, alter a school’s identity. Conflict may emerge around different expectations and interpretations of roles, the drawing of boundaries, and what values mean in practice. A crucial but difficult problem for schools to come to terms with is recognising the need to maintain identity or to change people’s expectations of what the school’s identity is (Beavis, 1992).

Major difficulties for schools in maintaining identity are in balancing: the desire to be mission driven with the demands of the market; the aspirations for community empowerment with the need to be effective and professional; and the provision of a well rounded education with the need to demonstrate school performance in certain areas. For those involved in school governance, consumerist attitudes of parents, competition
with other schools, and the need to maintain the confidence of stakeholders are some of
the challenges. Further, I contend that these are crucial issues for all schools, whether
they are government schools or their independent counterparts. Thus the community-
empowered, independent schools in Western Australia may offer insights into how the
roles and structures of governing bodies evolve and illustrate the type of tensions that
may lie ahead for government school councils.

Any understanding of what goes on must start with a description of what happens and
the different images and meanings people experience. The following sets of research
questions, were designed to gain the perspective of those involved in school governance
at different times about how changing discourses are perceived as affecting or changing
the identity of the school. These questions assist in the exploration of the nature of
decision-making processes and how these schools utilise parental involvement and
community empowerment.

Set One: What do the schools perceive as the important governance issues? What
processes involve the maintenance of expectations about schools, and establish and
negotiate the boundaries and roles within these expectations? How do these change over
time and impact on school identity?

Set Two: What balances are achieved between key tensions found in schools today?
Particularly, how are the balances managed at different school sites between democratic
imperatives and professionalism, between adherence to original school mission and
competition and markets, and between business propensity and sustaining community?
Set Three: What dilemmas emerge from conflicting value systems for those involved in school governance and what strategies do they develop in response to these?

OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

The thesis is structured to reflect my personal journey through the research process. Chapter 2, *Critical, Historical and Political Dimensions of School Governance*, locates the context of the research in relation to some historical and political dimensions to provide common ground for the following chapters. I discuss the rise of alternative philosophies in education and the background to the foundation of the particular independent schools in this study. Of particular relevance is the context of school restructuring and reform over the past twenty years, leading to the creation of school councils and decision-making groups, locally and internationally.

Chapter 3, *Organisational, Social and Cultural Dimensions of School Governance*, reviews relevant research literature on the organisational, social and cultural dimensions of school governance. Using a postmodern perspective, it offers two metaphors, schools as organisations and schools as communities. It discusses the different perspective these metaphors bring to the question of school governance.

Chapter 4, *Influence, Power and Identity in School Governance*, reviews literature on leadership, boundaries, power, trust, conflict and identity. It explores the ways leadership is being transformed in schools as they adjust to increasing and changing demands and expectations. This chapter also discusses issues to do with the drawing and maintaining of organisational boundaries, the distribution of power in schools and the importance of understanding the interplay of trust and conflict.
Chapter 5, *Research Design*, describes the research design as a qualitative one involving data collection through case studies and interviews and the use of NUD*IST* software (Qualitative Solutions Research, 1997) for analysis. I explain the three frameworks employed to consider the data, *Phases of Development, Community Empowerment* and *Dilemmas*. This research is premised on the belief that people are knowledgeable about the reasons for their and other’s actions, although perceptions may become distorted with the passing of time and hindsight. To account for this, from the original 13 sites five case study sites were selected for more in-depth analysis and participants chosen from different perspectives and time periods.

In Chapter 6, *School Governance as Phases of Development*, the framework of school governance as *phases of development* is used to consider the data that was generated by the study. This framework, which posits that organisations and their boards experience various developmental stages that influence decision-making and types of board members, fits primarily into the view of *schools as organisations* and is theoretically linked to the metaphors of organisational life cycles. It was during the transcribing and analysing of the interviews that the idea of cycles or phases of development in governance emerged to inform my thinking for this chapter.

Chapter 7, *School Governance as Community Empowerment*, focuses the results of the study on the metaphor of *schools as communities* and governance as a means of *community empowerment and involvement*. The use of the community empowerment framework to analyse the interview data addresses the question of whether school councils are really successful in increasing meaningful participation in decision-making.
It examines the ways influence and authority are manifested and retained. In this chapter I also consider whether schools can continue to envisage themselves as communities when many of the characteristics of professionalism, efficiency, marketisation, and management practices work against this view. Therefore, I also investigate the senses of community that exist and the ways they are maintained or weakened.

In Chapter 8, *School Governance as the Management of Dilemmas*, the findings make evident the need for schools to confront the tensions between differing demands on governance and the dilemmas that they produce. This framework helps delineate the *dilemmas of school governance* found within particular schools. It facilitates the reading of contradictions and the interplay between rhetoric, perceived realities and forms of evidence. It provides a means to consider the messy, untidy and ambiguous educational and social problems faced by school principals and school councils. This framework provides three dimensions of dilemmas within which to interpret the responses of participants: *dilemmas of boundaries and power*, *dilemmas of form and process*, and *dilemmas of identity*.

Finally in Chapter 9, *School Governance: Phases, Participation and Paradox*, interpretations and conclusions are made about the results and how they can contribute to an understanding of the processes of school governance. It concludes that every situation can be framed in many ways. While the choice of a particular framework affects both what is projected and what is ignored, the three frameworks employed in this study offer a useful means to think and talk about school governance. The implications for autonomous school boards and councils, state school councils, school principals, and leadership generally, are discussed in detail. Lastly the limitations and directions for future research are outlined.
CONCLUSION

It is recognised that there are multiple truths and realities, and meaning is something that is socially constructed. An individual’s perceptions, experiences and culture shape the political and ideological perspective of reality that is presented and believed. In the research process, I was exposed to postmodernist thought and the uncertainties it raised. I now see that underlying tensions were at work and that searching for simplistic or comprehensive explanations was naive and mistaken. The need was rather to problematise organisations and systems of thought and to question interpretations of them. Significantly, I began to accept that there are different realities and voices to be heard and recounted. However, while having Postmodernism as one point of reference, I also considered the difficulties for schools placed within their modernist and Enlightenment discourses. I have not lost hope in the possibilities of the humanist project but I approach it with a more critical view and a need to temper the Enlightenment discourse with postmodern sensibilities. Through this journey I moved to a more postmodern view of the world and became open to other realities and to the multiplicity of perspectives, that seek to expose those hidden ideologies that lie beneath discourses and motivations (Symes & Preston, 1997).
CHAPTER 2

CRITICAL HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL
DIMENSIONS OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

INTRODUCTION

This research is located in the context of continuing school restructuring and reform that is occurring as part of the globalisation of education. It offers a further perspective to the many critiques of reforms that have been taking place in Western Australia and in many countries around the world for at least the last three decades. The imperatives of the educational reform agenda are an inescapable aspect of school environments and are placing similar pressures on the governing structures of government, non-government and alternative schools (Angus, 2000; Kenway, Bigum, Fitzclarence, & Croker, 1993; Louis, 1998; O'Donoghue & Dimmock, 1998).

While some may see the present impetus toward reform as part of the ‘postmodern nexus’ between the global and the local, it can also be viewed as ‘high modernity’ with the strengthening of vertical hierarchies and the promotion of the rational scientism of accountability, management and markets (Whitty, Power, & Halpin, 1998 p. 41-2). It is perhaps not a commitment to heterogeneity, fragmentation, difference and horizontal
diversity but rather, as Simola (1998) puts it, present reforms are part of the
decontextualisation of the school making possible “the individualisation of the pupil,
the disciplinisation of the teacher and the goal rationalisation of the curriculum” (p. 741).

To provide common ground for reading and interpreting this research, I review the
direction of schooling that led to the rise of alternative philosophies in education and the
discourse of child-centred education. To foreground some of the issues faced by school
councils and boards today, the historical and socio-cultural background of restructuring
and various school reform efforts are also outlined briefly. The themes relevant to this
research that have emerged from these attempts at change are then discussed separately.

Historical Context of Alternative Educational Philosophies

While the eighteenth century was a period of diversity in approaches to education,
following the Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries
came the Modernist views of the world. Educators were to accept the Humanist and
Enlightenment calls for equality and justice, at least in rhetoric, but with a positivist
ideology, emphasising the rights of autonomous individuals in need of formal
preparation to become responsible and productive citizens. In response to this and to
what became a very disciplined and utilitarian approach to mass education came the
philosophies of Froebel (1895), Dewey (1916), Montessori (1912) and Steiner (1924).
These programs of Frobel, Montessori and their followers sought to "act upon the soul
of the child through the experiences of the body, turning pedagogy into a philanthropic
science by adjusting the child's experiences and the physical world, while embodying at
the same time in every activity the central moral principles of love and religion" (Rose,
Alternative schools, many based on the work of these educationalists, began to emerge at the beginning of the twentieth century. There was a return to the ideals of Rousseau and a desire for education to be based on the child’s natural development. As Cleverley (1978) puts it:

> Western Educators came under the spell of evolutionary theory, and began to regard children as active organisms in their own right. Psychology changed direction in response to dropping the search for some universal characteristic in man [sic] in favour of a close examination of individual difference … Names like Montessori, Freud and Dewey were invoked in support of arguments that children learned best in an atmosphere of freedom, that emotions had a rightful place in schooling, and that ‘scientific method’ was applicable in classrooms. (p. 258)

However, the period after the Second World War saw a return to more Positivist-Modernist ideologies in education in Western schools. There was a call for a strengthening of the traditional subjects. Cognitivists and behaviourists gained increasing influence in educational reform movements. Those, such as Thorndike (1944) and Skinner (1953), viewed the mind as a mechanism to be understood and observed, then ‘programmed’ with the necessary knowledge and behaviours (Kneller, 1984).

In Australia, it was the perceived failure of schools to fulfil what was promised that led to a regrowth in alternative, child-centred education approaches in the 1960s and 1970s (Dudley & Vidovich, 1995). The crisis of Australian schools in terms of physical resources was paralleled by a crisis in confidence in public schools themselves. Critiques of education came from virtually every ideological perspective (p. 103). The creation of independent schools, which were informed by liberal, progressive values that tapped into the counter-culture ideologies prevalent at the time, was notable by the late 1960s and early 1970s. There was a resurgence of Montessori and Steiner
schools, the emergence of educational practices championed by the ‘De-schoolers,’ such as Goodman (1966), Illich (1971), and Freire (1972), and the re-emergence of free or progressive schools informed by the work of Neill (1960), Holt (1964) and Kohl (1969). With persuasive ideologies and Commonwealth funding behind them, these new schools attracted parents and students disillusioned with conventional schools and in search of more student-centred and community-governed educational alternatives (Cleverley, 1978).

**Alternative School Movement in Australia in the 1970s and 1980s**

An outcome of this renewed interest in student-centred education and of government restructuring in the 1970s and early 1980s in the United States and in Australia was the resurgence of the free, progressive or alternative school movement. The schools in this research had their foundations within this aspect of the reform context and one of the schools was the direct result of the Commonwealth *Choice and Diversity* funding and initiative (Wilson, 1993). From the 1970s through the early 1980s, parents began establishing schools of their own because they despaired of ever improving public schools or of making them responsive to community views. Often the parent group was assisted or led by an inspirational teacher in whom the parents placed great trust (Firestone, 1975).

In Australia this movement was aided by the advent of the Schools Commission and the opportunity for schools to obtain both recurrent funding per capita and also capital grants for buildings and equipment (Hogan, 1984). There was also targeted funding, such as the *Innovations* projects which supported the original aim that “funds should be available to support, at the school level, special projects of an innovatory kind or with
implications for change” (Karmel, 1973 p. 127) and Choice and Diversity grants, which encouraged community involvement and ‘grass roots’ initiatives that would “enhance and exploit the capacities of committed people to generate their own improvements” (Karmel, 1973 p 126). A significant proportion of alternative schools came into being during this time. As shown in Table 2.1, between 1976 and 1994 there was a substantial increase of schools registered as non-denominational, Montessori, Steiner and other or independent.

### Table 2.1: Number of Non-Governments Schools in Australia by Affiliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ananda Marga</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assemblies of God</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brethren</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>1644</td>
<td>1694</td>
<td>1686</td>
<td>1654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Community</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churches of Christ</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-denominational</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek, Orthodox</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hare Krisna</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montessori</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moslem</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-denominational</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostal</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh Day Adventist</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society of Friends</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steiner</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniting Church</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Religious</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other or Independent</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>68?</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the early days of funding, it should be noted that many schools gave their affiliations as non-denominational or other rather than attaching a specific label, such as Montessori or Steiner, so the actual numbers of these schools cannot be as certain in the early data. This was also true for the ‘progressive’ or ‘free’ schools, which did not have an affiliation that fitted into the usual categories. However, Table 2.1 is illustrative of the growth of the range and number of alternative schools during the years of the Schools Commission (1973−1988). It also shows a similar growth in the smaller religious categories, which were begun as alternatives to the main, more prestigious religious schools. Schools, such as Assemblies of God, Baptist, Brethren, Greek Orthodox, Interdenominational, Pentecostal, and Uniting Church, increased substantially in numbers from the advent of the Schools Commission through to the 1990s. It can be extrapolated from these figures that the growth in alternative, progressive and small religious schools was greatest in the period between 1976 and 1994.

After the demise of the Schools Commission in 1988 and with the restrictions of the New Schools Policy, the number of new alternative schools being established declined, although a few new schools are still established each year (Angus, 2000). It has become more economically and bureaucratically feasible to expand already existing schools, adding new campuses in new suburbs, rather than to establish new schools. Montessori and Steiner schools have continued to be established but at a slower rate than before. Only the Christian Community and Moslem schools sustained significant growth into the next century. Some categories of schools, such as the Uniting Church, Baptist, and Seven Day Adventist, have declined appreciably in number, although the schools have generally expanded in size.
Generally the alternative non-religious schools have had a focus on parent
empowerment and philosophies of individual development supported by a child-centred
curriculum. They also had more flexibility and innovation of programmes. Sometimes
these schools adopted specific philosophies such as Montessori or Steiner, others were
based on the radical ideas of the de-schoolers or free-schoolers, and still others did not
adopt any specific philosophy but rather adapted several general approaches. They were
often leaders in experimentation and change, thus this group of schools came to be
known as progressive schools (Cleverly, 1978).

There are some grounds for claiming overlap between these schools’ approaches to
education and the philosophies behind the recent Curriculum Framework and Outcomes
documents in Western Australia. The schools in this study would generally have no
difficulty with the philosophical approach in the Curriculum Framework (Curriculum
Council, 1998) which espouses:

- A developmental approach where there is a recognition that students develop
  and learn at different rates and in different ways, constructing new knowledge
  and understanding in ways which link their learning to previous experience (p. 17);
- Consideration of the whole child and commitment to providing experiences that
  realise each child’s unique potential – physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual,
  moral, social and aesthetic (p. 16);
- Idea of shared values promoting social, civic and environmental responsibility
  (p. 16).

It seems the differences, at least in stated outcomes between alternative and mainstream
approaches to education, are decreasing. Roemer (1998), in a study of Montessori and
government schools in the United States, found that the espoused outcomes for both
sectors correlated well, although the Montessori schools identified more personal skill
outcomes and the public schools identified more cognitive skill outcomes. However,
there are other areas, such as multi-age grouping, the professional autonomy in
curriculum approach possible for teachers, and control over staff and enrolments, that public schools will probably never adopt across the board. Constraining factors, such as the difficulties of system wide change and the conservative nature of those in control, militates against radical reforms such as these. Angus (1998) points out that underlying all attempts at reform are embedded ‘meta rules’ that work against radical changes (p. 4). Unofficial rules such as “play the system … know your place… make sure there is something for everyone… build on past practice” (p. 83), and most importantly “don't position yourself too far in front of the pack” (p. 5), function like a protective case around reform initiatives providing an external limit to what is possible.

Unlike the larger high fee independent schools, these smaller schools, because of the relatively small number of students involved, and generally lower levels of funding, are overlooked as competitors for students. Although as Angus and Olney (1998) point out, they provide a sense of community in schooling and choice no longer easily found in the public sector. The government’s rationalisation policies of closing small government schools to build newer, larger schools, contributes further to the loss of “a small but important constituency of parents, namely those with preferences for more community-centred and community-controlled schools” (p. 14).

The educational reform agenda is an indisputable aspect of the environment within which both mainstream and independent schools currently operate. Although government schools are more clearly affected by the drives for accountability, efficiency, competition and devolution, independent schools also experience the same forces in terms of changes to their own operations and the types of demands they are subject to (Chait, 1997; Gannicott, 1997). Accountability and efficiency demands
impact on independent schools directly through their acceptance of government funding and the accompanying paperwork and regulations. Competition pressures come from the competition with other alternative schools and, with devolution, the competition from increasingly proactive government schools that are beginning to market themselves. All the participants in this research, currently involved in school governance, identified the reform issues discussed here as having significant impact upon the processes and structures within their schools and on their school’s identity.

POLITICAL AND REFORM CONTEXT

The dismantling of bureaucratic controls is evident across many areas of government responsibility. This process is often termed decentralisation or devolution. In schools it involves the devolving of some powers and authority to school sites from a centralised education department. Angus describes devolution thus:

> At one end of the continuum, locally managed schools may acquire many of the attributes of independent, privately-run schools, at the other end of the continuum, they may be required to do some of the mundane administrative work previously undertaken on their behalf by government bureaucrats, possibly without having been consulted about the redistribution of such work. (1998, p. 35)

Devolution, whether it has meant extensive devolving of powers or more limited devolution of administrative tasks, has, nevertheless, also included greater demands for accountability and increased paper work. Government departments apply these increased expectations to be accountable for funds and national goals to the independent sector as well. Independent schools have found they need to become more bureaucratic in order to meet these increased demands for accountability and efficiency (Gannicott, 1997).
Restructuring is another item on the educational reform agenda. Dimmock describes restructuring as:

A complex, ill-defined term increasingly used to embrace a multitude of reforms and which has emerged as a significant discourse of the school reform agenda since the 1980s. It is variously termed also as devolution, decentralisation or school-based management. While a variety of motives underpin the restructuring process in different parts of the world, most share in common the drives for efficiency, effectiveness, improvement in student learning and greater accountability. The process and outcome of restructuring eventuates in the re-configuration of roles and relationships between principals, teachers, parents and administrators, and for students’ lived experiences, and thus in fundamental change in school cultures. (Dimmock, 1999b, p. 97)

For the purposes of this research restructuring is understood as changes to the role of the central and regional offices of the Department of Education (Department of Education and Training or DET- as of 2003), and the impact this had at all levels of the system. It has also meant the limiting of some services or at the very least re-thinking how services were offered. This has affected independent as well as government schools. For all schools there is a continual adjustment to changing views of schools and their functions in society. Today schools are no longer being asked to produce citizens but rather consumers and producers. The demand for schools to restructure along business or corporate lines has had the effect of changing the way schools see themselves. Independents schools, already operating under market conditions, have been quick to respond to these new imperatives (Nowak, 2002).

In this next section I outline the context of school reform in several key countries and in Australia. Important themes that have emerged from these attempts at change are identified for further discussion.
International Reforms

Although social justice and equity were important issues of early reform agendas, a major theme in the successive educational reform movements of the 1980s and 1990s was the relevance of schools to their communities (Aspin, 1995; Chapman, Froumin, & Aspin, 1995; Furman, 1994; Heller & Edwards, 1992; McGaw, 1994; S. B. Sarason, 1996). This has led to various attempts, in name at least, at the restructuring of schools toward community empowerment, school-based decision-making and the devolution of powers from central authorities to the schools themselves (Chapman et al., 1995).

Site-based management refers to the placement of the authority and responsibility necessary to carry out practical action with the people at the site closest to that action. In Australia it is also known as school-based management. The rationale behind school-based management is that those who are on site will make the best informed decisions and this will lead to improved student learning outcomes (Lindgard, Hayes, & Mills, 2002; Summers & Johnson, 1996). There are a range of interpretations as to what the term covers “with a continuum from small-scale devolution to large scale reform where governing councils have been established to act as de-facto owners of schools” (Dempster, 2000). For schools in the government sector this has usually meant more power devolving to the principal who may then share this power with staff and parent bodies.

The claimed benefits of school-based management are in the positive transformation of patterns of authority, improved processes of communication, planning, decision-making, resource allocation and evaluation, and more effective and efficient management. Greater school autonomy is said to lead to a better alignment of
responsibility, authority and accountability, and to be associated with greater
participation, a greater sense of shared vision, an increased sense of understanding,
ownership and commitment, and, most importantly, to lead to improved student
behaviour and educational outcomes (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Connors & Sharpe, 1996).

Those who identify problems with this restructuring process fear it is designed to
weaken public education and lead to greater privatisation of the schooling sector. A
common assessment of the restructuring movement is that it is a tool of market reform
economics that masks funding cutbacks rather than devolves any real power or
resources to the local level. They maintain that the burden of greater responsibility and
accountability for student outcomes is being devolved from governments to the
individual school communities for reasons other than making schools more democratic.
It is seen as a budget cutting exercise that shifts the responsibility for meritocratic
outcomes from government agencies to individual schools who can then be blamed for
any failures by way of poor leadership or teaching (Connors & Sharpe, 1996; Whitty et
al., 1998; Williamson & Galton, 1998).

The rate and extent of reform and restructuring programmes varies from country to
country. There is a significant body of research literature relating to these reforms as
experienced in the contexts of New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States.
New Zealand has undertaken arguably the most extensive reforms and the United
Kingdom has also devolved considerable powers to school sites. The United States and
Australia have experienced waves of reforms.
**New Zealand**

New Zealand has radically transformed its education system. In 1989 the legal responsibility for governing New Zealand’s 2,700 state schools shifted abruptly from the central bureaucrats of the Department of Education to locally elected boards dominated by lay volunteers. Then only two years later the government introduced full parental choice of schools and a competitive schooling culture (Lange, 1988).

Fiske & Ladd (2000) identified three strands to the reforms in New Zealand. Firstly, and most obviously, was the concept of self-governing schools and the desire to make schools more responsive to local constituents. They found that although there is almost universal acceptance of the changes and that overall the decentralised structure is better than the centralised structure, the ability of the 15,000 amateur trustees to cope with the increased responsibilities has varied greatly. The Ministry, they said, conceded “it does not work for 10-20% of schools” (p. 8). Other research reported that principals take advantage of the lack of confidence of many boards and treat them as bodies to be consulted by professionals rather than as decision-making groups (V. Robinson, Timperley, Parr, & McNaughton, 1994).

The second strand to the New Zealand reforms was the role of the school as an agent of the state. While the government provides most of the financial support, sets curriculum and oversees accountability in management and governance, the schools are to produce the educated workers and citizens. The problems identified by Fiske & Ladd (2000) and Wylie (1995) were the inevitable tensions between school-level autonomy and national agendas, the lack of mechanisms for educational accountability, inadequate funding and most importantly the lack of support for school boards in dealing with new
responsibilities, especially for boards of disadvantaged schools (Macpherson & McKillop, 2002).

The third strand of these reforms, competition between schools, was based on the assumption that the national agenda and public good were best achieved by having autonomous schools operating in a competitive environment. Fiske & Ladd (2000) found that although parental choice became widely accepted and appreciated, there was also a noticeable polarisation and stratification of schools in the five years following the introduction of choice. Students and schools were sorted out by ethnic and, to a lesser extent, socio-economic status, raising the question of schools’ abilities to redress problems of social inequity.

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom reforms, while not quite as radical as in New Zealand, were extensive. There were five education acts in the twelve years between 1980 and 1992, with the most important being the 1980 Education Act, which required that every school should have its own governing body to include elected parents and teachers. There was also the 1986 Education Act (No. 2), which extended governors’ powers and increased parent representation, and the 1988 Education Reform Act, which greatly increased the responsibilities of governors in the local management of schools, encouraged an extension of schooling provided by private trusts and allowed parental choice between schools (Golby, 1993).

However, as Wolfendale (1992) explains, there appears to be a dual philosophy evident in all this legislation. While the educational process was opened up to parents through
their representation on governing boards with greater power and responsibility, schooling is now so regulated by the National Curriculum and assessment requirements that in reality the major powers remain with the national and local governments. As with the reforms in New Zealand, the deficiencies and shortcomings are identified with how the reforms are translated and impact at the individual school level. Boards of governors have generally not interacted with the professionals as partners (Golby, 1993; Munn, 1993a; Thody, 1999) and choice has impacted negatively by widening inequalities between schools (Adler, 1993; Ball, 1994). Lindgard et al. (2002) report the creation of, what in England have been referred to as ‘sink’ schools, those schools less successful at attracting students and thus forced to take students excluded elsewhere, leading to a spiral of decline in status and funding.

**United States of America**

According to Louis (1998), schooling in the United States had been fiscally and politically a local issue until 1983 when the National Commission on Excellence in Education issued the report, *A Nation at Risk* (United States Department of Education, 1983). The report called for broad reform and state and federal governments became involved. The attempts at restructuring since this time have varied greatly across school districts. Although according to Henkin, Cistone and Dee (1999), more than one-third of all schools in the country now have some form of site-based management. The level of authority devolved, however, varies substantially for individual schools and is criticised for being uneven and inequitable (Louis, 1998). The history of education reform in the United States has largely been one of making changes to institutional arrangements with little impact on teaching and learning (Steffy & English, 1995; Summers & Johnson, 1996). These changes have varied from minimal local autonomy given to schools to the
more radical 1989 Chicago School Reforms, which placed each of the 595 Chicago schools under the management of school boards made up of individually elected community and teacher members (Cuban, 1990; Gannicott, 1997). The power of these local school councils to exert real hiring and firing authority, however, was overturned by a court challenge that reinstated fifty principals on the grounds that their school-site councils violated the ‘one-person one-vote’ principle (Steffy & English, 1995).

Again, the reforms are perceived overall as deficient and incomplete, and a newer response to demands for community responsiveness is that of charter schools and vouchers. Charter schools are intended as a ‘bottom-up’ method of allowing professionals or parents to start their own schools with public funding. Arizona is said to have the broadest charter implementation with no restrictions on who can start schools or the numbers that can be established. Charter schools are only a recent pattern of governance. The first legislation was passed in Minnesota in 1991. Because there are still so few charter schools it will be some time before their potential to transform systems can be evaluated (Gannicott, 1997).

Others in the United State have been calling for the introduction of vouchers. Proponents claim there has been little or no progress to the inequalities in education for disadvantaged groups, particularly African-Americans, and demand a variety of schooling opportunities for parents to choose from (Bolick, 2003; Carnoy, 2001). The first to propose a voucher program was Friedman (1962), who justified his plan on the grounds that it would end the inequity of using tax funds to support some children (those attending public schools) but not others, and on the grounds that it would compel public schools to compete with independent schools to attract students.
Gannicott (1997) defines vouchers thus, “The fundamental idea is that the parent of a school-age child would be given a voucher or coupon worth a certain value; parents would then use the voucher to buy education for their child at a school of their choosing” (p. 109). Although Friedman made the original proposal in 1962 (Friedman, 1962), it was not until 1990 that a programme was officially implemented in Milwaukee when five independent schools agreed to take fifteen hundred voucher students (Bolick, 2003). Several states have now introduced some sort of voucher system but again data is limited and does not yet allow any assessment of their effectiveness (Carnoy, 2001).

**Australian Restructuring**

For most of their history Australian education systems in all states were highly centralised with clear hierarchies and extensive, rigid regulations. This bureaucratic control of public education was seen as necessary in Australia for reasons of efficiency, consistency, economy and equity, and remained largely unchallenged until the 1970s. In 1972, the Commonwealth’s Interim Committee for the Schools Commission⁴ produced a document known as the Karmel Report (Karmel, 1973), which resulted in a massive increase in federal funding for education and an underlying belief that any improvement in the quality of schooling would be best achieved by assisting the efforts and commitment of people at the school level (Chapman et al., 1995; Townsend, 1994). The Schools Commission argued, “If real devolution of authority is to be achieved, it will be the relationship between school and community that provides an alternative accountability to bureaucratic surveillance” (1979, p. 9).

⁴ The Schools Commission was originally known as the Australian Schools Commission and also for a time the Commonwealth Schools Commission. In this paper it will be called the Schools Commission as this is its most usual name.
While the Schools Commission did not have the power to implement such change directly, it attempted to do so by making grants for specific purposes through the *Innovations Program* (Karmel, 1973). This first attempt at devolution or first wave of reform, what Lindgard et al. (2002) term social democratic devolution, was considered an attack on the authority of the states and was contested vigorously by them. In fact few proposals put forward for grants promoted radical change or directly challenged the central decision-making authority of the states. The Schools Commission funding did little to shift the balance of power and the effects on restructuring were marginal (Angus, 1990, 1998; O'Donoghue & Dimmock, 1998). Institutionally schools remained little changed and central office power remained firmly entrenched (Angus, 1995).

The second change or wave came later, in the mid-1980s, with state government-initiated reforms and what Birch (1995) characterised as the “politicism of education” (p 76). Ministers became more active in their portfolios and ministerial advisers, rather than public servants, provided information and advice. Private sector management practices were incorporated into the public service in a corporate, managerialist devolution transformation (Lindgard et al., 2002). The most obvious change was from a concern about inputs, during the relatively prosperous 1970s, to a focus on outputs, during the economic downturn of the late 1980s. Around this time all school systems in Australia saw the devolution of authority over aspects of their budgets directed to the schools themselves, and to varying degrees the establishment of school councils or school development groups (O'Donoghue & Dimmock, 1998). While the discourse of the time was that of corporate managerialism, the underlying purpose of the reforms was to get better value for the dollar rather than to cut public expenditure (Angus, 1995). This period also saw the introduction of the ideology of ‘choice.’
Where reforms for teachers in the 1970s and 1980s concentrated on curriculum, teaching and learning, by the 1990s schools found themselves under the influence of the market version of devolution with increased corporatisation of government agencies and the free market reform agendas of economic rationalism and all the accompanying rhetoric (Lindgard et al., 2002). Angus (1995) saw this third wave as characterising a tripartite alliance of government, business and unions. The state governments and the federal government were using devolution as a means to improve efficiency and competitiveness, reduce public expenditure, and increase productivity. There followed award restructuring, enterprise bargaining and a view of parents and students as consumers. Although this time the Commonwealth played no direct part in the reforms, common to the discourse of restructuring of the last three decades is the justification of benefits to students and of improved educational outcomes. The assumption is that school improvement is better achieved through local control (Angus, 1990; Bishop, 1999; Whitty et al., 1998).

The most radical attempt at restructuring in Australia so far was Victoria’s *Schools of the Future* policy of 1993 where 90% of funds are now devolved to school sites. This program required each school to enter into a contract called a charter but unlike charters in the United States or the reforms in New Zealand, ownership does not pass to the school council. Schools are also to adopt corporate structures and processes. In return they are empowered to be responsible for the general education policy of the school, selection of principals and deputy principals, budget planning, maintenance and improvements, and finances generally (Caldwell, 1998a; Chadbourne & Ingvarson, 1998; Gamage, Sipple, & Partridge, 1996; Townsend, 1994).
Western Australian Devolution

In Western Australia the second cycle of reforms was ushered in by the report *Education in Western Australia* (Beazley, 1984), which recommended wide-ranging reforms including greater community participation in decision-making and school-based management. The *Better Schools Programme* (Western Australian Ministry of Education, 1987) was to establish self-determining schools, devolve powers to the school level and make school personnel more accountable.

The machinery for this devolution consisted of mandatory school development plans, single line budgets, school decision-making groups and an adoption of external auditing. According to Angus (1990; 1995), this attempt at restructuring was part of the state government’s commitment to overall reform of the public sector and was imposed with little consultation. In reality the centre still had absolute control over staffing, most of the control over policy and guidelines and simply devolved administration to the school level. The system was operating with elements of both a devolved and centralised system but without the advantages of either. Efforts went into drafting school plans, participating in school councils, which were hardly even advisory, and writing reports. However, there was little identifiable improvement in community involvement or meaningful decision-making (Angus, 1990).

Power in the more traditional and church-based independent schools is generally perceived as already being with the principal and even in the parent-run alternative schools, the principal is thought to hold considerable control and influence. In reality school councils can exert considerable and final authority, and for older schools the weight of ‘tradition’ may be an incredible restraining power on any principal wishing to
pursue radical lines. How power is perceived and changed over time is of relevance to this study in its investigation of governance issues.

With yet another attempt at reform, the new School Education Act ("New Schools Education Act," 1999) means all government schools are to have decision-making groups constituted as School Councils when the Act is fully implemented. To achieve this objective the Local Management of Schools Pilot Project, covering 21 schools, was commenced in 1999. It is interesting to note that a similar project in 1991 with seven schools had to be suspended after a year due to an industrial dispute. An evaluation study (Department of Education, 2001) found that the pilot schools were establishing processes to ensure community input into decision-making, with all but one establishing a school council. However, many issues still need to be resolved: the need for greater definition of roles, responsibilities and expectations of the different parties; a perceived lack of resources to support the changes; uncertainty about the role and composition of school councils; and the difficulties in some cases in gaining significant community input.

From this review of the reform context, several key themes have emerged as significant to the discussion of school governance. Markets, parental choice, community empowerment, and public versus private or independent education were issues identified in the literature as related to the various attempts at change and are reviewed in the next sections.
REFORM ISSUES

Markets, School Choice and Empowerment

In all educational sectors in Australia since the 1980s, there has been a drive for new corporate forms of management and an adoption of instrumentalist views of schooling. Currently entrepreneurial patterns are advocated as schools struggle to balance increased expectations of outcomes with competition for government funding. Education itself is increasingly seen as a commodity that confers benefits on individuals, and schools are expected to operate as though they are small businesses. The democratic and populist themes of community participation become harder to maintain and identify within the language of the marketplace. The policy press is for accountability, efficiency and improved outcomes (Ball, 1994; Reid, 2000; Strain, 1995; Williamson & Galton, 1998).

During the 1990s Australia, like many other countries around the world, adopted the discourse of economic rationalism and increased managerialism and these ideologies were applied to school reform. The social and democratic agenda gave way to an economic and national one. Schools found they had to adapt to the demands of market forces, the idea of user pays and exposure to the perils of competition. They are now, more and more, responding to imperatives to become more market-driven than mission-driven and to be focused on organisational attributes rather than their educational identity (Williamson & Galton, 1998). These rearticulated versions of school-based management are “thus linked to new state structures and new ideologies in a globalised, post-bureaucratic, post-Keynesian political and policy context” (Lindgard et al., 2002, p 12).
Market and corporatisation discourses dispense with the language of compassion, equality, social rights, resistance, and the greater social good, and instead use the language of self-interest, the individual, choice, private initiative, enterprise and competition (Brown, Kenny, Turner, & Prince, 2000; Reid, 2000). The implication, Strain (1995) says, is that there is no such thing as society; there are only individuals and families. Individuals are no longer citizens but are described as consumers and education, like other social goods, is a commodity. Associated with this view of governments as purchasers of education rather than providers come the technologies of the market, such as performance indicators, contracts, and specialisation, as well as promotional activities and brand images. In the marketplace, however, there must be winners and losers, and resources are not distributed equitably (Adler, 1993; Ball, 1994; Fiske & Ladd, 2000; Marginson, 1999; Reid, 2000).

It was Chubb and Moe’s (1990) very influential work that first directed school improvement policies toward markets and the private sector. They argued that public education was shaped by social purposes whereas independent schools determined their own goals, standards and methods and, as they were acting within a market, they had to please consumers. The educational argument for encouraging parental choice of schools is that it allows parents to choose the educational environment that best suits their child. This then promotes more enthusiasm from parents, more motivation and commitment from students, more diversity among schools, and greater accountability. The evidence for this is hard to find in the literature (Whitty, Power & Halpin, 1998; Adler, 1993). The arguments against allowing choice among schools are that it favours middle-class advantage and those already with strong cultural capital, leading to increased stratification between ‘good’ and ‘poor’ schools (schools start choosing families rather
than the other way around). This actually works against innovation and diversity (Fiske & Ladd, 2000; McBeth, 1993; Wylie, 1995).

In actuality parent choice is limited by the amount of information they have and, importantly, by economic and geographic factors. In New Zealand with its radical reforms, where parent trustees have real responsibility and power, Fiske and Ladd (2000) found since the reforms that schools in low socio-economic areas had become smaller and schools in high socio-economic areas had become larger, and that ethnic minorities had become concentrated in low socio-economic schools. Of concern is that parents tended to judge the quality of a school by the ethnic mix of students in the school rather than other factors.

The losers were the disorganised low-income families or those who had no control over where they lived. The most popular schools positioned themselves to serve primarily academically motivated students from families with high socio-economic status and attracted the best teachers. The system, say Fiske and Ladd (2000), has no way of rewarding value-added instruction. Schools at the poorer end of the continuum have to deal with increasing concentrations of difficult to teach students from deprived or dysfunctional families, and teachers who teach in these schools were generally “saints” or "incompetents” (p. 242).

Similar stratification of schools is reported in the United Kingdom and the United States. The new opportunities in grant-maintained and charter schools are being colonised by the already advantaged as they attract the relatively privileged parents and teachers. Where there is choice among public schools, there has been a gradual trend
away from progressive pedagogies and a shift towards more traditional education with little reliable evidence that there has been increased parent participation or better outcomes for students (Whitty, Power & Halpin, 1998; Adler, 1993). Whitty, Power and Halpin talk about the "commodification" (p. 95) of parents for their skills and expertise as some are considered more useful than others and some are more desirable as partners than others.

In studies of the motivations behind parent choice of small independent schools and charter schools in the United States, the results indicated that for those relatively well-off families, it was primarily a proactive search for different teaching and learning environments, and that these parents did have a good grasp of school differences (Bomotti, 1996; Manno, Finn, Bierlein, & Vanourek, 1998; Petronio, 1996). However, there is also evidence of schools becoming more exclusive over time and that extending educational choice by making these schools more accessible was likely to increase separation of students by social class, cultural background and race. Many parents chose a particular programme because they saw them as screening out the unwanted to get the ‘crème de la crème’ (Petronio, 1996, p. 34).

In Australia the findings are much the same. Blackmore (1995) suggests that “the market exacerbates differences on the basis of class, race and ethnicity, but does not encourage diversity in image, clientele, organisation, curriculum or pedagogy” (p. 53). Schools are judged against a prevailing image of a good school being one that is “well uniformed, well disciplined and academically successful” (p. 48). Improving physical appearance and public image can become more important than changes to teaching and learning. It seems leaving the responsibility for good schools in the hands of parents
may not be fair to them or the children. Certain types and amounts of cultural, social and economic capital are necessary in order to be an active and strategic chooser. The ‘free-market’ ideology, instead, disadvantages further those children whose parents lack the time and resources to speak out (Adler, 1993; Ball, 1994; Munn, 1993b; Whitty et al., 1998).

There are also questions raised about the value and reality of the restructuring process in its aim for empowerment of school communities, especially for parents. School councils were established in Australian states at different times with different powers and functions but only rarely was membership representative of the diversity of a parent body or community (Dimmock, 1995). Parents and other lay members on councils or boards tend to be “conservative, white, middle class and male” (Whitty et al., 1998, p. 61). This has implications for how representative a council may be in its decision-making and also for the appointment of its principals, teachers and the ethos of a school.

Teachers can be fearful of parental control and defensive in their attitude to parent participation. Consent may be manufactured by manipulating agendas and information, and decisions may be made for more political than educational reasons (Ashton & Cairney, 2001; O'Donoghue & Dimmock, 1998; Soliman, 1998). Parents often feel unable to question professional expertise and Robinson et al. (1994) claim that educational debates are as rare now as they were before the radical New Zealand restructuring. The new opportunities for parents are often narrow in scope, generally more financial than educational or democratic, and with little chance to have their voices heard. Most power continues to be held by principals. Exiting a school becomes a signal of preference rather than voice (Burns, 1999; Gilbert & Dewar, 1995; S. B.
Sarason, 1996; Whitty et al., 1998). Also there are often conflicting interests between
groups of parents, professionals and even the wider community. The New Zealand
reforms defined the community as the current parents and did not include mechanisms
for balancing minority concerns against the legitimate needs of the broader community
(Fiske & Ladd, 2000).

Public School/ Private School Divide

Alongside restructuring and competition for resources and funding comes the political
impetus for privatisation of public enterprises. This is most obviously seen with bodies
such as banks, airlines and utilities. The ideology of privatisation challenges the
previous norms of public administration and the credibility of public accountability. The
ideals of representativeness, equality, greater community good and public welfare are
replaced by those of utility, efficiency, productivity and profitability (McCabe &
Vinzant, 1999). While this is more problematic for schools, it becomes inevitable that
the distinction between public and independent schooling is increasingly blurred. While
public education systems look for ways of differentiating themselves and talk about
engaging the communities of public schools in a sense of ownership and involvement,
they also employ the language of business and private enterprise (Chapman et al., 1995;
Gannicott, 1997; Heller & Edwards, 1992; McGaw, 1994). A recent article (Gewertz,
2003) reports on several school districts in the United States that have hired private
companies to oversee their educational systems.

In Australia the competition for educational resources has become a public/private
debate as increases in educational funding have gone almost completely to the funding
of independent schools (Hogan, 1984; Reid, 2000). Angus and Olney (1998) claim that
the reform initiatives and funding policies have contributed to an increase in the number of places in the private sector rather than providing extended choice for parents in government schools. It has also allowed most independent schools to improve their staff/student ratios (Gannicott, 1997). The private educational sector in Australia is now so buoyant that the government system may simply become another provider catering for those less financial. The public system constituency has shown a steady decline since the beginning of the Australian Schools Commission reforms. The growth of non-government schooling at the expense of the government sector in Australia can be seen in Tables 2.2 and 2.3.

Table 2.2: Non-Government Enrolments in Australia by Percentage of Total Enrolments since 1955

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Total Enrolments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>1985</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>1990</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This graph shows non-government school enrolments, as a percentage, in decline in the 1950s and 1960s. This is a reflection of the sudden post war ‘baby boom’ in Australia, which resulted in a sudden increase of the school population during this period. Non-
government school enrolments, in fact, had been static for sometime and continued to be so until the 1970s. Government enrolments, however, had had to increase rapidly to cope with the increased demand of a growing school population. However, with the advent of the Schools Commission in 1973 and the peak of school population growth having been reached in 1966, this trend was reversed and non-government school enrolments show a sharp increase continuing to the present day. The corresponding decline of enrolments in the government sector can be seen in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Percentage Growth of Total Enrolments of the Non-Government and Government School Enrolments in Australia since 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calendar Year</th>
<th>Government School Students</th>
<th>Non-Government School Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>78.2%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>77.0%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>73.6%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>72.1%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>71.5%</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Criticism of government schools, the pressures of dwindling enrolments and population redistribution have had an unfortunate impact on public education in terms of morale and perceived status. After the boom times of the post-war period when government school enrolments outstripped those in the private sector, funding of non-government education brought about a change in direction as can be seen in Tables 2.2 and 2.3. This discernible movement of student population from the government to the independent sector, alongside a continuing reduction in government funding, has had the effect of increasing the opposition, by some, to independent schooling. Angus (2000) predicts
that with the abolition of the *New Schools Policy*, which did to some extent restrict the growth of new independent schools, the market share for non-government schools will show even greater expansion.

For some, independent schools are irrelevant or even detrimental to Australian education as a whole in that they take resources and funding from the government sector (Durston, 1986; Kenway et al., 1993; McGaw, 1994). The differences between government and independent schools are often represented by stereotypes. As Angus and Olney put it:

> The single sex grammar school located on prime real estate with a Gothic chapel, new science laboratory and honour boards containing the names of famous alumni is compared to a government high school in the suburbs, under maintained and struggling to come to terms with students attending under sufferance because they cannot get jobs. (1998, p. 9)

Of course these stereotypes do not recognise the similarities between the sectors or the range of variation within the sectors. When a group of government school principals was asked to identify the essential characteristics of government schools, the only characteristic identified by the majority of principals in the survey was an open admissions policy (Angus & Olney, 1998).

There is, in fact, a wide range of independent schools, varying in philosophy, organisation and style. Some are highly traditional and others are progressive. Independent schools sometimes offer a specific pedagogy or approach to education but in any case parents choose them for very definite reasons. What attracts them to independent schools may be the personalised attention, the academic programme, parents' own educational beliefs or background, the level of personal involvement offered or parent expectations about the school's responsiveness to their concerns.
Whatever their reasons, they come with specific expectations of what this means for them and their children. However, except for the community-controlled schools, parental influence or participation in governance is not strong. The sector operates as a “classical free market, in which consumers (i.e. parents) either accept what is on offer, or move on” (I. Morgan, 2000, p. 9). In the past these schools have not had to overtly respond to parent demands, as choice between them was limited. However, parents in today’s consumer world, with more choices, may in fact decide to move on and this ‘take us or leave us’ mentality is changing.

Independent schools, like schools in other sectors, face not only the challenge of a growing complexity of administration but also a shift in expectations as a consumerist attitude on the part of parents replaces the more familial relationships of the past. In today’s market driven environment the old feelings of being part of a community or of schools as an extension of the family are being replaced by the view of parents as clients, customers or consumers and schools as providers of a service (Munn, 1993b). Parents are likely to have increased and differing expectations and demand a higher level of satisfaction while schools are finding that parents tend to be less willing, and have less time than in the past, to be involved on the practical level of the school, to ‘roll up their shirt sleeves’ and give freely of their own energy and services (S. B. Sarason, 1996).

Convergence between the private and public sectors of education is significant. Gannicott (1997) notes that while the increased funding has allowed the independent sector to improve their educational offerings in many areas, it has also caused these schools to become more bureaucratic and to experience some of the same problems as
public schools. Some public schools mimic an elitist grammar school image to attract students and most have some sort of amenities fee. They also compete with other government schools for students. The Catholic systemic schools, on the other hand, operate administratively more like government school systems and face similar problems while most independent Aboriginal community schools have no fees and are almost entirely government funded. In Western Australia some government and non-government schools are located close together and actually share facilities (Angus & Olney, 1998). At the same time, in Australia as elsewhere, the imposition of national curricula and an impetus toward outcome-based education have narrowed the gap between the pedagogies of state and mainstream independent schools and even that of the more alternative independent schools (Angus, 2000; Lindgard et al., 2002). This has in some sense actually lessened choices for parents despite the ideological climate legitimating policies on the grounds of increased choice. Perhaps this explains, to some extent, the growth in the last decade of the ‘back-to-basics’ more traditional independent and religious schools. Previously the demand had been for schools seen to be very different, such as Montessori and Steiner schools.

In contrast to the more traditional approaches of teaching that emphasise what is taught and how and when, an outcomes or individualised approach focuses on what students need to achieve and how this can best be facilitated. It implies a shift from using the common denominators of the whole class in programming educational experiences, to recognising and responding to individual student needs and goals. In Australia ‘outcomes’ have thus far focused on achieving individual goals through specified processes. Outcome-based education is not yet equated to nominated national standards monitored by national testing as in the United States (Manno et al., 1998), although the
The learning experiences provided to facilitate the achievement of these outcomes, however, can be varied and flexible. This is usually where pedagogical differences lie. These differences in pedagogy are often linked to social class and correspond to the cultural context in which the school is placed (Hatton, 1998b). The way teachers teach and the way students respond are not just a function of the characteristics of the individuals but are socially patterned and structured (Sharp, 1998). School councils, instituted to give all parents some influence in schools, instead reflect the inequalities of power and resources that different groups bring to the educational environment (Soliman, 1998). Several writers argue that education in general, and the public schools themselves, benefit from the diversity that independent schools provide, partly because they are often willing to experiment and take risks but also because education is improved by the provision of more decentralisation, greater choice and increased competition (Angus & Olney, 1998; Chubb & Moe, 1990; Gannicott, 1997; Ravitch, 1991). For marginalised groups, such as Aborigines, the establishment of schools under indigenous control that enable curriculum and structures to be specifically suited to their needs is of great importance (Malin, 1998).

Chubb and Moe (1990) contend that public schools need to be more like independent schools but not for reasons of innovation and diversity. Their study has been a major contributor to educational policy worldwide following their conclusions that
independent schools are more effective academically than public ones. They conclude that this effectiveness was evidenced by the better academic results the independent schools in their study achieved in comparison to public schools. The key factor identified by Chubb and Moe for this effectiveness was the autonomy that independent schools enjoyed and particularly the lack of bureaucratic control experienced. All schools that operate with substantial autonomy, it was argued, would have a highly effective organisation and thus academic success. Autonomy of decision-making, not source of funding, was identified as the crucial factor. Their findings and that of others, such as Coleman and his associates (1982), have led to the drive for school autonomy, devolved decision-making, school choice and the reduction of centralised, bureaucratic control still evident in school reform initiatives today (Gannicott, 1998).

The evidence for decentralisation, autonomy of decision-making and parental involvement leading to greater efficiency and academic success in public schools is hard to find in the literature (Marginson, 1999; Whitty, Power & Halpin, 1998; Adler, 1993). Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998) challenge Chubb and Moe’s (1990) original claims that organisational factors alone adequately explain variations in student outcomes between public and independent schools. Indeed Marginson (1999) claims that the success of bureaucratic public education in socialist Cuba “turns Chubb and Moe’s book on its head” (p. 236). Although Gannicott (1997) and Angus and Olney (1998) are advocating a further blurring of the public/private divide by the introduction of charter schools or vouchers similar to those introduced in the United States, any real ownership of public schools by the community in Australia is unlikely. This is partly due to the fact that, unlike the North American and English systems, we do not fund our schools through local community authorities. McGaw (1994) contends that the Australian
independent education sector is too large, too well established and too well supported by government funding to allow the widespread development of semi-autonomous public schools.

CONCLUSION

Reform agendas, by ignoring the institutional, historical and cultural frames of mass schooling, make it possible to place ambitious, and even utopian, societal expectations upon these reforms, thus establishing inevitable cycles of innovation and failure. There are contradictions between the policy and the rhetoric of education reform and the reality of any changes taking place in schools. Initially each reform initiative appears to offer a rational and conclusive answer to some pressing need; however, they are eventually judged to be deficient and incomplete (Angus, 1998; Boyd & Crowson, 2002; Cuban, 1990; Dimmock & Paton, 1997; S. Sarason, 1990). For example, schools are said to have become more bureaucratic during precisely those years when reforms aimed to make them more autonomous and responsive to the community (Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1996; Gannicott, 1997; Simola, 1998; Spicer, 1995). As Angus (1998, p. 3) predicts, however, these partial reforms will continue to fail and even the so-called ‘lighthouse’ schools will eventually be reclaimed by the system unless we understand and construe reform differently to that of conservative adjustments to contemporary schools.

While I agree that education has been, and still is, enriched by the existence of schools outside the public system, especially alternative schools, I argue that the independent sector’s incentive to offer this diversity and innovation is under increasing threat. Where schools are judged primarily by image, clientele and examination scores, competition
and market forces drive both school sectors towards conformity and traditional pedagogic approaches. Rather than expanding the breadth and variety of pedagogical approaches necessary to meet a range of needs, schools become conservative and focused on academic results (Adler, 1993; Ball, 1994; Munn, 1993b; Whitty et al., 1998).

In the next chapter I examine the organisational, social and cultural dimensions of schools in the face of these imposed reform agendas and the widespread acceptance of the efficacy of market forces. Two different views of schools are employed to assist in the understanding of school governance.
CHAPTER 3

ORGANISATIONAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL
DIMENSIONS OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

INTRODUCTION

The way we think about schools leads to their being understood in distinctive but partial ways, partial because no one perspective is complete. In the face of imposed reform agendas and widespread acceptance of the efficacy of market forces, schools are being challenged to respond to this question; Are they primarily businesses meeting consumer demands and competing in a marketplace or places of learning, nurturing and developing the potential of individuals?

In this chapter, I review the literature relating to school governance from two different perspectives or root metaphors, schools as organisations and schools as communities. I discuss some of the organisational literature relating to schools and non-profit boards and to organisations as coupled or living systems. I also discuss literature that relates to communities and the cultural patterns that are created and sustained by different groups of people within them. In particular the classic *gemeinschaft*/*gesellschaft* theoretical
framework from sociological theory (Tonnies, 1957) is used to form some understanding of a school's view of itself as a community.

METAPHORS FOR SCHOOLS

Language is our means to structure interpretations and communicate the abstractions of our experiences. The images we evoke with language are central to the way we relate to the world. What we say has meaning on multiple levels, though it may be interpreted differently by others. Metaphors are created when “a term is carried over from one system or level of meaning to another” (Alvesson, 1993, p. 116). The use of metaphor causes a break or shift in literal meaning that allows the phenomenon to be perceived and understood from a different viewpoint. At the same time, while we use metaphors to draw parallels between apparently unrelated phenomena and to understand one element of experience in terms of another (G. Morgan, 1997, p. 4), there must be coherence and internal logic within the comparison between the two levels of meaning. Metaphors help us to gain insights, to illuminate some areas of experience or thought, to make discoveries, to develop hypotheses and to construct arguments. Metaphors build bridges from the known to the new, helping us to leap a gap in understanding or reach new meaning. They are a way of enabling us to see to deeper level meanings of communication and experience, raising to the surface hidden or subtle characteristics but also establishing figure and ground relationships that serve to highlight certain features while suppressing others (L. L. Putnam, Phillips, & Chapman, 1996).

It can be argued that in a broad sense all theory or all knowledge is metaphorical in that it “emerges or is constructed from some point of view” (Alvesson, 1993, p. 116). We conceptualise schools by seeing them as something. Schools have been variously seen
as large families, factories, living organisms, businesses, gardens and so on. The metaphors used in discussing schools reveal something of the thinking behind the discussion as well. Metaphors provide coherence to a particular perspective and one means for understanding the interpretations and theorising that result. Different metaphors will utilise and evoke very different images and thus exert a power over our interpretations of what we examine.

Metaphors are inherently paradoxical. While they help us ‘see’ and give valuable insights, they are also ways of not seeing (G. Morgan, 1997). Some things are left in the shadow. The seductive quality of their constructed meaning causes us to overlook their ambiguous and sometimes deceptive nature. Metaphors give an incomplete, biased and often misleading picture as other perspectives, which might be valuable, are obstructed or distorted. Metaphors stress the similarities but ignore the differences. Worse, they can come to be viewed as ‘the’ reality rather than just one way of viewing or describing what we wish to understand better. “Today’s metaphor can be tomorrow’s literal sense” (Pugh, Hicks, & Davis, 1997, p. 13). There is a struggle in our schools today over the metaphors and discourses with which we see and talk about schools.

In this chapter I review the literature from two very common but different ways of talking about schools, schools as organisations and schools as communities. These are root metaphors in that they include within them other ‘second level’ metaphors and ways of seeing (Alvesson, 1993). Schools as organisations often incorporate second level metaphors, such as schools as systems, schools as businesses, and schools as machines or factories. Schools as a community also have other metaphors within them, such as a school as a learning community, as a culture, as a village, as a democracy, as a
team, or a family. These two principal metaphors are considered in this chapter for their coherence and for the different perspectives they bring to the question of school governance.

School as Organisation

For the most part, the sociology of organisation theory has focused on the organisation as a bounded entity with the research traditions of the field based on modernist assumptions and structuralist views (Alvesson & Deetz, 1996; Clegg, 1990). Organisations are represented in terms of ideal types, of structures and processes, of rational decision-making, of inputs and outputs and of efficient, knowable functioning. This structuralist-functionalist approach to management emphasises consensus and coherence rather than conflict and complexity and promises improvement through better understanding of organisational life. Management’s task is to undertake this improvement through defining and achieving explicit organisational goals (Clegg & Hardy, 1996).

For schools this structuralist-functionalist approach aims to have educators accept the administrative roles of management, to confer the accompanying terms and rhetoric with status and meaning, and to stress the need in schools for professional approaches and business-like skills (Hoyle, 1986c). Within this approach, school improvement is to be accomplished by better management rather than changes in pedagogy (Whitty et al., 1998). Cavannah and Dellar (2001) assert that this exchange between organisational theorists and educational theorists has been unidirectional, leading to a further reinforced emphasis on managerialist solutions.
While schools increasingly are viewed as business organisations, some writers see a shift within the organisation studies field itself from modernist to more postmodernist paradigms (Clegg, 1990; Clegg & Hardy, 1996). Structuralist analyses, although seductive because they simplify complex conditions, have provided insufficient solutions to organisational difficulties. Reed (1996) claims that organisation studies are “at a historical juncture and in a social context where all the old ideological certainties and technical fixes that once underpinned the discipline are under attack and seemingly on the retreat” (p. 32). He maintains that the self-confidence of the 1950s and 1960s about the discipline’s intellectual identity and rationales was lost by the 1980s and is now being replaced by “uncertainty, irony and humility” (p. 32). Weick (2001) reports several themes in the newer proposals about what organisations are like. He holds that these proposals maintain that there is less rationality in organisations than meets the eye, organisations are segmented not monolithic and the variable strength of connections between various segments of organisations produces ambiguity.

Gunter (1996) utilises a view of chaos theory in putting forward her metaphor of management in educational institutions as *Jurassic Management*. Chaos theory, from the educational management perspective, asserts that “educational institutions are not linear but complex networks with equally complex feedback loops” (p. 13). The future is not knowable but must be visioned as unpredictable, with organisations situated between stability and disintegration. Where the drive for stability comes from a retrospective, ‘back-to-basics’ view of education, under chaos theory schools should function away from such equilibrium, but within a bounded instability. The choices made may shape and support, but not necessarily control, the natural drives to create self-organising networks. The capacity for groups to self-organise has been
underestimated and under-utilised. In the same way that weather patterns are not totally predictable but still operate within the boundary of what is known about the seasons and the other causal factors, educational management must identify the main environmental factors impacting on the school but utilise intuitive, creative strategies to respond to change, contradiction and conflict, and shape their future as it unfolds.

For Gunter (1996), the world’s ultimate theme park in Michael Crichton’s best seller novel and movie *Jurassic Park* (Crichton, 1991) can be used as a parable for those studying educational management. Her argument is that “Jurassic Park failed because the management thought that planning and organisation, combined with skilful marketing, would bring success” (p. 5). The fundamental flaw for management and those training managers, including educational managers, is that they cannot know the future but act as though they do. They seek stability, reciprocity, consensus and consistency but do not recognise that it is not only an illusion but also a delusion. This disconnects management theory and practice from the turbulence within school environments and prevents them from dealing with the ‘chaos’ and complexity that exists in schools. Further it means that problems continue to recur and so-called solutions fail, leading to a sense of “going in circles” (Boyd & Crowson, 2002, p. 523). This is the concern with the current emphasis on visioning, strategic planning and marketing prevalent in schools. Discussions about school boards and the literature on non-profit organisations are focused this way and still very much embedded in the modernist and structuralist views of governance and organisational theory. This next section reviews some of the literature from this area.
Schools and Non-Profit Boards

The emphasis here is on the structures and decision-making processes of boards and their organisation. The main themes from this literature are those of leadership, accountability and the need for professionalism. A few writers also discuss the ideas of boundaries, conflict and trust (Burns, 1999; Greenleaf, 1977; Johnson & Scollay, 2001).

Although describing the non-profit sector, there is still concern evident with the wider economic context. Chait (1997) warns that non-profit organisations, including independent schools and hospitals, “are now irretrievably immersed in a free market economy and mercilessly exposed to the perils of competition” (p. 1).

Manuals for boards, such as those by Block (1998), Duca (1996) and Houle (1997), describe three different models for non-profit boards: a structure with an executive focus and power, those with a strong board focus and organisations where there is a balanced partnership between board and executive. These writers acknowledge, however, the difficulties with all three models. As Block (1998) argues, despite the huge amount of literature giving advice to boards and their executives, board behaviours have not changed in twenty years and board members “experience confusion, disappointment and frustration about their roles and responsibilities” (p. vi). He refers to boards as mythical two-faced creatures. On one side, you have this inspiring picture of a group of moral and noble volunteers working for the good of an organisation and on the other hand, boards are often seen as disorganised groups operating with confusion and conflict and subject to the whim of personalities and egos. The heroic myth continues to be maintained and promoted in the literature while the impossible standards this sets ensures its perpetual failure.
At a recent conference in Western Australia (National Council of Independent Schools Association, 2002) for those involved in the governance of schools, a presentation was given by a large independent boys school on their implementation of the Carver Model in their school. The Carver Model was originally developed in the 1980s. It was interesting that this model was being presented at a 2002 conference. It is an indication of the extent to which school governance is still tied to modernist ideologies and models of the past. This model (Carver, 1997) proposes that the sole duty of non-profit boards is to establish policy and strategy. It is very detailed and explicit in its description of the four main areas that boards need to consider: ends to be achieved, means to those ends, board-staff relationships and the processes to ensure this ‘good’ governance. Carver states that “the failures of governance are not a problem of people but of process” (p. xv). The model has been criticised for its idealised view of non-profit boards operating above the “messiness and reality of board-executive relationships,” and for not dealing with the external factors and contexts that boards must contend with (Fletcher, 1999, p. 2).

Most writers acknowledge leadership and board-head relationships as important factors in governance, although it is not always recognised that these relationships will always be problematic. Any partnership that involves mutual dependency and is compounded by the people involved playing multiple roles within multiple relationships will be inherently difficult (Chait, 1997). This is especially true where parents are involved (Firestone, 1976; Page & Levine, 1996). Moreover, it is an arrangement where a body of part-time amateurs and volunteers oversees the work of full-time professionals. A metaphor for the difficulties of such relationships is that of a marriage with the added hazard of the principal having more than one spouse at one time and over time. Boards
can often choose to act individually rather than collectively, resulting in a principal
having to adjust to many different partners with different "rhythms, tunes, and styles"
(Chait, 1997, p. 3). Not only do principals have to adjust to different partners but they
must also look in several directions at once. They are responsible to faculty for
leadership, and to parents and students for the educational programme, and at the same
time are financially and educationally accountable to the board or council. They become
increasingly stretched as they are simultaneously pulled upwards toward state mandates
and downwards to community expectations. It is no wonder they sometimes ‘tread on
toes’ and boards may then choose to seek a new partner.

Misaligned and diverging expectations of what is expected of each other frequently play
a role in the deterioration of board-head relationships and in coups and other leadership
transitions (Aitken, 1992; Kane, 1992). In schools, the principal may take on any or all
of the following roles in relationship to the board: student, teacher, leader, follower,
subordinate, colleague or mentor. The board members may be simultaneously employer,
confidante, supervisor, client, advocate, critic and friend. Often the principal finds
himself or herself operating in some undefined and treacherous borderlands between
these different roles expectations. To quote from one principal's experience,

As it turned out I was in for a huge surprise. Although, before I would
accept the job, I clearly articulated the need for strong leadership by the
principal, literally before the construction dust had settled, the board
changed its level and scope of activity dramatically. Board members began
to make decisions about practically everything … To my dismay, they
steadfastly neglected their commitment to create a job description for me
that would clarify my evolving role. (Page & Levine, 1996, p. 27)

Despite the difficulties of these relationships, the education board literature places
power firmly with the principal. Apart from the more alternative parent-run schools,
which the literature largely ignores, principals are not seen to have to contend with
stakeholder empowerment or interference (Chait, 1997; Jackson, 2000; Sewall, 1996). The literature from those investigating leadership in government schools with councils or boards also stresses the power of the principals in these schools. Writers, such as Ashton and Cairney (2001), Ortiz and Ogawa (2000), Whitty et al. (1998), and Gilbert and Dewar (1995), maintain that the principal remains the most powerful and influential individual, setting and controlling the agendas. School councils remain mostly advisory and members, especially parent members, are overwhelmed by the tasks and challenges of governance. Most of those writing about the government or independent sector agree that the expectations and workloads of principals have increased considerably (Connors & Sharpe, 1996; Duca, 1996; Mahoney, 1988; Whitty et al., 1998). This issue is discussed further in Chapter 4.

Other issues faced by boards are in the areas of accountability and professionalism. Boards are in a paradoxical ‘bind,’ they are often viewed as excessively involved or criticised for not being involved enough. Although encouraged to delegate responsibility, the board is still ultimately responsible for the organisation. Several writers accuse them of wasting time or spending too much time on the trivial and not enough time on the critical issues (Carver, 1997; Chait, 1997; Todras, 1993). While most writers on the subject of board responsibilities agree that the board governs by making policy and reviewing strategy and the executive manages through implementation, many acknowledge that, although reasonable, this is rarely the reality (Duca, 1996; Houle, 1997; Jackson, 2000). There are shadowy “zones of accommodation” (Houle, 1997, p. 96) that result in tension and confusion. The breakdown of good governance is often blamed on a lack of expertise of board members, frustration of executives from interference or lack of support, inertia, narrow
social perspectives, factionalism, and confusion about roles. Boards are advised to become more professional through recruiting specific expertise, through induction and by undertaking reviews and evaluations (Nowak, 2002).

Some of the more interesting metaphors used in the literature for governing boards, apart from the mythical two-faced creature of Block’s (1998), are of boards as watchdogs or cheerleaders (Carver, 1997), boards as servants (Greenleaf, 1977), boards as ships with members being advised not to rock the boat, as fireman putting out fires, as bridge builders and healers (Beavis & Thomas, 1996), and as juries chosen to stand in for the ‘ordinary’ people (Golby, 1993). An interesting metaphor for decision-making is the ‘garbage can’ model (S. J. Miller, Hickson, & Wilson, 1996) where problems, solutions, participants and opportunities are thrown together and mixed. Two other views, boards as part of phases or cycles of governance development (Wood, 1992) and board members as community democrats (Thody, 1999), are discussed in some detail in the Frameworks section of Chapter 5. Second level metaphors from organisation studies that have been applied to schools, schools as loose and tightly coupled systems and schools as organic or living systems, are considered in the following section.

Loose and Tightly Coupled Systems

For many people it seems natural to view organisations as systems. Organisations traditionally were adapted to the needs of production and machines, clearly defined activities, it seemed, could be linked by clear lines of communication, coordination and control. The image of the rationally functioning system has endured because it offers managers the impression of control and links into what Beare (1988) calls the factory or industrial metaphor. Schools with their regulated days, their ‘conveyor belt’ curriculum,
where one grade leads to another, and their hierarchical authority are linked to this metaphor as well.

Writers, such as Beare (1988), Chait (1997) and Jackson (2000), call for new corporate forms of management for schools. Corporate organisations are simultaneously tightly controlled and yet at the same time freewheeling. The aim is to create locally autonomous, yet centrally cohesive institutions that use the benefits of size but operate like small businesses, what is called a ‘loose and tightly coupled’ system’. For Shedd and Bacharach (1991), schools are neither the tightly coupled system that policy makers and administrators would like them to be or the loosely coupled collectives of autonomous crafts-persons that many teachers would prefer. They are instead extremely complex combinations of ‘loose’ and ‘tight’ elements (Boyd & Crowson, 2002).

Linkage and coupling are metaphors for binding forces. Linkages are those mechanisms in schools that serve to coordinate the various activities and people undertaking them. Tight coupling, according to Pang (1997), is the force which binds people to the organisation’s goals, mission, philosophy and core values. The bureaucratic framework of roles, rules, regulations, procedures, policies and authority relations is typically positioned at the tightly linked and cohesive centre. The professional spheres, which accommodate individual autonomy and discretion, are more loosely coupled at the edges (Campbell-Evans, 1993). Weick (2001) finds evidence for this loose coupling in schooling’s indeterminate goals, hard to evaluate outcomes, inability to control supply and lack of direct evaluation and accountability. Actors, he says, in loosely coupled systems must rely on trust and presumptions, work to ill-defined objectives and in isolation, and must cope with ambiguity and contested terrains.
In contrast to these mechanistic views of organisations, several theorists developed the ideas of organisations as organisms or open systems adapting. These organic systems adapt and interact with their environment and evolve in response to these interactions (Bach, 1993; Kauffman, 1993; McKelvey & Aldrich, 1983; J. G. Miller, 1978). The form an organisation takes or evolves into depends upon the environment it operates in with different ‘species’ needing different types of environments.

Living systems

There are several different metaphors evoked under the image of organisation as a living system: organisations as ecologies, as particular species, as brains, as cybernetic organisms, and as autopoiesis (G. Morgan, 1997). They have in common the idea of organisations evolving patterns of internal and external relations. The degree of harmony or fit with their environment is then a result of human decision-making, action or inaction. Incongruence and conflict are often the result. For their survival, organisations depend upon the ability to acquire adequate supplies and resources while the environment eliminates the weaker systems. The implication under this metaphor is that management must be concerned with alignment and good fit. Although there is general agreement that problems stem from changes in the external environment, the debate is about whether adaptation or selection is the primary factor influencing a system’s survival. If it is selection that is most important, then what managers do has little effect in the long run. It is the environment that has the most impact.

The autopoiesis view is that all living systems are organisationally closed (Ulrich & Probst, 1984). This theory challenges the validity of drawing distinctions between a system and its environment. Instead systems are said to be characterised by the features
of autonomy, circularity and self-referencing. Their autonomy is in their ability to self-create and renew. Their interactions are circular patterns wherein change in one part of the system is coupled with change in another, and they are always attempting to form self-referential closure in relation to their environment. The environment is really part of the system. Systems are not isolated entities but instead strive to maintain identity by subordinating all changes to their own maintenance of identity. The problems organisations face in dealing with their environments, as living systems, are related to the kind of identity that they try to maintain (G. Morgan, 1997).

Beavis (1992) is one who argues that schools should be viewed this way, not as a sum of their fundamental parts and their formal structures, but rather as autopoietic systems. This notion of schools is that they are not just the particular people, board members, staff, parents, and students who comprise the school at any one time, but more completely include the interactions of all these groups, sub-species, and the systems of communications that they develop. In this view the school, as a living system, must endeavour to maintain its identity, to remain recognisably the same or almost the same, while dealing with the reality of constantly changing personnel and constituents, and that it ensures “the meaningful communications within the school are distinguishable from those of the environment” (p. 2).

It is argued here that the particular perspective or image used by researchers in examining schools is fundamental to how they are then described and understood. As Morgan (1997) says, “think structure and you will see structure . . . think in terms of systems of patterns and loops and you will find a whole range of them” (p. 349). The next section examines some of those writers who think of schools as a community.
School as Community

A community is a group of persons interacting in both institutional and non-institutional roles and having a sense of identification with others in the group as a result of this interaction (Merrill, 1969). The concept of community is based on social interaction and communications between people. Cavanagh and Dellar (2001) explain the differences between organisation and community thus, “a community is a consequence of social interaction whereas in an organisation social interaction can be considered a consequence of membership of the organisation” (p. 3). For Bellah (1985) a community has a history, it is constituted in its past and a real community is a “community of memory” (p. 153). To keep the memory alive and ensure the past is not forgotten, communities nurture a constitutive narrative that reinforces a collective history of deeds, of suffering, of success and of exemplary individuals, the heroes and the villains. Sometimes it is the painful stories and the tragedies that create the deeper and stronger identity for the community and keep them focused on a hopeful future. People involved in a community of memory, as opposed to those in geographic or lifestyle enclaves sometimes called communities, participate in the rituals and practices which define the patterns of loyalty and obligation that keep the sense of community alive.

For Eisenstadt (1992) and Sergiovanni (1992) communities are defined by their centres. Members of communities have a common relationship to the ‘centre’ that is greater than their other connections. They are not defined by their institutional purposes, their rationally conceived structures and processes or even their skilfully contrived cultures of collaboration and positive working environments, it is their values, sentiments, beliefs and histories that unite members at the centre. Community cannot be borrowed or bought but the need for community is universal (Sergiovanni, 1994). Communities
are individuals that knit together in a way that transforms them from a collection of ‘I’s’ to a community of ‘we’s’ in a web of meaningful relationships (Sergiovanni, 1996). The more a group is presided over by representatives and its affairs directed by those on the outside, the poorer a community becomes and the less community life will exist (Eisenstadt, 1992). It has been argued that the centres of schools should be what governs and gives meaning to school life (Sergiovanni, 1992).

Concern about community in schools is not new and is a major theme in school reform rhetoric in many countries (Ashton & Cairney, 2001; Chapman et al., 1995; Furman, 1994). Dewey was one of a few educational theorists in the early part of the twentieth century arguing against the metaphor of schools as educational factories capable of mass producing children trained for work in the real world. He wanted each classroom to “be made a genuine form of active community life instead of a place set apart in which to learn lessons” (1916, p. 14). Society has different expectations of schools than they do of organisations (Cavanagh & Dellar, 2001). Organisations, particularly business organisations, are situated in competitive national and international free market environments. Success and effectiveness is judged on the ability to generate financial dividends for invested capital and on their means to demonstrate accountability, adaptability and efficiency. Schools, however, confront more complex issues and are subject to an environment with more diverse influences and demands.

While both the organisation and community metaphors can give us insights into how schools function, Sergiovanni (1996) argues it makes a world of difference which of the two provide our overarching frame. Schools should be treated as special places, unique in that they are places for children of transition between the subjective and protected
environment of the home and the objective and exposed outside world. Schools are not
the managerially tight and culturally loose systems described by organisational theorists
but rather “real schools look more like clockworks gone awry” (p. 160). Sergiovanni
contends that going for the “main gear and pin” by instituting school-based
management structures and other rationalistic approaches “may sound sensible but
doesn’t affect the cogs and pins whirring away independently” (p. 160). Shared
premises, memory, replication and commitment are more effective than strategies that
rely on structural changes. Connections need to be based on shared values and not on
contracts.

There are those who see dangers with such a ‘modernist’ concept of community for
schools (Bartlett, 1995; Enomoto, 1997; Furman, 1998). For these writers this view of
school communities as unified and cohesive fails to conceptualise their multifaceted and
complex nature. Furman (1998) claims there is dissonance around even the possibility
for unity within our postmodern society. Not only that, but the very notions of
sameness, coherence, belongingness and mutuality as criteria for membership of
community suggests the opposites of difference, marginalisation, fragmentation and
exclusion, thus further perpetuating boundaries between groups. The assumption that
experiencing a sense of community depends upon sameness leads to the conclusion that
to build community we either have to gather together those who are already the same, as
in independent schools or schools of choice, or create sameness within the school
through shared goals and visions. The irony, Furman claims, is that the efforts to create
community, to force sameness, “may exacerbate issues of centre and margins,
membership and exclusion when they are intended to do the opposite” (p. 310). Also the
values adopted at the centre may serve only the interest of the status quo and powerful
and become a tool of social control.
Enomoto (1997) proposes instead the metaphor of ‘nested communities’ to describe the varied groups and their cultures found within any school, what Bartlett (1995) describes as “nested ecologies of education . . . much like the nested Russian dolls” (p. 161). For these writers even these nested subcultures involve contradictions and inconsistencies between group members. The whole idea of a collective culture in schools is problematic. Rather, it is suggested, members align around particular issues and, although there are some collectively shared views and sense of culture that endure over time, the multiple, nested and overlapping communities that exist mean that they are perpetually mediated and negotiated within relationships that are defined and redefined.

A lack of a unifying community or loss of a feeling of community in schools results in a search for substitutes, often counterfeit communities that rely on using the rhetoric of community, paying lip-service to labels like participation and empowerment, gaining surface agreement to imposed goals and values, and isolating dissenters. When there is not enough ‘glue’ to keep communities connected, bureaucratic formalities and procedures are substituted (Greenleaf, 1977). Scrinnis and Lyssiotis (1995) claim that today we are primarily members of ‘abstract’ communities held together by the ‘technologies of extension,’ such as the telephone, the television, the car, the Internet and the aeroplane. The interiors of communities or collectives, whether ‘authentic’ or ‘constructed,’ are a network of social practices and mores registered as culture. As well as the culture that develops in a community, certain symbols become invested with meaning specific to the group, and a ‘stock of social capital’ is generated or depleted (R. D. Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1993). In the next section I examine some of the literature relating to an important feature of communities, their culture.
Culture

The culture of a school is important to both the form and processes of its governance. A culture provides the values, ideas, beliefs and language identified with a school, and supplies the ideological basis for action (Williamson & Galton, 1998). There is an inescapable relationship between ideas and structure within a culture and a school, and it is essential to recognise the complex nature of this relationship when initiating or coping with change. Changing the structures of schools will not, by itself, bring about the desired changes. Ideas and culture must also be altered.

According to Halley, (1998) there are three ways to view culture. Firstly culture can be seen as content. That is as a complex whole that includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, and custom (Halley, 1998), or simply as the shared experience of a group (Weick, 2001). Secondly culture is also process. It is the ways a group has of learning, knowing, storing, sending and processing collective experiences and cognitions. The third view is of culture as effect, as the system of constraints and limitations, the meaning of rules for social action, and the modes of differentiation and identification, adopted by a group (Halley, 1998).

Wilber (1996) classifies culture as one of four axis or four ways we have of knowing or viewing the world. The other three are social, behavioural and intentional. Behavioural and intentional views are very individualistic approaches. The examples Wilber gives of behavioural theorists are Locke and Skinner whom he places on the exterior or individual axis with a material, monological, empirical and positivistic orientation. Intentional theorists, he suggests, would be those such as Buddha, Freud and Piaget with their orientation also being toward individuals and singular viewpoints but also
with hermeneutic and interpretive outlooks concerned with consciousness and interpretation. Social and cultural ways of knowing take communal and collective orientations. Where social theorists such as Comte and Marx look at systems and exterior features, cultural theorists such as Kuhn and Weber are more concerned with non-material aspects and seek interior meanings, values and identities. Culture, from this viewpoint, is all of the interior meanings and values and identities we share with those of similar communities, whether tribal, national or global.

For Morgan (1997) the idea of a culture being established by particular groups or communities derives from the older metaphor of ‘cultivation’, that is, it is an agricultural metaphor that guides our attention to these historical aspects of social development. Culture originally came from that notion of being ‘cultured,’ that is, different societies had different degrees of refinement evident in their beliefs and practices. Although today the concept of culture may not necessarily embody this evaluative component, Morgan uses it to argue that cultures of groups and organisations will vary from one society to another and according to different stages of development for that society. Cultural patterns are created and sustained by different groups of people who have developed different ways of life. The culture that results is both self-organising and evolving. Although a discernible pattern, culture is not something that can be easily defined or measured. It is a form of lived experience. The classic *gemeinschaft/gesellschaft* theoretical framework from sociological theory (Tonnies, 1957) can be used to form some understanding of a school's view of itself as a community.
**Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft Framework**

In the *gemeinschaft* framework, which is associated with traditional communities, relationships are based on kinship, friendship and shared beliefs. Trust, intimacy and loyalty characterise these relationships. *Gemeinschaft* translates into the typically small communities where universal rules and their consistent application are not so important as feelings of belonging and personal security. In contrast, the *gesellschaft* framework is associated with the wider, secular society, with the world of commerce and its marketplace relationships. It is typified by contractual obligations of performance, impersonalisation and impermanence. As Sergiovanni (1996) reminds us, neither of these types of culture exist in pure form but represent two different versions of existence. In any institution, the values of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* will interact and overlap but the relative dominance of one type over the other will change and affect the quality of the experiences for the individuals within the system. The movement of society toward the *gesellschaft* end of the continuum results in community values being replaced by contractual ones.

*Gesellschaft* relationships are characterised by associations related to bartering. Rewards and punishments are used to ensure loyalty and compliance. There are prescribed roles and expectations, and acceptance in the collective is conditional on acceptance of these rules and formalities. The connections between people and their institutions become more contrived and individuals feel isolated and disconnected despite any unifying factors. In *gemeinschaft* cultures people can remain essentially united in spite of disabling dynamics. Relationships are characterised by ties of kinship, place or mind, and values that have enduring qualities. The understandings that develop are resilient and survive the movement of members through the community over time.
They are sustained and protected, and passed on to new members, by the stories, symbols, rituals and customs that are celebrated.

In the past the school was the bridge from one kind of community to the other, from the *gemeinschaft* of the family and local community to the *gesellschaft* of the wider world. Until the early twentieth century schools were associated with their local communities. It was accepted that while schools were educating students to take their place in the larger society, they would support the norms and mores of the local community (Furman, 1994). In Australia, though, this connection was never strong, as state schools were highly centralised and bureaucratic with most decisions and policies consolidated firmly in state departments of education. Today’s reform movements intensify this tension between the central bureaucracy's need for control and the impetus to decentralise. Local communities have also changed. Families are more likely to break down and be isolated as people work further from home and move more often. Schools are increasingly governed by the rational *gesellschaft* rather than the values of the *gemeinschaft*. The school is losing its identity as a bridge to the larger society and instead becoming indistinguishable from it.

**CONCLUSION**

In this chapter two principal metaphors widely applied to schools were considered for their coherence and for the different perspectives they bring to the question of school governance. The small independent schools in this study, while having their foundations in the *gemeinschaft* paradigm and the metaphor of schools as communities, are modifying themselves in light of increasing *gesellschaft* influences and are adopting
organisational metaphors. The ways that schools are governed are adjusting to these varying and sometimes contradictory understandings. The ways we ‘know’ schools or the ways we think about them differs depending upon the experiences we have. At the same time the ability of fragmented communities to resist change has been eroded along with an important resource of communities, social capital. This is discussed further in the next chapter.

It is argued in this research that there is an inescapable relationship between ideas and structure within a school, and further, that it is essential to recognise the complex nature of this when considering governance processes. In the next chapter some of the tensions that develop as schools struggle with increasingly mixed metaphors and changing communities are discussed under the themes of influence, power and identity.
CHAPTER 4

INFLUENCE, POWER AND IDENTITY IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

INTRODUCTION

The metaphors we apply to schools impact significantly in all areas of governance. The dominant cultural elite, those with the human and social capital resources, will be the ones who shape these metaphors and influence the ways in which a school's identity is constructed. In investigating governance, particular issues arise in the areas of boundaries, power, symbols, identity, trust, conflict, and expectations. This chapter looks at these issues and how the leadership role is constructed or changed by the dominant metaphor in use of school as community or organisation. In this next section I discuss the way some boundary lines and edges are perceived and negotiated in schools and what this means in terms of power relations and governance.

INFLUENCE AND POWER

Boundaries and Borders

Boundaries can be classified as psychological, temporal or physical (P. Robinson, 1981) and are essential features in all systems. They define the uniqueness of an organisation
and provide the territory within which groups or individuals operate (E. J. Miller & Rice, 1967). Communities and organisations have and draw boundaries and maintain borders. These borders can be defined by physically segregated environments, the internal rituals and expectations established over time, the roles people take, and formal documents and policies (Mitchell, 1997). In sociological and organisational theory, boundary theory describes the interiors of collectives, such as groups, organisations and societies, and attempts to explain the differentiation, integration and extent of the culture such collectives create. Boundaries are perceptual arrangements used to establish and maintain habits, rules and expectations and provide a defence against infiltration and change. They are thus lines, regions, or zones that divide, distinguish and set limits. By defining membership and describing group and individual roles, they are a place of both separation and connection (Halley, 1998).

To manage this separation and connection, many writers stress that the clear definition of roles and delineation of boundaries to authority are essential strategies for the stability and effective functioning of organisations (Block, 1998; Duca, 1996; Henkin et al., 1999). For these writers blurred boundaries lead to misunderstanding and serious conflict. What is promoted is a balanced partnership with assigned roles for each partner, along with mutual trust and understanding. Although it is accepted that in restructured schools, where varied interests in education converge, there will be inevitable tension emanating from the “interactions of interdependent people who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving those goals” (Henkin et al., 1999, p. 142). In 'healthy' organisations, however, such conflict and tension are said to be important dynamics as they promote continual dialogue and clarification of roles and responsibilities (Duca, 1996, p. 92).
Other writers suggest that there should be no set boundaries between crucial roles; and they argue that lines between governance and management need to be blurred (Ashkenas, Ulrich, Jick, & Kerr, 1995; Carver, 1997; Chait, 1997). In discussing board and principal roles, Chait (1997) describes the dynamics of board and principal roles as like a double’s tennis match. The “lines on the court provide useful markers about territory and position, yes there are preferred patterns of movement and interaction, yet with practice and skill, and as circumstances dictate, adept doubles partners move across lines and react instinctively to the other’s moves” (p. 9). Ashkenas et al. (1995) promote the idea of a ‘boundaryless’ organisation. While accepting that all collectives will by definition have boundaries, they urge organisations to make these boundaries permeable. In the case of the vertical boundaries that exist in hierarchical organisations, there should be less emphasis on who has authority and rank and more on whom has the useful ideas. Horizontal boundaries exist between different functioning groups and should be permeated by establishing teams that include people from these different groups.

As well as these internal boundaries that describe the interior of collectives, external boundaries are also important in maintaining and defining identity. In response to pressures from the environment, such as increased competition or other perceived forms of attack, boundaries that separate an organisation or community from others become a focus for defence or redefinition (Fiol, 1989). Environmental pressures, such as new government policies, changes to regulatory or accountability requirements, demands for new outputs, scarcity of resources, or advances in technology and information, impact on groups and often converge or overlap. Mechanisms put in place to absorb, buffer or
deflect these pressures, however, can act as conduits, attracting and transmitting them deep within the organisation, rather than offering the protection they were designed for.

Mitchell (1997) describes how such buffering and bridging strategies have altered relationships and structures within university settings, threatening the identity of some institutions. “Broad social trends towards professionalism, specialisation, and credentialing have placed emphasis on the more utilitarian elements of university work” (p. 269). Buffering strategies, such as the establishment of segregated physical units, a dependence on rich internal rituals and scholarly ethics, or the more recent bridging and boundary spanning strategies of joint ventures, attempt to insulate the core processes and values from external influences or absorb the effects without compromising them. Over time, however, Mitchell (1997) claims these relationships become clouded and the subsidiaries draw scarce resources away from the core. Schools employing such strategies should be warned that rather than protecting the core business of education, they may come to actually define the institution. As border disputes break down the traditional barriers, administrators and teachers may find that they are now engaged on the boundary between schools and commerce.

Schools and other voluntary associations must face the reality of today’s imperatives. The modern pressures of marketisation, corporatisation and drives for accountability have seen the boundary between what is private and public shifting and such pressures can impact on the core of their identity (Angus & Olney, 1998; Beare, 1998; Brown et al., 2000; Whitty et al., 1998). E.J. Miller and Rice (1967) suggest that those institutions and professions that offer help or other public services, such as hospitals and schools, have inherently permeable boundaries. They usually accept those clients who appear at
the door, thus their intake is difficult to control, and once accepted it is frequently difficult to dissolve responsibility for those taken into care. As well, the nature of schooling means outputs are similarly intractable to any real control. This makes schools vulnerable to outside pressures while limiting their response to these forces.

Cultural differences are another dimension to external boundaries that exist within schools and other collectives. Luft (1999) describes some of the cultural boundaries that exist within different groups in schools. These can be between teachers and parents and students, between different ethnic, social or economic groups, and between different staff members. People cross these cultural boundaries knowingly or unknowingly in their interactions within the school environment. Such ‘border crossings’ can be easy when values are similar; but when value systems differ, difficult border crossings occur. Schools therefore need ‘boundary spanners’, individuals who can comfortably and legitimately interact with cultures other than their own (Sandholtz & Finan, 1998). The school literature is largely silent on this vital aspect of school community.

**Power Networks and Influence**

Recognised or not, tensions exist between these different cultural values and a school’s or system’s core values. Power networks, technologies and discourses operate within and across the many boundaries and relationships found within schools. These contacts that bring the various actors together “lack symmetry . . . the participants do not interact as equals” (Marrett, 1990, p. 83). Structuralist-functionalist perspectives of power, which emphasise order, control, regulation, legalism and avoidance of conflict, continue to permeate our educational systems, whether positioned in the postmodern present or not (Fennell, 2002). Hoyle (1986b) claims there is a particular problem with power and
authority in organisations that are staffed by professionals. Professionals call upon their superior knowledge and expertise to legitimate power and decision-making. Hoyle defines power as a generic term that underpins the concepts of authority and influence. “Authority is that form of power which stems from the legal right to make decisions governing others. Influence is that form of power which stems from the capacity to shape decisions by informal or non-authoritative means” (p. 74).

A principal has legal and traditional authority that is conferred within the parameters of the ‘role’ of principal. They will also have influence. This may come from their personality, their stocks of social capital and their accepted educational and/or administrative expertise (Hoyle, 1986b). Social capital is discussed later in the chapter but refers to features of social organisations, such as trust, social networks and norms that exist within relationships between individuals and groups, and forms identity. Principals find that they can no longer fall back on professional expertise alone, the legitimation of disciplinary knowledge is now determined by market forces as well. Hoyle (1986b) discusses four bases of power available to the traditional head of independent schools and, more recently, to principals of self-managing and other autonomous schools. They are: coercion through the threat of sanctions such as dismissal or demotion; remunerative authority and influence through allocation of resources, promotions and references; normative controls, which may be evident in an emphasis on particular professional and ethical values, the bestowal of blame or praise, and the distribution of status and recognition; and control of information.

It is the area of influence rather than authority that is of particular interest. In what ways are the manifested and desired goals of community empowerment through school
councils subverted by the counter discourses of market and accountability and by the power embedded in professional influence? The accepted discourses of a particular place and time determine what counts as true or important. Implications from Foucault’s (1979) work is that empowerment strategies that may appear more democratic, participatory or reforming than in the past may in fact be more effective forms of disciplinary power. The idea of participation may be successful, not in reducing controls, but in establishing more effective controls (Anderson & Grinberg, 1998).

Several researchers have indeed found that power seems to have largely devolved to the principal or remained with central authorities (Chadbourne & Ingvarson, 1998; Guskey & Peterson, 1995; Johnson & Scollay, 2001; O'Donoghue & Dimmock, 1998; Whitty et al., 1998). Administrative practices seem trapped in the discourses of efficiency, productivity and accountability and thus create a binary opposition between the manager and the managed while those serving on school councils regulate themselves to accept this power and influence (Ball, 1990).

In Australia, Hunter (1994) postulates that the notion of the school as a ‘community school’ and the family as a ‘pedagogical family’ is the result of “a series of exchanges that took place between a statist and secularist education bureaucracy and a parentalist and religious private school system” (p. 128). As reasoned from this position, equality and justice are to be achieved by the use of both school and family as social technologies and as a means of transmitting pedagogical norms into the community while allowing parents to adjust their desires to these norms. Hunter (1994) maintains that Western public school systems can be neither understood nor reformed as “an expression of a coherent set of ethical or political principles. It is a whole web of non-
principled institutional arrangements: systems of training and supervision; technologies of administration and of pastoral supervision; languages of analysis and procedures of decision” (p. 90). Those who work within this web must “act within the limits of their professional personae and respect the fragility as well as the power of those institutional arrangement that give the system its unprincipled coherence” and thus make it difficult to change (p. 91). A school system can be neither understood nor reformed if we try to do so on the premise that there is a coherent set of principles upon which to act, rather we must understand the 'technologies' and 'institutional arrangements' that hold the system together (Hunter, 1994, p. 91).

Certain amounts of cultural, economic and social capital are required or governance is rendered into a ritualistic, symbolic and often unstable process. The result is that councils are still dominated by a relatively small elite group of parents and teachers who are recruited rather than elected and have only a vague and distant relationship to the general body of the community. According to Limerick (1995), they are usually influential pressure groups who “become further engaged in the quest for power and control” (p. 229). In Kentucky where more than 85 per cent of schools have site-based decision-making councils, Guskey and Peterson (1995) report that the number of parents running for council elections remains dismally small and only four percent of eligible parents voted in 1992 school council elections. Council composition is very important in determining what power relationships are maintained, reinforced or altered.

It is the task of those governing schools to consider how power is distributed and to endeavour to look beyond the manifest and obvious exercise of power to how school governance reinforces existing patterns of control and normalisation. It is also necessary
to examine who crosses and who maintains boundaries, and how the regulation of various boundaries is managed. The mapping of a school’s ideological environment and the histories and constraints that have formed it are crucial to understanding and maintaining identity (P. Robinson, 1981). Stokes (1998) proposes that the art of survival for an organisation will be in its ability to identify the right boundary to work on—to distinguish an ‘adaptive boundary’ that may ensure survival or a ‘generative boundary’ that will lead to organisational re-generation. Either could maintain or change identity.

This next section examines the construction and maintenance of school identities and leadership. Further, who is it that has the power and influence in these schools and shapes identity? The way signs, symbols, images, visions, stories and ideals are invested with meanings and designated, establishes which metaphor or metaphors come to represent the school. Other, alternative symbols, meanings and viewpoints become subordinated and marginalised (McLaren, 1989).

SCHOOL IDENTITY

Image and Symbols

As Hoyle (1986c) warns, management theory, and much organisational theory, focus on structures and processes but these are the surface features of a school. “The reality of an organisation may inhere much more in the ways in which members utilise and respond to symbols” (p. 167). Schooling has generated its own ‘image folio’ of meanings and symbols, icons and experiences, which are part of the sub-text of its place in western society (Symes & Preston, 1997). In the face of the market pressures of today, ‘impression management’ strategies have become an important part of a school’s
manipulation of consumer choice or what Symes (1998) calls the ‘symbolic economy.’ The symbolic economy is “that part of the economy in which changes in market behaviour can be traced to semiotic phenomenon such as advertising” (p. 134). There is an underlying assumption that follows this, that appearance, the way a school presents itself, its professionalism, is a measure of educational quality. Individual schools then construct their own image folio with which they maintain individual identity, marshal support or counter opposition, increasingly marking “a shift towards a culture of consumption centred around appearance as much as it is performance” (p. 136).

Symbols in this context are objects or actions that become invested with meaning specific to a group. A symbol represents something other than itself. Examples of such symbolic representation are: language, gestures, dress, rituals and artefacts. Schools may have mottos or rallying chants, uniforms, emblems or flags. This symbolic dimension, claims Hoyle (1986c), is more significant for schools than for all other forms of organisation, with the exception of churches, because schools, like churches, have potent and expressive tasks. For these institutions symbols must convey the abstract values essential to their identity. They are the means of communicating and constructing this identity. The importance of this symbolic dimension is often manifested in the disputes about appropriate dress or hairstyle with pupils, or in long drawn out discussions at board level about the colour of paint or the interpretation of particular words in a brochure. A symbol is thus a carrier of connotative meaning in that it goes beyond simply standing for something and conveys, instead, a whole set of feelings, associations and expected responses.
Strategy is a good example of a word that is used in this way. A school that has strategic plans and clearly identified strategies is perceived as forward planning with a modern approach to governance. According to Whipp (1996), however, it is more than just a symbolic word for conveying the importance of a plan, suggesting worthy aims and coherent thinking, it is a key term of modernity. Coming from military terminology and meaning something done out of sight of the enemy, as opposed to the immediate and in sight, which is tactics, it was translated into the world of commerce through the theme of competition. The discourse of strategy conveys the associated images of mechanisms of power and victory for the few, and as it exists in most contemporary organisations, including schools, derives from modes of activity rooted in conflict, competition, hierarchy and social control (Bell, 2002). Weick (2001) also highlights the way the word strategy is used in organisations. He claims strategies are more like maps than plans of action. They are really a theory of past and current success and in fact “any old plan will work because people usually learn by trial and error” (p. 347). Weick quotes de Bono as saying “strategy is good luck rationalised by hind sight” (p. 345).

Symbols can be substitutes for reality and can have different meanings for different groups. Change of leadership or substantial change of governance groups may result in changing symbols or changing interpretations of symbols resulting in mismatches of meaning between those involved. In the case of shared decision-making, consultation may be symbolic and power may only be nominally shared. In this way the manipulation of symbols is used to hide a lack of substance. An effective strategy, or symbolic action, is to change the words in documents. Talk about innovation and change but leave the activity itself untouched.
Leadership can also be considered a fundamentally symbolic activity, a performance (Blackmore & Sachs, 2000). Certainly principals, consciously, or sub-consciously, construct an image for their school. This is most often done with words through vision statements, presentations to staff or parents, or the ‘glossy’ brochure. A new principal may want to modernise the image of the school, evoke an impression of the school as innovative and creative or, alternatively, as conservative and traditional. Through changing the images on the prospectus or the uniform or through the careful use of symbolic words in talking about the school, a particular view of the school is presented.

Hoyle (1986c) gives an example of a school where two sets of symbols were employed. At one level, for largely middle-class parents, the importance of uniforms, high standards of behaviour, firm discipline, and examination success were emphasised. The principal himself symbolised these values—he was tall with a military bearing, formally dressed and spoke with authority. On another level, with staff, flexibility and curriculum change were encouraged, and innovative teachers were deliberately appointed when vacancies occurred. Innovation flourished in this school by the intentional strategy of protecting it with symbolic conservatism.

In the same way management processes in a school can be more important for their symbolic dimensions than for their perceived rationalistic character (Hoyle, 1986c). The use of management terminology suggests a certain level of complexity, skill level, and efficiency. It presents to the wider community a view of the school as a professional, modern organisation that is approaching the business of schooling along the lines of a commercial enterprise. A management approach symbolises a different mode of integration of people and relationships. Hoyle hypothesises that the use of management
language gives a profession, historically seen as suitable for women rather than men, a more masculine and scientific self-image and thereby aims to improve the status and desirability of schooling as a profession. Women are encouraged to reconstruct themselves in a masculinised fashion as “the shift from a public service bureaucratic culture to the privatised set of contractual arrangements allows managers to become ‘real men’ operating in the ‘real’ market place” (Blackmore & Sachs, 2000, p. 14).

Professionalism, or being ‘professional,’ is used to convey an image and to discipline leaders and governance, it is an “occupational strategy, defining entry and negotiating the power and rewards due to expertise, and as an organisational strategy, shaping the patterns of power, place and relationships around which organisations are coordinated” (Clarke & Newman, 1997, p 7). What is more, the emphasis is on the professionalism of expertise, a managerial professionalism where individuals make rational and self-interested choices to meet corporate goals and be accountable, as opposed to the social trustee professionalism or democratic professionalism of advocacy for clients and colleagues as part of professional responsibility and commitment beyond the organisation (Blackmore & Sachs, 2000). “Being professional (technically efficient and competent) therefore did not necessarily mean being a good professional (working for disadvantaged kids)” (p.10). This next section looks at two ways principals may construct their roles and the implications for identity.

**Leadership : Heroic Head or CEO**

The leadership role of school principals has changed substantially in Australia and overseas in the last fifteen years as the metaphor of school as organisation has gained prominence (Angus & Olney, 2001; Caldwell, 1998b; Connors & Sharpe, 1996;
Dimmock, 1999b; Lam, 1996; Ortiz & Ogawa, 2000; Whitty et al., 1998). Schools have found themselves adjusting to market ideologies and imperatives and to changing consumer expectations. Not only has the centrality of the principal’s role as educational leader been challenged but new and increased responsibilities, in the form of administrative, accountability, resourcing, promotion, public relations and performance management tasks, have greatly increased workloads for principals (Lindgard et al., 2002). Principals are expected to exhibit a myriad of skills other than educational ones. For example in the United Kingdom formal qualifications in leadership and management are now required for all school principals (Caldwell, 1998b). Meyer (2002) reminds us that for Weber, the father of bureaucracy, an exceptional ‘charismatic leader’ was the only countervailing force able to challenge the bureaucratic rigidity and routinised tendency of organisations.

Williamson and Galton (1998) discuss four leadership styles: ‘Familial Complementary’ where principals take a head of the family style, establishing consensus but not equal power; a ‘Common-Market’ model where policy and communications are interpretable in more than one way and broad enough to gain everyone’s agreement; ‘Collegial,’ which is very hard to implement in times of increased accountability and competition, but when achieved there is real power sharing and collaboration; and ‘CEO’ where principals are seen as chief executive officers running an enterprise, and schools have in place management teams and strategic plans. The business-orientated models of leadership create a growing gap between the manager and the managed (Ball, 1994), and also what Hargreaves (1994) refers to as ‘balkanisation,’ sub groups that form their own loyalties, agendas and identity. There is often an exaggeration of bureaucratic top-down controls, especially when principals are
struggling or over stressed and, commonly, consolidation of vertical rather than horizontal structures (Whitty et al., 1998). Principals must juggle the competing discourses of democratic professionalism from below and management professionalism from above, learning to judge those below as they in turn are judged by those above. Collegial relationships are also changed as principals network with other principals rather than their own teachers and move out of teachers’ unions and into principals’ associations (Blackmore & Sachs, 2000).

Grace (1995) distinguishes three ways principals have responded to these changes and challenges in the United Kingdom. One group, usually male and professionally orientated toward managerialism, responded by enjoying the perceived empowerment of local management and was “confident about new working relations with governors, and the likely success of their schools in a new competitive market culture in education” (p. 73). These Grace called ‘Headteacher-Managers’. ‘Headteacher-Professionals’, however, often women, were a group concerned about the deterioration in important professional relationships, about the effects of management and market values on educational values, and the distancing they felt from classrooms and colleagues. The third group identified by Grace was the ‘Headteacher-Resistors’. This group sought ways to oppose and subvert those aspects of the reforms they felt threatened their role as educators, even if the battle seemed overwhelming.

In a study by Connors and Sharpe (1996) that asked principals about their roles in self-managing schools in NSW, only three, all secondary principals, out of thirty-eight principals described their role under restructuring as predominantly one of educational leader. The principals in the study reported that over 70 per cent of their time was spent
on management and administrative duties, a lot of it trivial but time consuming. The vast majority of principals, 95 per cent, considered: the workload had increased considerably; they had insufficient time to carry out their responsibilities; there were greater accountability requirements; there was greater uncertainty in their role; they had inadequate training for their changed responsibilities; and they were experiencing greater stress. Whitaker (2003) also found that principals in New Zealand reported greater levels of stress related to work with boards of trustees and that workloads had increased an average of ten hours a week. Other studies, she reports, found the micropolitics of self-managing schools meant principals were more often involved in conflict and spending more time in formal and informal meetings.

These new pressures and changes in role appear to be leading to high turnover rates in principals and fewer people applying for the vacancies of school principal in Australia and overseas (Boyd & Crowson, 2002; Whitaker, 2003). Whitty (1998) claims that since the New Zealand reforms of 1989 there has been a 40 per cent turnover of principals in New Zealand schools and that in Victoria 70 per cent of principals were appointed in the preceding four years to 1995. Whitaker (2003) reports recruitment difficulties in the United States, Ireland, England and New Zealand. Recent newspaper articles in Australia also highlight this trend. The West Australian newspaper (Hewitt, 2002b) reported that four of the top Perth independent schools were looking for principals in April of 2002. The schools, it claims, had only a narrow field to choose from to fill the vacancies as high stress levels and shorter contracts made the positions less attractive. Quoting the chair of the Association of Independent Schools in Western Australia, the article asserts that the average term served by principals has dropped from ten years to five years, and the pressures of the job have increased.
Another independent school principal was quoted as saying:

A move toward schools operating as commercial entities had put more pressure on principals and made it harder to protect student-centred learning. These things remain crucial but it has become harder to protect them as core parts of the vision because of parent accountability requirements, government funding requirements and a move to see schools as needing to operate as commercial entities and coming within the corporate management view. (Hewitt, 2002b)

Horton (2002), speaking at a recent Independent School’s conference, also referred to the problem of principals losing their jobs after only three or four years and stated that this, along with the growing complexity of headship, was deterring people from applying for such positions. However, the problem is not only one for independent schools. The Age (Dunn, 2002) similarly reports a dramatic fall in applications for principalship in government schools. Quoting the president of the Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals, it states that vacancies in schools, which would have attracted twenty to thirty applications a decade ago, are now receiving only around five applications and more vacancies are going unfilled. At the primary level the situation is even worse as only one or two applications are received.

The reasons given in the article for the reluctance to take on principal positions are: the job is too stressful; the responsibility is too much; there is too much administration work; they lose touch with the classroom; relationships with school councils are too difficult; the hours are too long; there is too much emphasis on fund-raising and entrepreneurship; and there is too much demand for extra-curricular commitment. The chief executive officer of the Australian Principals Centre is quoted as saying that the move to self-managing schools has meant that principals have had to take on work of greater range and complexity, and that the shortage of applicants for positions inevitably leads to questions about the quality of those appointed. Further information regarding
this trend may be forth-coming as the *Education Review* of April 2002 (Myton, 2002) reports on a research project being instigated at Deakin University that will examine this apparent decline in the supply of principals in Australia.

Carr (1994) would argue that the stress principals report today, often leading to anxiety and depression, is an inevitable outcome of the ideological tension they find themselves in, situated at a contradictory location between the “bourgeoisie and the “proletariat” (p. 28). Principals, he argues, suffer loneliness and confusion as, in their roles as predominantly managers and supervisors, they have some limited control over ‘labour’ and ‘production’ but do not control the apparatus of production. They are both employees of education departments and yet act as employers demanding accountability and performance from staff and students. They suffer diminished authority professionally but increased autonomy in management areas as their work becomes more bureaucratised and technical in orientation. It is hard not to concur with the Institute for Educational Leadership’s conclusion that the job of principal is “simply not doable … [due to] the lethal mix of long hours, meagre pay, little respect and new accountability measures” (1999, p 12). Dimmock (1999b) and Whitaker (2003) also discuss the contradictory and difficult role of principals positioned at the same time at the head of a school and at the interface between parents, community and system, and yet in many ways simply a line manager acting on behalf of the system.

When schools are considered as communities the leadership role may be in some ways clearer. Principals may be viewed as head of a family, as a headteacher-professional or even Caldwell’s leader on a heroic quest (Caldwell, 1998b), but in general in a community the leadership role is described as one of responsibilities and obligations
orientated to society’s greater good, not to production, efficiency and accountability. In communities, principals call on their stocks of social capital, particularly trust, to legitimise decision-making, not formal authority or sanctions, although they will need to have a network of supporters that is stronger than any network of challengers (Ortiz & Ogawa, 2000).

However, even leadership in a community has its own uncertainties and ambiguities. As Sergiovanni (1996) puts it, the ‘game’ of education may be more like surfing than it is like baseball. Previous understandings and experiences are used to inform intuition and enhance professional judgement, and one learns to ‘ride the wave’ by continuous problem solving and adjustment. Universal rules and their consistent application, and prescribed playing positions, are not as important in communities. In communities values are placed more highly than rules and in more open-ended ways. However, the values, patterns and configurations that make up our schools and communities today are no longer as self-evident as they once were. When school councils are constituted to allow community participation, principals are required to work with a wide range and changing group of individuals. There may be conflicting values or too many interpretations of them, a result perhaps of Enomoto’s (1997) nested communities.

A term, initially coined by the poet John Keats, is today being applied in the field of leadership. This term, ‘negative capabilities,’ (French, Simpson, & Harvey, 2001) is used to describe the ability leaders must have to live with such uncertainties, to ‘surf the waves of our times.’ A leader’s positive capabilities are those usually described in much of the literature on leadership, whether of managerial or professional orientation. They are the skills, competencies, knowledge and technologies of leadership. The dominant
image of a leader is of someone who knows what to do and it is evident through a leader’s activity, work and success. Negative capabilities are those needed to deal with another dimension of leadership that is based on ‘not knowing’. They are the capabilities we have “to live with and to tolerate ambiguity and paradox and to remain content with half knowledge” (French et al., 2001, p. 1). Leaders who have these capabilities work at “the edges of their ignorance” and in the “illusory spaces or intermediate positions between what is and what could be” (p. 2). This allows them to move backward and forward across boundaries and between a state of knowing and not knowing, on Buber’s “narrow rocky ridge” of what cannot be expressed (Friedman, 1993, p. 10). French et al (2001) suggest that the ‘edge’ is a powerful metaphor in organisations. It represents: danger, in ‘dead-lines’; exclusion, in the ‘glass ceiling’; power relations, in ‘toe-the-line’; and success, in ‘leading and cutting edge’.

Negative capabilities may be essential for leaders dealing with the complexities and uncertainties of our postmodern world. As discussed before, schools and management ideology in particular are founded and continue to operate on the positivist certainties of modernist paradigms. In a market environment of competition, school league tables, performance management, and accountability, how are qualities such as patience, observation, imagination, intuition, flexibility, humility, temperance and adapting, to be valued? Leaders are judged on their positive capacity for action not their negative capabilities for contemplation. This next section examines further the expectations about leadership and school governance and how they contribute to the construction and maintenance of school identities.
Identity and Expectations

Statements are made about schools as a whole and expectations are held about them and particular roles assigned to them but there are also distinctive features that make a particular school unique. Apart from physical or geographic features, it is the nature of the expectations of the community and students and where they draw the boundaries, which distinguishes one school from another. Every school has its own ‘high ground’ of accepted procedures, rules, goals and actions, and ‘swampy’ areas of symbols, vague understandings and unstated beliefs (Campbell-Evans, 1993), some of these values will be imposed and some constructed. The school's organisational system of relationships, its communication system and its identity generally remain distinct from the external environment. They develop from the evolution of a core of expectations.

This structure of core expectations is about what makes the school distinct, what beliefs about education are held, what symbols are important, and how people within the school are expected to behave. Although identity is “produced through cultural contact, intrusion, fusion and disjuncture” (Popkewitz, 1997, p. 26), certain attributes become stabilised within the school, and a presumption of consensus develops around them and the resulting identity. Although intrinsically part of what the school is, not all of the attributes are defined or even made explicit. To maintain the perceived consensus, the agreed upon expectations need to be communicated and legitimised by the power-holders and by formal institutionalised procedures (Beavis, 1992).

The least secure holders of identity are individuals. Identification through this means can be successful in small, intimate situations where one individual, usually the principal, is very visible and inspirational. Small community schools often invest
identity in this way. This can be a risky practice as individuals change or disappoint and
the expectations associated with them then become threatened as well. The departure of
a charismatic leader usually results in a reassessment of identity (Starke & Dyck, 1996).
If identity is attached to a particular role or roles, symbols or rituals, and not so much to
the particular person holding the role, the risk for loss of identity is reduced. However,
individuals and groups can change the roles or not perform or interpret them as
expected.

Procedures and policies are more abstract means of holding identity. Such documents
endeavour to prescribe and define correct action thereby protecting identity. As schools
become larger, endeavour to be more professional and deal with greater complexity,
extpectations are more and more contained in verbally fixed forms such as handbooks,
prospectuses, aims, philosophies and policy documents. This limits but does not
altogether prevent reinterpretation or misrepresentation as the vague understandings and
unstated beliefs are never quite fully extracted from the ‘swamp’. Values are the most
secure form of holding and delineating identity. Values are not tied to personalities, to
differences in performance of roles or changes to procedures; however, their very
abstraction makes them difficult to portray and their generality leaves them open to
interpretation by all to suit their own purpose (Beavis, 1992). As Campbell-Evans
(1993) put it, when the culture does not reflect the vision people have it is “likely to
result in many hours in the swamp” (p. 105).

Changes in personnel, pressures from outside or challenges from within can all impact
on school identity. At times there will be disappointment, the unexpected or a conflict in
interpretation that threatens the continued stability of consensus in relation to the core
expectations. These problems can occur at governance level or more generally throughout the school population, with staff or parents, and in the wider community. If not dealt with effectively, they may seriously threaten the stability of the school. Most boards or principals will deal with challenges to identity by adapting to the new expectations or dismissing and ignoring them (Beavis, 1992). There is danger in both of these tactics.

In today’s environment of market ideology and consumerism, where all schools must sell themselves to consumers, success may lay as much with presentation as with substance, a culture shift has arisen as schools move from a paternalistic to a contractual organisation (Blackmore & Sachs, 2000). Schools are re-instituting school uniforms, emphasising discipline, and the ‘traditional’ subjects and values in the response to competition and the image that parents seek (Blake, Smeyers, Smith, & Standish, 1998; Symes, 1998). Adapting or changing a school's image or its core expectations may bring about a new consensus but irrevocably change the school's identity. This often means two visions of school identity, the new one established to meet the demands of outside pressures or a group of challengers from within, and the old vision of identity held by those uninvolved in the desire for change, perhaps even a majority of the community, who then feel excluded. This can result in further conflict and challenges from those resenting change. Unless explanations persuade otherwise, ignoring or dismissing forces for change will also be unsuccessful. It will not satisfy those who feel their expectations have not been met. This leads to groups leaving the school, conflict and continued instability (Beavis, 1992).
In this next section, I discuss the notion of social capital and the social networks that establish relationships between individuals and groups. Social capital is an important factor underlying the identity of institutional structures, such as schools and an important resource in the foundation of the schools in the study.

**Social Capital**

A concept important to communities and recognised as such in educational sociology is the notion of social capital (Coleman, 1990). Social capital refers to features of social organisations, such as trust, social networks and norms that improve the productivity of individuals and groups and that help form identity. Social capital is productive in that it makes possible certain achievements that would not be possible without it. Increasing skills and capabilities in individuals so they can act in new ways creates human capital. Human capital is a quality of individuals while social capital is created when individuals or groups relate in ways that facilitate new actions. It is a less tangible concept as the term refers to opportunities that are created and embodied in the ‘relations’ between people and in a variety of social relationships and contexts.

Like the physical framework or structure of an organisation, social capital is not one-dimensional. Networks link most community members in multiple ways but vary in density and complexity from group to group. Braatz and Putnam (1996) hypothesise that democratic, horizontally-structured organisations constitute more productive forms of social capital than vertical, hierarchical ones. Furthermore, place-based social capital, such as that created through neighbourhood networks, will be more effective than function-based social capital created in work situations or based on formal roles. Some forms of social capital bridge social divides, while other forms reinforce and parallel them.
Woolcock (2000) gives three dimensions to social capital, ‘bonding, bridging and linking’ social capital. Bonding social capital is the relationships with people who are similar or like you. Bridging social capital comes from the relationships to people who are not like you, who are not the same age, generation, ethnic background, or economic group but are people recognised as useful to have in your network. Linking social capital comes from the sort of relationships people, particularly poor people, have with those in positions of power. Poor people typically have an abundance of bonding capital, little bridging and almost no linking capital. As with more conventional capital, those who have social capital tend to accumulate more (R. D. Putnam et al., 1993). However, unlike other forms of capital, unique features of social capital are: supply increases rather than decreases with use, supplies become depleted when not used, it is most often produced as a by-product of other social activities, and social capital is a public ‘good’. Like all public goods, social capital relies heavily on volunteers and the civic minded for its production but tends to be undervalued and under-supplied by private agents. Conversely, financial and physical capital is highly valued and is nearly always seen as a private ‘good’.

While there have been increases in financial, physical and human capital, Coleman (1994) contends there has been generally a decrease in social capital in western societies. The increase in human capital is the result of the increase in educational attainment in the population while the decrease in social capital is evidenced by the decline in many familiar forms of civic engagement and social connectedness (Braatz & Putnam, 1996; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Distrust and alienation have played an important role in this decline. Research indicates the importance of both human and
social capital in schools for countering alienation and building trust. Those children whose parents are both intelligent and skilled (human capital) and involved and interested in their development (social capital) are said to be more successful at school and achieve better educational outcomes (Braatz & Putnam, 1996; Munn, 1993b; S. B. Sarason, 1996). It is this sort of research and these kinds of conclusions that have been used to support the restructuring agenda of devolution and school-based management.

Forms of social capital linked to improved educational outcomes are that of community engagement where students are linked to their communities through particular programmes, and parent-school engagement where families are directly involved with their children’s education. However, creating new social capital is much more difficult than simply redirecting existing social capital through structures such as school councils. The concern here is that, as the work of Putnam et al. (1993) shows, those rich in social capital may just get richer and those poor in social capital may be further marginalised when educational reform relies heavily on pre-existing stocks of social capital. Further the school’s role as the bridge from one kind of community to the other, from the gemeinschaft of the family and local community that has been a resource of social capital to the gesellschaft of the wider world more dependent upon human capital, has become much more challenging as schools now confront more fragile family units and weakened community networks.

Although governance processes in self-managing or autonomous schools clearly draw on social capital for formation and functioning, these sources may not be as rich or as stable as in the past. School councils or boards today are generally made up of relative strangers and though created to address common needs and deal with common issues,
stocks of social capital are not distributed equally and can easily be destroyed or depleted. Trust and distrust are crucial factors in these processes and are discussed later in this chapter. Strengthening communities, building links with parents and creating and maintaining social capital is not a simple task. It will not merely be a matter of establishing school council structures and expecting social capital to hold relationships and goals together. What sort of human and social capital is available, whether bridging, bonding or linking, and who has it, will be important concerns to consider. This research addresses the issue of whether schools can continue to generate and maintain social capital when many of the characteristics of professionalism and marketisation and the advocated qualities of ‘good’ management practices and approaches to governance work against such an essential resource of community (Brown et al., 2000).

In this next section, I discuss one of the resources of social capital, trust, and how it is maintained and depleted. I also examine how conflict results from loss of trust when espoused values are incongruent with what people do.

**Trust and Conflict**

In society at large broad patterns of values and norms are embedded in the public and private institutions that then shape a general ‘baseline of trust’, a shared set of expectations and predispositions for those interacting with these institutions (Creed & Miles, 1996). Social science researchers agree that this baseline of trust and trusting behaviour are essential in managing the networks and relationships within and across community, institutional and organisational boundaries (Coleman, 1990; Kipnis, 1996; Lewicki & Bunker, 1996). Trust is a form of social capital and as such is a resource whose supply increases rather than decreases with use. Trust essentially involves
prediction about future behaviour. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1997) hold that a climate of trust exists in schools and other collectives that allows them to function. However, the importance and existence of trust is generally taken for granted until it is destroyed. A climate of trust is essential to cooperation and correspondingly a climate of cooperation develops further trust. Trust forms the basis for legitimacy and influence and, thus, it connects leaders to followers.

Trust is also based on the assumption that people are both able and willing to use power for the common good. R. D Putnam et al. (1993) describe such trust found in communities, as ‘thick’ trust. Thick trust comes from the familiarity possible with the dense networks of social exchange that individuals develop in small communities. In such communities people are more confident that not only will trusting be required but it will also be exchanged rather than exploited. In organisations, conversely, having to trust others can be vexing. It detracts from autonomy, accentuates dependency, and creates unwelcome uncertainty and anxiety. Many people prefer to avoid or escape from such trusting relationships, even though to be trusted means you are capable of managing resources that people value and means you have power over them (Kipnis, 1996).

In all relationships trust is in constant tension with distrust. Trust is neither embedded nor chosen but is instead learned and reinforced as a product of ongoing interactions and experiences (Powell, 1996). If there is distrust between those involved in governance, differences will be difficult to resolve and there will be an inability to unite behind a clear vision for the school or organisation. A high trust culture is necessary for information from the ‘chalkface’ to reach those attempting to lead the organisation.
Without this trust culture governors or senior leaders intervene in management and seek to control areas in which they have limited knowledge or expertise (Shaw, 1997), and organisational communications get watered down, subverted or ignored (Meyer, 2002). Trust is based partly on faith and partly on previous experience. However, it is more easily and rapidly destroyed than faith. It is built incrementally but can be lost in a single event. Trust is also lost through inconsistencies and deception. Such perceived activities raise doubts, particularly about motives, and it then becomes very hard to rebuild trust. Every error continues to reinforce distrust and when those in authority distance themselves from negative outcomes or attempt to put ‘positive spins’ on mistakes, distrust is further reinforced.

Trust violations can result in two general categories of harm—a damaged sense of civic order and damage to identity (Bies & Tripp, 1996). Damaged civic order results from the perception of rule violations, ethical violations, boundary violations or abuse of authority. Those who then take the initiative can assume control of new boundaries and authority but without legitimacy civic order will not be fully reinstated. Damage to identity occurs when individuals feel they are the targets of interpersonal attacks that undermine their reputation and social identity. These can be in the form of public criticism, unfair accusations, or insults to themselves or the collective. Endangering trust can be costly to all. In a climate of distrust people adopt self-protective behaviours, are unwilling to take risks, don’t pass on information, avoid situations that might involve betrayal, and often insist on costly sanctioning and legalistic mechanisms to ensure compliance (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1997). Trust repair is time-consuming. It is almost impossible to engineer through management strategies or formal procedures. In fact, when trust problems are based in perceived value incongruence, such procedures
often emphasise a greater sense of distance and differentiation (Sitkin & Stickel, 1996). Rebuilding trust needs to be a two-way process. Some trust violations and harm are irreversible (Bies & Tripp, 1996). Shaw (1997) concludes that while new leadership may not always be necessary after a breakdown in trust, in many cases those responsible for the loss in trust, or those suffering the loss of trust, cannot repair the situation and leave.

Crisis and conflicts generally result from or are the cause of loss of trust. The magnitude of the crisis and the damage to trust are linked. It is during and after such a crisis that “the most marked adjustments occur in perceptions of loyalty and betrayal, friendship and treachery” (Webb, 1996, p. 289). The greater the crisis, the greater is the loss of trust. In times of crisis trust plays a pivotal role in who and where support is sought. The temptation is to “circle the wagons, rely on a band of true believers … and pick from a narrow band of advisers” (p. 292). Any failure to provide the perceived necessary support will be viewed, not as inability, but as betrayal.

Conflicts also result where there are incompatibilities between desired goals and interests. There may be clashes between those with professional or expert orientations and administrators with bureaucratic orientations, or between the different expectations of schools held by various groups of students and parents. The issue can be whose authority or expertise counts. Conflicts divide those who wish to maintain the status quo from those who wish to change it and consolidate power and influence within particular groups. Restructured schools are sites of such conflict, where different voices are brought into the governance of these schools and where power and influence are distributed among individuals who have traditionally assumed more passive decision
making roles (Henkin et al., 1999; Johnson & Scollay, 2001). However, attempting to solve such differences through imposing a “template of technical rationality” may submerge but not solve the inherent conflicts that occur over authority, values and meaning (Jacobson, Hickox, & Stevenson, 1996, p. ix).

School-based decision-making councils are portrayed as being based on a horizontal interaction model in which all participants have an equal voice, where power is shared between faculty and community members, and where trust, support and impartiality characterise decision making. Johnson and Scollay (2001) found, “in reality school-based decision-making councils suffer from power struggles, time management problems, deficiencies in expertise, cultural constraints, avoidance of responsibility and participation, low motivation and the inability to implement decisions” (p. 48). They operate more as vertical teams where principals have the most influence and parents have the least. Council decisions tend to be made by a ‘powerful group’, not on a rationale of what is best for the school but often on other agendas. Others members feel alienated, powerless, confused about their roles, and uncertain about processes to resist. Although community conflicts in schools which constitute revolts may only involve a small subset of the population with the majority not active on either side (Coleman, 1990), it can seriously affect decision making processes, effective functioning and the willingness for others to participate (Johnson & Scollay, 2001).

In cases of parent-run schools, such as charter and some independent schools, conflict may even occur more often than in government schools. These schools have usually consciously made personal relations and the building of a total community part of their purpose. There is a great intensity of personal relationships and Firestone (1976) found
a real minimising of distinctions between roles and the blurring of usual boundaries. Definition of roles is imprecise in these schools because the ideology emphasizes the legitimacy of consumer preferences and thus, in some sense, undercuts professional authority. The power of parents is increased but without the accompanying legitimacy and influence in the view of teachers and some other parents. This results in an increased likelihood of schisms and power struggles occurring between parents and professionals and also between groups of parents with different expectations. Firestone (1975) found that internal conflict resulted in an average life-span for schools of eighteen months for parent-run schools in the United States at that time.

Working in such schools is very demanding and survival is tenuous. The job is stressful as parents and teachers try to adjust to varying expectations. The responsibility is great as principals often have increasing legal and community obligations. Relationships with school councils are often difficult and the working hours excessively long. High turnover rates in principals, teachers and groups of parents are common. The disruption to boundaries can be so stressful that the conflict spills out into the wider community. A recent example of this was reported in the *West Australian* newspaper (Hewitt, 2002a). It reported that the State’s top judge had become embroiled in controversy when he sent a letter to principals and school council heads around Australia. In the letter Chief Justice David Malcolm criticised the treatment of Guildford Grammar School’s principal by its school council. Widespread conflict like this cannot be contained and usually somebody has to leave. Though purging dissenters can leave the schools more unified, exhaustion, loss of trust and loss of manpower outweigh the benefits (Firestone, 1976). For those remaining, the preservation of morale and rebuilding of trust may depend on finding, or inventing, groups or individuals to blame.
The disruption to personal relations in times of conflict becomes much more disturbing because of their affective quality and because the governance structure has made them important to the school’s identity and purpose (Firestone, 1976). As with many non-profit groups that involve volunteers there is an assumption of consonance and cohesion and a belief that those involved are motivated by values rather than wealth creation or the accumulation of power (Lewis, French, & Steane, 1996). Conflict and discomfort usually have no channels through which they can be expressed and the underflow of such elements erodes structures and undermines trust.

This value-base of schools and other ‘grassroots’ and non-profit organisations means they exist in “an environment of contradictory institutional logics” (Stone, 1996, p. 64) where the cultural dimension of their governance and value systems is in conflict with the structural interests of the corporate, competitive and market ideologies that increasingly impact upon them. Market discourses replace those of mutuality, social rights and common cause, with the discourses of individual self-interest, self-help, private initiative, and supply and demand taking new precedence (Brown et al., 2000).

CONCLUSION
As Usher and Edwards (1994) contend, the meanings we make about schools are in the stories we tell, in the plots, the narratives, the characters, villains and heroes, and most importantly in the style, the set of metaphors that we select to animate the text (p. 145). Individuals all have unique images of themselves and their schools and as a result particular schools are constructed out of these images. Schools are deliberately created and constantly reconstructed by the every day interactions of those involved at all levels but particularly through leadership and governance.
According to Rose (1999), the modern selves that have become attached to the new emerging images of governance develop from a matrix of power and knowledge and through the application of expertise. The primary economic image offered to the modern citizen is not that of producer but of consumer, channelled through institutional practices, such as schools, in the name of efficiency, profitability and adaptability. As with human relations, the new conception of organisations enables the techniques of government of the internal world of the enterprise to be made consistent with this aim. Like Rose we need to look at the shaping of self in its engagement with the past and the present in order to learn more about how power, influence and identity are manifested.

The schools in my study drew on the social capital of parents and the community to form their school councils and on the authority and power of principals to function. They operated on a baseline of trust. Loss of trust and conflict over boundaries and values resulted in crises and divisions. This study investigated how different governance processes were perceived as affecting or changing the identity of schools. In the next chapter the methodology and research design of the study are described in detail. I also explain how the research process explores the issues of leadership, boundaries, power, identity, trust and conflict identified from the literature, in the context of school councils and governance structures.
CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

Research is one form of textual representation and practise, and within it is constructed its own version of reality and truth. The particular textual strategies chosen to undertake the research are also an outcome of the researcher's lived experiences and orientations (Usher & Edwards, 1994). It follows, therefore, that as researchers positioned in the postmodern moment we operate within the constraints and possibilities of subjectivity and should recognise that what is said is our own construction and cannot be value-free in either its representation or interpretation of the research (Guba, 1990). In a postmodern context this research is exploring, by listening to the discrete voices of those found within such constructions, the unresolved tensions between schools as organisations with identifiable structures and schools as communities with varied and changing constituents.

In the next section I describe the use of frameworks to further consider schools as organisations or schools as communities. These frameworks focus the research in its interpretations of issues of leadership, boundaries, power, identity, trust and conflict.
identified from the literature and in the discussion of their relevance to the context of school councils and governance structures.

FRAMEWORKS

Frameworks are the conceptual tools researchers use to make sense of what they see and explain it to others. Weick (2001) describes the work of researchers as resembling cartographers.

There is some terrain that mapmakers want to represent and they use various modes of projection to make this representation … It is the job of the sensemaker to convert a world of experience into an intelligible world. That person’s job is not to look for the one true picture that corresponds to a pre-existing, preformed reality. (p. 9)

Thus frameworks are the tools researchers choose to make their ‘maps’ and represent the terrain of their research. Any situation can be framed in many ways and the choice of a particular framework will affect what is projected and what is ignored and, therefore, the scope and content of the research. Frameworks are a particular tool for giving one view of reality. “Our perceptual and representational frameworks are virtual theories of the possible” (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997, p. vii).

The intention of this research is not to produce any definitive theory or map of school governance but to critique three frameworks that may be useful for consideration of the issues involved. These frameworks also facilitate the interpretation of the empirical data. They are: governance as phases of development (Wood, 1992), governance as levels of empowerment (Limerick, 1995; Thody, 1999), and governance as the management of dilemmas (Cuban, 1996; Dimmock, 1999a). My contention is that these three conceptual frameworks are capable of complementing each other to provide a
means of considering schools as both organisations and communities. Together they offer greater insights into the processes of school governance within particular schools, as well as being applicable to school governance more generally.

**Governance as Phases of Development**

The consideration of governance as phases of development comes very much from the view of schools as organisations. Several writers on organisational theory touch on the idea of cycles or stages in organisational development (Baum, 1996; Block, 1998; Hassard, 1996; Starke & Dyck, 1996; Wood, 1992). Hassard refers to the ‘archaic’ or pre-Christian notion of the cycle as the basic time metaphor with events unfolding in recurring rhythms of seasons, life and death, and how the Christian era abandoned this circular view of a bounded world for that of direct linear progression and the historical process. Modern industrial cultures, he argues, have been embedded with these conceptions of irreversibility, progress and objective, measurable time. “The past is unrepeatable, the present is transient and the future is infinite and exploitable” (p. 583).

Change is viewed in the sense of motion toward growth and thus involves stages of development.

Baum’s (1996) model uses a developmental metaphor. Organisations, he posits, start with an initial stock of assets, such as goodwill, beliefs, commitment, resources and trust, and these buffer them from early failure. The larger and more comprehensive this stock, the longer the buffering lasts. Then there is an adolescent period with a need to generate or regenerate resource flow. If organisations are unable to establish clear roles and routines and stable relationships, then they will fail at this stage. However, if they survive adolescence, there will be a period of stability. This stability continues until the
liabilities of ageing occur bringing an increasing likelihood of a breakdown in structures and organisational death. This comes about because the environment into which an organisation is initially founded changes over time and because tendencies for inertia and inflexibility come with age. These erode alignments, leaving the organisation vulnerable.

Block (1998), writing from a governance perspective, claims organisations and their boards experience various developmental stages which influence numbers and types of board members, although he does not explore the concept further. Wood (1992), also writing from a governance perspective, provides a model (see Figure 5.1), which is theoretically linked to the metaphors of organisational life cycles as put forward by Greiner (1972) and Weick (1979) or the open and closed systems of Scott (1987). Wood claims, however, that her model is broader in scope than these narrower perspectives and is more compatible with Parsons’ (1966) view of social systems as dependent upon cultural systems. Wood identifies four main phases of board development in non-profit organisations. She also cites some evidence that these phases are repeated in cycles.
Table 5.1: Cycles of Board Behaviour- Key Characteristics of Operating Phases (First Cycle)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operating Phase</th>
<th>Member Characteristics</th>
<th>Board Operating Structure</th>
<th>Board Role</th>
<th>Board Behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Founding</td>
<td>Strongly, even morally, committed to solving a social problem</td>
<td>Collegial, collective; committee activity negligible</td>
<td>Has agency initially but is later eclipsed by persona of owner executive</td>
<td>During collective phase, high energy and involvement until ownership of agency is transferred to executive; in subsequent sustaining phase, low energy, low involvement, deference to executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supermanaging</td>
<td>Personally interested in promoting a businesslike approach to board affairs but also committed to mission</td>
<td>Committees activated and meet at length</td>
<td>Copes with crisis by putting agency’s house in order; dual roles as board member and program volunteer may be discouraged</td>
<td>Highly involved or meddling; informal sources supplement information from executive; occasional overrides of executive recommendations and decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate</td>
<td>Dominated by middle-aged professional’s attitudes and values: goals and bureaucratic structure and process emphasised more than mission</td>
<td>All committees meet regularly and report; meetings shortened</td>
<td>Strives to exemplify idealised board of Fortune 500 corporations</td>
<td>Supportive of executive; increasing reliance on information and recommendations from executive and senior staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratifying</td>
<td>Interest in associating with other prestigious members in support of a good cause</td>
<td>Committees in perfect order on paper but meet irregularly and briefly</td>
<td>Provides financial support and prestige</td>
<td>Low energy and minimal involvement; ratifies executive’s recommendations; attendance down; some resignations; unable to respond to crisis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Wood (1992) called the first phase of board development ‘founding’. The founding period has two sub-phases, the collective and the sustaining phases. In the collective phase there is a great sense of mission and fervour related to the worthiness of a cause.
Board members are personally involved in the service that is offered. For example, their children attend the school, and there is a high level of dedication as well as personal, and even financial, investment. One or two individuals become strongly identified with the organisation and operate as a de facto executive. No distinction is made between policy and administration. In the second sub-phase, the sustaining phase, one of these individuals (in a school’s case, the principal) gains visibility in the community as the spokesperson for the organisation and ownership passes to an executive role as represented by this individual. The board has confidence in this person and feels the organisation is in capable hands. There may be one or two committees, usually financial, but otherwise the board functions as a committee of the whole. Increasingly, however, the individual as executive gains knowledge and thus power that the board does not have. The board then feels a disciplined approach to governance is now necessary.

There is often a crisis, frequently a financial one, that initiates a reassessment of the leader and the board’s role, and a ‘super-managing’ phase begins. A new kind of board member is now recruited, one who has skills and experience with organisations and boards. Wood (1992) found this new kind of recruit was typically, although not exclusively, a middle-aged professional with expertise in business, law, or other fields that equipped them to act as consultants to the staff. These new members examine problems and solutions through a rational process in which the rhetoric of goals, objectives and results supersede that of a mission. More time is spent on board and committee business. Committees meet regularly and report in detail to the board. Other staff may become vocal as they perceive the board is less responsive to the leader’s bidding. The board seeks information from outside and even overrides the leader’s
recommendations and decisions. There can be factions within the board as veteran board members feel the newer members are not willing to be practically involved but only want to manage. The executive begins to perceive the board as meddling and becomes the focus of the developing tensions. They may resign or be forced to resign. Other board members and factions in the community go with them. In a few cases, however, the executive changes his/her management style to suit the board’s ideal and remains as leader.

Wood (1992) called the next phase in board development ‘corporate’. In the corporate phase board members begin to feel over-committed. The energy and time needed to bring about what they perceive as necessary changes are demanding. However, with change achieved (with a new leader or revamped old one), this level of involvement in management is now seen as micromanaging and is no longer deemed necessary. Roles are clarified and re-defined. Policy-making is identified as the province of the board and separated out from administration, which is now solely the responsibility of the professionals. Professionals implement board policy. Board members reduce the time spent in decision-making and rely on the knowledge and recommendations of the professionals. The focus for the board is on long-term planning and finances. Over time this corporate style becomes routinised and the balance of power is shifted back to the chief executive (CEO).

Over time this corporate style evolves into what Wood (1992) calls the ‘ratifying’ phase of board development. There is inertia and a dependence on professionals. Processes for decision-making are ritualised and staff recommendations are ratified without question. This style has similarities to the sustaining phase of the founding period, except that
now leaders (CEO) are managerially-orientated and view themselves as professionals rather than on a mission. These leaders derive great satisfaction from the trust and freedom enjoyed in this phase and resent any attempts to curtail it. Attendance at board meetings declines and members become too busy to give a sustained level of commitment. Recruitment becomes more difficult.

In Wood’s (1992) model a new cycle results from a crisis derived from either internal or external forces. External forces include government policies, funding or other environmental pressures. Stakeholders feel the board has not been doing its job and should have seen these problems coming. They also may feel the board has lost touch with them and the original mission. The crisis that threatens the survival of the organisation then brings to the fore two or three individuals who devote extraordinary amounts of time and energy into saving the situation. The organisation returns to operating in a similar manner to the collective phase of the founding period although it soon begins to proceed through the other phases once more with some slight variations.

Wood’s (1992) research was carried out with 21 incorporated youth agencies in the United States. These agencies were considered small, having less than 50 employees, and had been in existence from 9 to 136 years. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with the executive director and the chairperson, or other members of the board, of each agency. Wood concludes that:

Following a nonrecurring founding period, a board typically progresses through a sequence of three distinct operating phases and then experiences a crisis that initiates the whole sequence again. During each cycle board members become progressively less interested in the agency’s mission and programmes and more interested in the board’s bureaucratic procedures and the agency’s reputation for success in the community. (p. 139)
Wood claims the value of her model is as a diagnostic tool to enable boards, executives or consultants to analyse and identify a particular board’s perspective and potential. Although the sequence of movement through the operating phases is predictable, the timing of changes is not so predictable and there is no data to indicate whether intervention could alter the sequence of the phases or otherwise affect the cycle.

I chose a framework based on Wood’s model as one means to help explain the data and to view school governance processes (see Figure 6.1 in Chapter 6). My own experiences and that of others indicated that it offered a useful way of considering the issues and changes identified. As well as the view of governance as having phases of development during which members view their role differently, this research also focuses on the issue of community empowerment and how this aspect is reflected in the data. The following section discusses two community empowerment frameworks from the literature.

**Governance as Levels of Community Empowerment**

The community empowerment framework used in this research is developed from the work of Thody (1999) and Limerick (1995) to assist in the consideration of schools as communities. Thody presents two models of school governance in the United Kingdom, the *Political Servant* model (see Figure 5.1), which represents her view of the current roles of school governors and the *Community Democrat* model (see Figure 5.2), which is her proposed model for future school governance. The political servant model is derived from the ideas of Deem et al. (1995) and portrays governors’ powers and authority as being derived from central government and their role as unpaid servants undertaking tasks previously the responsibility of government employees. Thody claims that governors do not generally have the micro-political skills they need to manage in an
environment in which educationalists feel more comfortable and expert than they do. Principals and senior staff not only act as ‘gatekeepers’ to the relevant information and knowledge, but generally institute governor training thus ensuring they become socialised into accepting the professionals’ viewpoints. As Limerick’s (1995) research also shows, governors are reluctant to become involved in teaching and learning decisions.

Thody’s (1999) proposed model for school governance for the new millennium (see Figure 5.2) introduces the idea of elected governors acting as community democrats. The governors’ authority is to emanate from their basis in community support, as representatives mandated to advance community views. This would legitimise the position of governing bodies and enhance their ability to undertake macro-political and micro-political activity and to extend their role into the teaching and learning areas. Training and induction programmes and governing board pressure groups need to be instituted to strengthen their position and status to achieve this. Thody’s (1999) preferred model assigns a more balanced division of power and roles to members of governing bodies, particularly less emphasis on a management focus and a greater focus on pedagogy.
Figure 5.1: Political Servant: 20th Century

Figure 5.2: Education’s Community Democrat: 21st Century

Limerick’s (1995) framework (see Figure 5.3) for community involvement describes three dimensions to school-community interactions. For Limerick’s *Busybodies, antibodies, nobodies—or somebodies*, these dimensions are: domains for interactions to take place, complexity of decision-making, and stages of involvement.

**Figure 5.3: Dimensions of School-Community Relations**

![Figure 5.3: Dimensions of School-Community Relations](image)


The domains for volunteers from the community to interact in schools are given as: the support area, where most volunteer activities have traditionally been situated; administrative areas, which relate to running the school; and educational areas, which relate to curriculum and student learning. The decision making dimension refers to the complexity of decisions, where routine and repetitive decisions are less complex and policy decisions are the most complex. The third dimension is the stage or level at which community members may have input into such decisions. Are they asked to assist
with implementing decisions largely already made, consulted and asked to give some advice before decisions are made, or do they actually make real decisions? Limerick (1995) describes the interrelatedness of these dimensions by explaining how one interaction may involve decision-making of a policy nature, but be in regard to an issue that is considered peripheral to the core business of the school, while yet another may involve assisting on a routine basis but on a key educational issue such as curriculum change. It is the interactions that occur in the policy area that relate to educational issues and are at the highest level of decision making that he predicts will produce the most conflict and tension.

Although the frameworks of phases of development and community empowerment are satisfactory tools for interpreting these particular aspects of the study, they do not encompass satisfactorily the complexity of issues arising from other areas, such as those of leadership, boundaries, power, identity, trust and conflict. These demand a different paradigmatic framework. The theme of tensions was identified during the interview process and added as the data were analysed. The framework of dilemmas was needed to investigate the areas of leadership, boundaries, power, identity, trust and conflict and the resulting tensions.

**Governance as the Management of Dilemmas**

The notion of dilemmas arises from the sociological conception of ‘contradiction’ which postulates: that social organisations are sites of possible or actual conflicts of interest; that personality structures are split and convoluted; that an individual’s conceptualisation's are ambivalent and dislocated; that motives are mixed and contradictory; and that the formulation of practical action is beset by dilemmas (Winter, 1982). Unlike the original use of the term, as a choice between two unfavoured
outcomes, the educational literature talks of multiple choices arising out of crisis and contradiction (Berlak & Berlak, 1981; Blackmore, Kenway, Willis, & Rennie, 1996; Dimmock, 1999b; Glatter, 1996; Moeller, 1996). For Cuban (1992), “dilemmas are conflict-filled situations that require choices because competing, highly prized values cannot be fully satisfied” (p. 6). Dilemmas look and feel like problems but unlike problems there are no satisfactory technical solutions. Dilemmas are complex, messy and insoluble, and involve not only making choices but also recognising that the bargains that are struck among values “have to be renegotiated again and again because they are so deeply embedded in who we are and the practice of teaching, administration and research” (p. 7). Berlak and Berlak (1981) argue, “The dilemmas are not to be conceived as entities that may be physically located in persons’ heads or in society. Rather they are linguistic constructions that, like lenses, may be used to focus upon the continuous process of persons acting in the social world” (p. 111).

Educational and social problems are untidy and ambiguous. If we endeavour to understand the messy and unsolvable problems of governance by applying rational, scientific thinking or imposing the ‘templates’ of procedures, rules and structures, value conflicts are submerged and tensions surface (Cuban, 1992). To manage tensions and dilemmas, the compromises, inconsistencies and contradictions that result have to be better understood. Survival may depend on the ability to disentangle value conflicts and reconcile the competing claims embedded in the practice of educational administration. Several writers have considered school administration and leadership from the framework of dilemmas (Connors & Sharpe, 1996; Cuban, 1996; Dimmock, 1999b; Glatter, 1996; Lam, 1996; Manno et al., 1998; Moeller, 1996; Newton, 1996; O'Donoghue & Dimmock, 1998).
Dimmock (1999b) argues that intense and enduring tensions result from the changes integral to restructuring imperatives. The transfer of tasks previously undertaken elsewhere and the imposition of new responsibilities threaten traditional practices, roles and relationships and present school governance with a multitude of dilemmas. According to Dimmock, there are three main dimensions to restructuring and school reform: changes to teaching and learning and the core technology of schooling; changes in the occupational situation of educators; and changes in the distribution of power and governance processes. New processes and new ways of working accompany the introduction of new structures, such as school councils or charters, and dilemmas arise from such changes and in the choices that have to be made. These may be choices between the conflicting interests of parents as stakeholders or consumers or participants, between teachers as professionals and between differing community expectations. Dilemmas are inevitable with the moves to devolution, diversity and choice, and the drive for autonomous schools are at the same time accompanied by demands for more regulation, accountability and standardisation. There is a need to confront the tensions between these dimensions and the dilemmas they produce, or those involved in governance end up placating the most vociferous interests or making largely cosmetic changes rather than achieving core goals or meeting the needs of those without powerful voices.

Dilemmas identified by O'Donoghue & Dimmock (1998) and Dimmock (1999b) are those that come from these tensions between a principal’s role as educational leader and as a corporate manager; whether to focus on professional matters and the core activities of the school or to concentrate on a growing administrative workload; whether the school is to be conceived as a business organisation or something distinctly different; or
whether equity is to be traded off in the name of efficiency and competition. Further tensions that create dilemmas for school leaders in restructuring environments in Australia are: between their roles as heads of self-managing schools and their strategic positions as line managers between central office and staff; between their role as leading professional and as administrator-bureaucrat; as gatekeeper and preserver of identity and as initiator of changes; and between their position as both employer and employee. From a different perspective, leaders are also expected to move from the autocratic, ‘heroic’ style of leadership to a collaborative and participatory style (Dimmock, 1999b). They are no longer to be at the head but at the centre of a complex web of interconnected networks engaging the different groups in meaningful participation in school governance.

Cuban (1996) identifies three common types of dilemmas facing educational administrators: dilemmas to do with the purpose of schooling; dilemmas over change strategies; and dilemmas about the outcomes of schooling. Dilemmas of purpose arise when parents, employers and taxpayers want schools to fulfil inherently competing functions. They require schools and teachers to socialise children to fit in and become useful citizens and able employees while at the same time they demand that teachers be encouraging students to be questioning, problem solving and independent thinkers, to follow the rules but be flexible in new situations. Those involved in education face such dilemmas as they endeavour to satisfy differing expectations while dealing with competition for students' time and attention, and with declining resources and support. Dilemmas over change strategies arise from: which changes to make, are they to be whole school or classroom level, structural or pedagogical; which ones come first; and how to evaluate them. Dilemmas over outcomes are related to curriculum and
assessment, what should be included and who decides, how is it best taught and how is it assessed.

Moeller (1996) found two general areas into which dilemmas of school leadership could be classified: dilemmas related to loyalty and dilemmas related to issues of control and steering. Dilemmas of loyalty arose when principals found it difficult to decide whom to support in conflict situations between groups or individual parents, students, teachers, central office personnel, or pedagogical values. Dilemmas of control or steering arose from tensions between administrative control strategies and professional autonomy, change and stability, and support or evaluation. Glatter (1996) identifies a further area of dilemmas that arise from the role of parents as both clients and formal decision-makers sitting on school councils, as both provider and consumer, and as volunteers overseeing the work of professionals.

To manage dilemmas we need to reframe them in terms that distinguish them from technical problems and allow some resolution or at least management of the conflicting choices. According to Glatter (1996), it may not be a choice between right and wrong but between right and right. Modernist thinking has within it the inherent belief that for every problem there is a solution and many people involved in school governance have felt guilty or inadequate when unable to resolve problems that have really been dilemmas. Those involved in school governance will need to look for the ‘negative capabilities’ (French et al., 2001) that are necessary to live with the dilemmas, ambiguities, conflicting choices and contradictory demands faced by schools today. The postmodern paradigms of uncertainty, multiple choices and realities will be of more use in dealing with dilemmas than are the technical, rational approaches suggested by most administration manuals.
RESEARCH DESIGN: SUB-TEXT

Qualitative inquiry, having an emphasis on description, reflection and interpretation, was considered the most suitable form of research for this study and its location within the postmodern present. The research investigates and explores issues and dilemmas of governance, and how they may vary within different contexts. Establishing any perspective of such issues requires access to views from different sources, as the experience of them will vary for different people at different times (Patton, 1990). This inquiry was designed to describe and analyse some of the processes of school governance at work in selected sites and to contribute to an understanding of what issues are significant and relevant for the participants.

Gubrium (1997) sees such qualitative methods as being on the “lived border of reality and representation,” (p. 101). It is interpretation that makes this reality come alive but “one’s vantage point in relation to that border shapes what one might observe” (p. 102). The point I am making is that researchers need to be aware that being close to the border that is in relationship to people or issues may reduce the clarity of what is seen. Whereas, viewing things from a distance, where involvement may not be so personal or may be seen to be more ‘objective,’ may give the impression of objects, events, actions, and processes being more distinct, solid or self evident than they might otherwise be (p. 102).

With the complexity of school organisations, case studies were considered one of the best ways to describe, reflect and interpret the nuances and peculiarities of the individual schools in the study (P. Robinson, 1981). The many aspects of several cases
were examined to clarify any myopic view, to inform ‘theory in action’ and to investigate how espoused theories of organisational behaviour differentiated from ‘theories in use’. Scrutinising the particularised case allowed me to make some features more apparent or transparent, thus locating me somewhere close to the borders of reality and representation (Patton, 1990). The specific textual strategies used were those of the focused, semi-structured interview and document collection (Minichello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1995). Documents in the form of recent and early school prospectuses and other formal documents were collected.

In qualitative inquiry, topic, theory and methodology are closely inter-related and these strategies are, therefore, both legitimate and appropriate means of revealing perspectives of schools as either communities or organisations. Although it is important, as McHoul (1993) warns, to be aware that “Interpretation is nothing more than one discourse—usually a scientific one—trying to secure another within its bounds” (p. 23), the perspectives of different people involved at different times in school governance will provide varied, and sometimes conflicting, discourses for interpretation. People’s stories, as Carter (1993) tells us, are a mode of knowing that “captures the richness and nuances of meaning in human affairs,” while at the same time allowing for “ambiguity and dilemma” (p. 6).

FIELD OF RESEARCH: CONTEXT

The research sites for this study were selected by purposive sampling in that homogeneous or dense cases were sought (Neuman, 1997). The cases were dense in the sense that all of the schools were operating with school councils and were similarly child-centred and outcome-based in their approach to education. Notably, all schools
had their origins in the period of the alternative school and community empowerment movement, which created large numbers of small alternative schools here in Australia and overseas in the 1970s and 1980s (Angus & Olney, 1998; Cleverley, 1978).

The schools in this research offered the opportunity to investigate how the ideals of parent empowerment and greater responsiveness were implemented and interpreted over time. The fact that they were fairly similar in their philosophies and in the employment of child-centred approaches to curriculum was considered a further indication of congruence to each other and to government schools of today that are attempting to be more child-centred in their approaches to curriculum (Curriculum Council, 1998). Since their foundations, these schools have been through varying degrees of stability and currently their governing structures differ as to the level that stakeholders are involved in governance. It was considered that this range of degree of involvement in governance would offer a breadth of data to consider.

The sampling of research sites (see Table 5.1) is considered rich in that it includes a substantial percentage of the schools with these characteristics in Perth, Western Australia. The multiple sites investigated in Perth for the first stage of the research were thirteen independent primary schools and one primary school within the state school system termed an ‘alternative’ school (GAS). Five of the independent schools identified themselves as Montessori schools (MS), one was a Waldorf School (WS) and the remaining seven were other small independent schools (OIS). They represent over fifty percent of possible independent schools that fit the profile described above (Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia, 2002). The government school is the only government school that has been operating with a school council for twenty years and it
has the greatest level of parent involvement in management and curriculum so far implemented (Angus & Olney, 1998; Wilson, 1993).

Table 5.2: Research Sites - Stage One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>Date Founded</th>
<th>Principals Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GAS 1</td>
<td>Government Alternative School</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Current Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS 1</td>
<td>Montessori</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Recent Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS 2*</td>
<td>Montessori</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Recent Principal #7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS 3*</td>
<td>Montessori</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>∅Current Principal#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS 4</td>
<td>Montessori</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>∅Current Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS 5*</td>
<td>Montessori</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Current Principal#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 1</td>
<td>Other Independent</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>∅Current Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 2</td>
<td>Other Independent</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Current Principal#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 3</td>
<td>Other Independent</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Recent Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 4*</td>
<td>Other Independent</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>∅Current Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 5</td>
<td>Other Independent</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Recent Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 6*</td>
<td>Other Independent</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>∅Current Principal#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 7*</td>
<td>Other Independent</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>∅Current Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WS 1</td>
<td>Waldorf Steiner</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Current Principal#</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of the schools grew out of a crisis of an earlier school but all had their impetus from the alternative school movement of the 1970s and early 1980s. The one school that was only established recently came from the closing of a school established in 1976.

Groups of parents tried to re-establish the school under new names and in new locations but with similar goals and philosophy. One of these has now also ceased operation and the other, the one in the study, is struggling to survive. It is not in the scope of this

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5 Primary schools have been defined for the purposes of this paper as those with students from three years to twelve years of age but not those schools that may have primary and secondary students on the same campus.
6 *Grew out of a crisis at another school.
7 #Is also the Inaugural Principal.
8 ∅ These principals were current at the time of interview but have since left their position.
9 ♦ This school has ceased operation since the study began and has lead to two new off shoot schools, one of which has also closed. The other one is included above.
thesis to consider the particulars of these cases except to note that many of the issues that lead to school closure are a focus of this study.

The government school included in this research is known as the alternative school because of the level of parent involvement in its governance. It was established in 1984 as a result of the *Choice and Diversity in Education* project initiated by the Commonwealth Schools Commission in 1979. The Education Department of Western Australia made a submission for funding under this project in 1982 and formed the State Steering Committee for Choice and Diversity to direct and suggest initiatives. The establishment of the alternative government school was a result of this submission and the work of the committee chaired by H.W. Louden (Louden, 1984).

A focus on governance in principally primary schools\(^{10}\) was chosen because the level of parent involvement and the probability of a sense of community were thought to be greater in primary schools than in large secondary schools. Although there are large government and independent primary schools in Western Australia, many of the government primary schools are comparable in size to the independent schools in this study. Schools of 300 students or less comprise approximately 63 percent of all government primary schools and 80 percent of all independent primary schools (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002).

Five of these schools were then selected from the initial fourteen schools for more in depth investigation of the themes and patterns that emerged. The selection for the five case study schools was on the basis of ensuring a range of types of schools, on whether

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\(^{10}\) Two small high schools were included in the initial round of interviews. One has since ceased operations and the other is struggling to survive.
the schools indicated an ability, and willingness for further participation, and also whether council members from those early days of school governance were known and contactable. All these criteria were met and the five schools selected included schools from the government system (GAS), Montessori (MS), Steiner (WS) and Other (OIS) classifications and with a range of governance structures. Key school members involved in the governance of the schools, past and present, were then interviewed in two stages (See Table 5.3). To ensure confidentiality all participants were given pseudonyms and the names appearing on tables or attached to quotations from interview transcripts are not participants’ real names. Anonymity, however, is harder to maintain when using schools with such specific characteristics and in a location, such as Perth where the number of schools is small.
Table 5.3: Case Study Sites- Stages Two and Three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERVIEWEES</th>
<th>CASE STUDY SCHOOL 1 (MS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inaugural Principal</td>
<td>Kate: Principal from 1985 - 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Board Member</td>
<td>Dianne: Board member 1981- 1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent 1981- 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mike: Board member 1985 - 1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent 1982 - 1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Principal</td>
<td>Ben: Principal 1998 - 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roger: Appointed 2000 (ongoing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Chairperson</td>
<td>No interview granted\textsuperscript{11}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERVIEWEES</th>
<th>CASE STUDY SCHOOL 2 (MS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inaugural Principal</td>
<td>Megan: Principal from 1991 (ongoing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Board Member</td>
<td>Lynn: Board member 1991-1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent 1991-2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rita: Board member 1991 – 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent 1991 – 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sam: Board member 1991- 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent 1991 - 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Principal</td>
<td>Same as inaugural principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Chairperson</td>
<td>Max: Chairperson 1999- 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Board member 1997 - 2003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{11} Although initially agreeing to be interviewed and then agreeing to respond to emailed questions, the current chairperson of this school did not respond, claiming to be too busy and that as the Principal had already been interviewed, he would have nothing new to add.
**INTERVIEWEES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>CASE STUDY SCHOOL 3 (WS)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inaugural Principal</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Early Board Member</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current Principal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current Chairperson</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**INTERVIEWEES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>CASE STUDY SCHOOL 4 (OIS)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inaugural Principal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Early Board Member</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Current Principal</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Current Chairperson</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**INTERVIEWEES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>CASE STUDY SCHOOL 5 (GAS)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Early Principal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Early Board Member</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Current Principal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current Chairperson</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹² Lives in the country so interviewed over the phone and also used his Masters Dissertation.
¹³ Lives in the country so interviewed by phone.
DATA COLLECTION: PRETEXT

Interviews

Interviews are interactional events. They can be described as conversations with a purpose. Central to this type of research is the belief that aspects of social reality can best be made known through understanding others’ points of view, interpretations and meanings (Minichello et al., 1995) – “a conversation between researcher and informant focusing on the informant’s perceptions of self, life and experience, and expressed in his or her own words” (p. 60). The purpose of this dialogue is to make meaning together (Reissman, 1993).

Guided interviews were considered appropriate in that they allowed similar information to be obtained from all participants while retaining flexibility to ‘hear’ what specific issues were important to each participant. Variation was allowed for in the wording and the responses to the questions. This permitted new lines of inquiry to be pursued. Issues could emerge from the conversations and in the participants’ own words. Such semi-structured or guided interviews enabled me to explore complex issues in more detail. They allowed me to seek clarification and to probe for further reflection and also offered the respondents a chance to elaborate and clarify. This provided for the possibility that the data could be more comparable, rich and meaningful (Pawson, 1996).

Through the interviews I became engaged personally in the data collection. This research strategy of being face-to-face with a participant, while time consuming, allowed for obtaining non-verbal information and for consideration of the way things were said or not said. I was also aware that a respondent’s perceptions of the purpose of
the research could influence the way they answered. The level of trust of the interviewer
and perceived legitimacy of the questions can also be a factor in the quality of their
responses. Foddy (1993) observed that interviewees seek clarification of purpose and
endeavour to reach a mutually shared definition of the questions with the interviewer.
This was experienced during the interviews for this study and reinforced the importance
of being clear and honest with regard to the purpose of the research and the intention of
the questions.

I knew a large percentage of those interviewed and had a prior collegial working
relationship with many of them. This allowed me to position the interviews more as a
joint effort in exploring issues of mutual interest and shared experiences rather than an
attempt by an objective 'other' to elicit information from an informant. My familiarity
with the wider educational culture and the specific role of a principal working with a
school council allowed me to engage the participants in a dialogue with shared
understanding and empathy. I also changed role and became interviewee as well, as it
has been recognised that personal, subjective experiences can be valuable for
interpreting events in the field (Patton, 1990). In this case, a colleague interviewed me
before I began interviewing other participants. This was also a means of trialing the
guiding questions and resulted in the development of sets of prompts to aid in the
probing of responses (see Appendix I).

The interviews aimed to seek clarification about structures, processes and relationships
according to the issues identified from the research literature and the research aims. The
goal was to develop or re-establish an open and warm relationship between interviewer
and interviewee. The participants needed to feel that they were treated with respect and
as individuals rather than research subjects. As mentioned, it was hoped that the interactions would be viewed as an exploration among colleagues of issues of importance to both.

Potential participants were contacted by telephone and where they expressed interest in being involved in the research, a letter explaining the rationale for the research, a copy of the guiding questions and a consent form were sent to them (see Appendix II). They were then re-contacted to set an interview date. The interviews were conducted individually in the interviewee’s choice of location, generally at the school or their home and in two cases by telephone due to their rural location. The interviews, which took between one and two hours, were recorded with the permission of the participants. They were then transcribed at a later date for coding and analysis. Upon importation of the transcribed interviews into NUD*IST software (Qualitative Solutions Research, 1997) for analysis, line or paragraph numbers were assigned to the text (see Appendix III, sample Interview Transcript). When quoting from these transcripts the text identification numbers follow the assigned pseudonym and type of participant (Example: Kate/Inaugural Principal: 101-105). Where participants were interviewed a second time, the different transcriptions were identified by the numerals 1 or 2.

It was not practical to quote every respondent who made reference to particular issues so a few examples were chosen and used to illustrate the discussions. Interviewees were sent a copy of the parts of their interviews that were to be quoted in the thesis and invited to modify, change or add to these quotations. Stamped, addressed envelopes were provided to facilitate this process. Participants were also assured that they could stop being part of the research project at any time. All quotations used were as
transcribed or amended by the respondent, except for minor modifications necessary for clarity and correct grammar.

To gain an historical account as well as diverse views, it was decided to make the research a multi-stage study. In Stage One, I interviewed the present or recent principals of the fourteen schools, thirteen independent schools and one government school. In Stage Two, the interviews were with the inaugural principals and early board members of the five case study schools. In Stage Three, I interviewed or re-interviewed the current school principal and current council chairperson of the five case study schools. After each stage the interviews were transcribed, coded and analysed for themes or patterns, which could contribute to the analytical frameworks addressing the key research questions. The multi-stage approach assisted me in interpreting the data as the study proceeded and to gain access to the experiences and insights from people connected to the schools at different periods and times. This process allowed a wider range of 'realities' to be investigated and the development of an understanding of why some issues were significant for some interviewees and how they changed over time and in different contexts.

Stage One: 1998 - 2000

In Stage One, the interviews were with the schools’ principals\(^\text{14}\) (some have since resigned or been replaced) or with the very recent principals\(^\text{15}\) from the selected sample of schools (see Table 5.2). In the case of the government school, as well as the present principal, a recent past principal was interviewed as he was considered a key informant.

\(^{14}\) The term principal is used for the person in charge of the educational and daily administration of the school. In some schools they are called co-ordinators, heads or educational administrators.

\(^{15}\) Where there had been a very recent change of principal, it was decided to interview the outgoing principal who was more likely to have an in-depth understanding of the issues being investigated.
He had been at the school in question for a considerable number of years and had also had experience with the governance of other small independent and state schools in Western Australia and New Zealand. He is presently a principal in a more traditionally governed state school. The interviews with principals aimed to seek clarification about structures, processes and relationships related to school governance from the principals’ perspectives. They involved a significant sample, 50%, of principals from small community schools with school councils in Perth.

The following is a summary of the guiding topics used for Stage One (for the full questions including the set of prompts, see Appendix I). The topics were used as a guide. While variation in wording was employed to suit the specific situations and individual participants, all topics were raised in some form. The participants had been sent the guiding questions prior to the interview to allow them time to reflect on the topics. Neither the wording nor the order of questions was fixed and flexibility was also employed in order to ask additional questions and pursue further issues where appropriate. I began by asking participants for background information about themselves in terms of their education, involvement with other schools and other relevant experiences.

**Key Topics For Discussion Questions**

- Participant’s history and level of involvement with the particular school or schools.
- How the governing body of the school was structured and constituted.
- The ways parents were involved in the running of the school.
- The central roles of the governing body and of the principal.
- The participants’ perceptions of any need for changes in roles or structures'
- How differences were catered for between educational and administrative decisions and how any differences were clarified.
- The decision-making processes of the governing body and examples.
- The positive and negative aspects of the governing structure and any alternative structures that participants thought had been or might be tried.
Stage Two: 2000 - 2001

In Stage Two, five of the schools, including the government alternative school, were selected for more in depth investigation of the themes and patterns that had emerged in the first stage. The school’s inaugural\textsuperscript{16} principals and at least two early board members of these case study schools were then interviewed (see Table 5.3). The questions were modified slightly for the Stage Two interviews following analysis of the data from the interviews of principals in Stage One. The protocols and format for the interviews were the same as in Stage One. Emerging from the data were themes related to boundaries, identity and expectations. However, not wanting to force the data, I did not ask specific questions about boundaries but asked these two further questions.

- How would you describe the identity of the school and has it changed at all?
- What is it the school valued most?

Stage Three: 2001 - 2002

Stage Three interviews were conducted with the current chairperson of the case study schools and the current principal was interviewed or re-interviewed (see Table 5.3). The experiences and insights from people connected to the schools from this earlier period allowed multiple views of the issues and was of particular value in considering one emerging theme from the Stage Two interviews, that of cycles or stages of development in school governance. The protocols and format remained the same as they were for the Stage One and Stage Two interviews. The questions were modified appropriately and I asked one additional question.

---

\textsuperscript{16} Inaugural principals were not always appointed in the schools’ early years, particularly when the schools began with one classroom, or in the case of the Waldorf school, where they managed without a principal’s role until the appointment of an Educational Administrator.
• What are the main issues involved in governance of the school and are there any issues that never seem to be solved or keep coming up?

Five additional interviewees with experiences in school governance (see Table 5.4) were also interviewed. Four of these were people who were recommended by other interviewees as having valuable insights and relevant experiences and thus able to contribute to the study. The following is the kind of response that initiated these further interviews.

_Well you should really talk to Len. In his position he had to deal with little schools like us. He got to know a lot about the problems and conflicts and such._ (Mike/Early Board Member: 387-388)

The fifth of these key informants was a person who contacted me after reading a paper I presented at the _Australian Association for Research in Education International Conference_ in 2001 (Payne, 2001).

Table 5.4: Additional Subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Len: Director of the Non-government Schools Division of the Education Department of WA for 5 years  
  Board member and Chairperson of two larger independent school councils |
| Neil: Education Department of W.A.  
  Edith Cowan University |
| Jeff: Teacher in New Zealand and Western Australian primary schools  
  Case Study School 5 principal from 1991 - 1994  
  Principal Independent Alternative High School 1996-1998  
  Principal state schools 1998 ongoing |
| Alice: Member of New Zealand Board of Review 1989 – 1998 for the NZ reforms  
  Director of Early Childhood & Education Department of W.A., 1998 - 2001 |
| Kerry: Parent at an Independent School in Victoria that has experienced sudden Principal departure |

These additional informants provided information relating to government department interactions with independent schools and school councils, as well as their own personal experiences with school governance.
Documents

In the organisational culture that underpins education today, in which the market has become an integral part of educational endeavours, impression management strategies gain increasing importance (Symes, 1998). Schools, particularly independent schools, have become more conscious of the need to influence the educational choice of consumers and to increase, or at least maintain, their share of a contracting educational market. They employ such strategies as corporate imaging, market positioning, advertising and self-promotion. In this context documents give valuable insights into the values and systems of thinking, and provide a textual construction or discourse of the ethos of a school. The school prospectus was of particular interest as it is an official and public document by which the school represents and sells itself to the wider community. It is a document that “provides a summary account of a school’s immediate aspirations and an outline of its educational advantages and assets” (p. 138).

Documents, therefore, were collected from the research sites and analysed together with the interview data. The documents collected included handbooks, prospectuses, web pages, information booklets and policy documents. Where possible, the schools’ early prospectuses were compared to recent ones as it is in such documents that the transition to a more image-conscious approach may be revealed. Although most were willing, some schools were not able to make these early documents available (see Table 5.5).

Table 5.5: Documents Collected
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOLS</th>
<th>DOCUMENTS OBTAINED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MS 2</td>
<td>School Prospectus, 1982 School Prospectus 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS 4</td>
<td>Parent Information Pack 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 1</td>
<td>Web Page 2003 School Prospectus 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 2</td>
<td>School Prospectus 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 3</td>
<td>School Information Pages 1998 School Prospectus 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 4</td>
<td>Constitution 1990 Parent Handout and Parent Survey 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 5</td>
<td>Web Page 2003 School Prospectus 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 6</td>
<td>School Prospectus, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WS 1</td>
<td>Parent Handout 1999 School Prospectus 2002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Collection Files**

In qualitative research, the data generated needs to be organised into data files (Minichello et al., 1995). For this research the files take the following form:

- **A Transcript File**
  
  The transcript file consists of 44 transcribed interviews with 39 interviewees.

- **Artefact File**
The artefact file is made up of the interview tape recordings and the documents collected from interviewees and schools. The tapes, once transcribed, are kept in a locked file.

- **An Analytic File**
  
The analytic file is comprised of the imported transcribed interviews with assigned text numbers, the records of the coding trees constructed with the use of NUD*IST software (Qualitative Solutions Research, 1997), and the reports generated by different text and index searches.

ANALYSIS

Data were created from ‘real’ world contexts to allow better understanding of the research questions, rather than being produced under experimental conditions. The understanding is that data are best understood within the context in which they are generated and framed. A variety of sources were used to aid the understanding and interpretation of particular data (Patton, 1990). Data analysis began alongside the data generation process and at each stage of the study. The researcher personally transcribed all interviews to become very familiar with the data and allow reflection and building of theory.

The raw data from interviews and school documents were categorised and coded for examination of what they revealed about the relationships and interactions of constituents and the governing structures themselves. Variations in perspectives were recognised rather than discarded. Themes were drawn from the interview transcripts by
examining words, phrases and their contexts. This was to discover how they were connected to each other and to issues in the literature. It is recognised that what is considered significant is the result of a researcher’s own theories and preferred explanatory frameworks, and so, with this research, I chose to code all the interviewee’s responses at each stage before attempting analysis. However, the process of transcribing and then creating the coding promoted the building of frames and theories ahead of analysis (Pawson, 1996).

As described before, this research employs three complimentary frameworks: school governance as phases of development; the construction of community empowerment in school governance; and tensions and dilemmas in school governance. These frameworks emerged from the literature review and from the coding and analysing of the data. They also helped shape the form of the coding trees that were used to manage the data. A full set of the coding ‘trees’ is available in Appendix IV.

**Data Coding**

All transcriptions and documents were coded into a user constructed conceptual coding system with the use of QSR NUD*IST qualitative analysis software (Qualitative Solutions Research, 1997). This software has the capacity to store in a systematic and logical manner the data of qualitative research projects. It assists the researcher in managing and analysing data by allowing coding, searching and testing. This makes the data more manageable thus providing the means for creating, experimenting, questioning and theorising with a range of categories and themes. It also facilitates the identifying of emerging concepts, patterns and hypotheses.
The index system and coding trees that evolved during the analysis process show networks of related themes and ideas, and the software makes them more easily accessible. Approximately 100 index searches were conducted using union, intersection, collect and inherit searches. A further 25 string and pattern searches were made for significant words and phrases in the 182 coded nodes or branches in the five trees. The trees themselves evolved and changed with the analysis of each stage. Thus, they are described in stages to reflect these different ways of thinking.

Coding Stage One: The initial fourteen research sites

The original coding tree was established reflecting the initial focus on structures and decision-making (see Figure 5.4). Each one of these main categories had sub-categories that allowed data to be organised more particularly for retrieval (see example Figure 5.4a in Appendix IV).

Figure 5.4: Initial Coding Tree
One of the first themes to emerge from the early analysis was that of tensions relating to boundaries, role division, conflict and community. These issues were emerging as important enough to have their own branches. Much data relating to Parent Involvement (2) was connected to these themes and so better organised under these classifications. The other categories of Philosophy (4) and Evaluation (5) were no longer considered main issues so the original coding tree was discarded. A tree with a new structure was developed that incorporated all the main categories from Figure 5.4 but with an organisation that better reflected the frames and themes that were emerging.

Figure 5.5: Second Version of the Main Coding Tree

The category History of Participants and Schools (Appendix IV, Figure 5.5a) now incorporates the data from the Background Information (6) category from Figure 5.4, but as well, has allowed for more specific information to be coded on the history of the school and that of the interviewees. The category Structure (Appendix IV, Figure 5.5b) incorporates the data from the Governing Body (1) and Evaluation (5) categories and some of the data from the Parent Involvement (2) category from Figure 5.4.
The literature review identified several themes that were also being reflected in the data from the interviews so the category of **Context** (see Appendix IV, Figure 5.5c) was added to the main coding tree. **Decision-Making** (3) and **Philosophy** (4) data and some of the data from **Parent Involvement** (2) in Figure 5.4 was moved to the new category of **Tensions** (see Appendix IV, Figure 5.5c), which also includes the Sub-categories of **Community**, **Professionalism**, **Trust** and **Boundaries**. The whole coding tree was not developed at the beginning but rather developed as the data was analysed. This flexibility facilitated patterns emerging and avoided data having to be forced to fit an already established structure.

*Coding Stage Two: Interviews with past principals and board members of the five case study schools.*

During the transcribing of these interviews the idea that there were cycles or phases of development in governance processes and structures began to emerge so this new category was added to the coding tree.

**Figure 5.6: Final Main Coding Tree.**
Coding Stage Three: Interviews with current principals and chairpersons of the five case study schools

Following the transcribing and coding of the third stage interviews, modifications were made to the Cycles or Phases in Governance category of the coding tree. Figures 5.7, a, b, c, and d in Appendix IV, provide details of this coding. In the following chapters I discuss more fully the results of these searches and their implications and interpretations.

Believability and Credibility

In this study I sought to establish reliability and believability by noting the repetition of ideas or concepts that identified the emerging paradigmatic frames rather than demonstrating that the study could be replicated (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Minichello et al., 1995). Validity is not just about questions of truth but how the work contributes to the wider community (Meerwald, 2001). In this study validity was supported by using the multi-stage approach, by my previous collegiate knowledge of many of the participants, by previous meetings with most of the interviewees at a Small Independent School Principal’s support group, in which I had participated for several years, and by unstructured school visits. Internal consistency was judged on whether the data were plausible, given what was known from these different sources (Neuman, 1997).

In addition, cross-matching data was obtained by collecting and analysing documents from the research sites. These other sources of qualitative data aided the facility to determine the fit between what people said and did (Minichello et al., 1995) and where gaps existed to challenge me to examine further the reasons behind them. Triangulation
was achieved between the interviewee’s responses, perceptions over different time frames, the documents collected and the researcher’s previous knowledge of the schools and the participants.

The basis for credibility was laid by the initial identification of issues and themes from a sampling of fourteen research sites. In this instance, this number could be considered rich and broad in that it included a substantial percentage of the schools in Western Australia fitting the characteristics relevant to this study of empowerment and governance. Depth and density of data were achieved through the case studies of the five schools in Stages Two and Three of the study. All quotations from the interviewees give the line or paragraph numbers from the transcribed interviews to allow verification. Generalisation for this study was considered in terms of its possible applicability to other schools and other locales. In endeavouring to insure this applicability, small independent schools established by distinct and separate groups were incorporated within the sampling.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations were important and the research was designed so that the protocols conformed to the *NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* (National Health and Medical Research Council, 1999). Interviewees were informed that all information given during interviews was to be confidential. No names or other information that might identify participants were used in any publication arising from the research. Tapes of interviews and any material identifying participants were kept in a locked boxed in my home office. To ensure confidentiality, all participants were given pseudonyms, which are used on all computer files and documents and printed copies.
Where parts of the interviews have been quoted and interviewees could be contacted, they have been sent copies and given the opportunity to modify, clarify, change or add to these quotations. Several interviewees have done so. If they had any concerns or any questions about the research they were invited to contact me, or my supervisor or alternatively to contact Murdoch University's Human Research Ethics Committee. Phones numbers were provided.

CONCLUSION

The intention of this research is not to produce any definitive theory or map of school governance but to employ frameworks that may be useful for consideration of the issues outlined. For this research three complementary frameworks were identified and developed. The Governance as Phases of Development framework is used in exploring the evolution of school structures and processes. The Community Empowerment framework addresses the issue of whether schools can continue to see themselves as communities when many of the characteristics of professionalism, efficiency and marketisation and the advocated qualities of management practices work against this image. The study also questions whether empowerment strategies such as school councils are really successful in reducing central control and increasing meaningful participation in decision-making or are, in fact, disguised forms of disciplinary power and institutional colonisation. It explores the ways influence and authority are manifested and retained by some groups and the ways community and democracy are subverted by the counter discourses of market and accountability.
The *Dilemmas* framework provides a means to consider the messy, untidy and ambiguous educational and social problems faced by school governance. It is one way of understanding the dilemmas that arise from within schools and from the wider context that school governance must confront. This framework is used to facilitate the process of disentangling value conflicts and reconciling the competing claims embedded in the practice of educational administration. It is further used to assist in distinguishing dilemmas from technical problems and the identification of tensions that give rise to the conflicting choices that have to be made.

People are knowledgeable about the reasons for their actions, but it must be accepted that this knowledge comes tinted with their unacknowledged biases and preconceived notions and becomes distorted with the passing of time and hindsight. Also, there are often other conditions and consequences to actions, unknown to them at the time, that have influenced their interpretations now. To account for some of this, case studies were undertaken at several sites and participants chosen from different perspectives and time periods.

Attention was paid more to the participants' sense of the issues and the links they were making between them. There was also recognition that individuals could not grasp the whole ‘truth’. The coding trees enabled me to find and connect the links that the interviews indicated and to explore them conceptually. Research is a process of building a picture of the ‘truths’ as perceived by those involved in the field but more importantly it is also a process of uncovering our own versions of ‘truth’, and then presenting these for others to assess. In Chapters 6, 7 and 8 my versions of such ‘truths’ are presented for consideration as I discuss the implications from the empirical data.
CHAPTER 6

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AS PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT

In a sense an organisation has got developmental stages too and we became aware of that. (Eve/Early & Current Board Member:263)

INTRODUCTION

School governance as phases of development fits primarily into the view of schools as organisations and is theoretically linked to the metaphors of organisational life cycles as put forward by Greiner (1972), Weick (1979), Ulrich and Probst (1984), and the open and closed systems of Scott (1987). Wood (1992) claims her model (see Chapter 5) is broader in scope, relating to the understanding of social systems as dependent upon cultural systems as well and, therefore, includes aspects of culture and identity. However, the developmental view is still essentially based on a rationalist analysis of the school as a bounded entity and employs the techniques of identification and classification. These are used to delineate attributes of functioning such as structures, management processes, decision-making, roles and strategies.

It was during the transcribing and analysing of the interviews that the idea of cycles or phases of development in governance emerged. Wood’s (1992) model was identified as
a useful framework and modified in response to the data emerging (see Chapter 5). A
number of writers on organisational theory were also identified who made reference to
this notion of cycles or stages to analyse organisations and social systems (Baum, 1996;
Block, 1998; Hassard, 1996; Starke & Dyck, 1996; Wood, 1992). In the interviews for
this study 13 of the 39 participants specifically mentioned cycles, phases or stages or
talked about a school’s evolution, for example:

In a sense an organisation has got developmental stages too and we became
aware of that. … I will be interested to see when the school reaches its 21st
year, whether we will be ready to get the key. (Eve/Early & Current Board
Member:263-268)

I think we are in the third phase. The second phase carried a lot of
resentment from the originators who felt that things were changing and
didn’t like what was happening. Now we are back in the third phase where a
high proportion of people in this school actually have no knowledge of what
the original wave was like. (Gail/Current Chairperson:99-104)

Participants, such as Gail, spoke about these phases spontaneously. I did not discuss
with them the phases as set out in Wood's (1992) model, but as a result of the interviews
I decided to modify Wood's model. This new framework (Figure 6.1) separates decision
making from that of board behaviour and operating structures. Decision-making
processes, which are also the focus of restructuring and community participation
reforms in the wider educational context, are considered pivotal when examining school
governance and to understanding how structures, roles and behaviour have been
implemented and interpreted within different settings at different times (Johnson &
Scollay, 2001; Limerick, 1995). A further category of issues and crises was also added
to the framework as Wood’s research showed these differ in form and substance
according to the phase of the school’s development.
Table 6.1: Phases of Development in School Governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board or Council</th>
<th>Pioneer Phase</th>
<th>Super-Managing Phase</th>
<th>Corporate Phase</th>
<th>Ratification Phase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Operating Structures</td>
<td>Collective</td>
<td>Sustaining</td>
<td>Roles are clearly defined</td>
<td>Committees operate but led by the experts and professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group is agency</td>
<td>Only a few committees</td>
<td>Policies &amp; procedures put in place</td>
<td>Bureaucratic structure &amp; process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>De facto executive</td>
<td>Collegial</td>
<td>More committees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collective</td>
<td>Staff get involved at council level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Members Roles &amp; Behaviours</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>Elections &amp; roles formalised but not clearly defined</td>
<td>Still highly involved, even meddling, and some recruited as experts</td>
<td>Professional &amp; focused on long term planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overlapping roles</td>
<td>Still high energy &amp; involvement but mission passes to staff &amp; principal</td>
<td>Committees meet at length</td>
<td>Supportive of &amp; reliant on executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High personal investment</td>
<td>Principal is spokesperson and often takes ‘Heroic’ Role</td>
<td>‘Goals &amp; Objectives’ but still committed to mission</td>
<td>Loses contact with stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dedicated to mission</td>
<td>Principal’s vision may be challenged</td>
<td>Principal’s role is administration as well as education – resents ‘meddling’</td>
<td>Competition &amp; business focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Principal is CEO in control but may be challenged by other staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decison-making</td>
<td>On the run/as needed</td>
<td>Still as needed</td>
<td>Formalised &amp; business like</td>
<td>Decisions to professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Processes not formalised</td>
<td>Decisions take more time</td>
<td>Council members very much involved</td>
<td>Effectiveness &amp; accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues &amp; Crises</td>
<td>Burnout of volunteers</td>
<td>Loss of trust</td>
<td>Tensions- factions form</td>
<td>Staff industrial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>Power struggles</td>
<td>Financial/enrolments</td>
<td>Loss of community &amp; mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Philosophical</td>
<td>Financial crisis Groups leaving</td>
<td>Staff/others leave</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two sub-stages described by Wood as Collective and Sustaining were evident as sub-stages in the data and so are shown as such on the table. The label Pioneer is used instead of Founding as several interviewees employed the pioneering metaphor when describing this period. Two examples are given below.

*I think because we were so pioneering in those early years, I’d say the first three years. (Nancy/Early Board Member: 186-187)*

*Yes there was a period when it was more of a pioneering school and the council had a large number of members. (Fran/Inaugural & Current Principal: 58;1)*

I organised the interview responses according to the vertical categories from the framework. To demonstrate the changes over time, I discuss the data from two time periods: the pioneering and present phases, starting from the operating structures and ending with issues and crises. This also reflects the staged approach of the interviews.

**OPERATING STRUCTURES**

For the purposes of this research, operating structures are defined as the formal and informal arrangements of people and processes that facilitate necessary decision-making and make it possible for an organisation to operate (G. Morgan, 1997, p 26). Here I consider the forms of board composition, stakeholder representation and committees to discover how the interview responses from the different phases fit with this modified model.

**Board Composition and Stakeholder Representation**

**Pioneering Phase**

The Stage Two interviews with founding or early principals and board members reveal that all schools were clearly situated in the pioneering phase at the time of foundation.
They operated without committees and generally as a collective. All schools in this early phase depended upon a de facto executive of parents.

*I think there were only two of us who were active at the time. My memory is a bit hazy as to whether we met as a council. … She became chairperson fairly early on and her friend was vice-chair and basically ran the school for quite a while.* (Jack/Early and Current Board Member: 29-49)

*There was a council but she [the Chairperson] was really making all the decisions at that stage and doing the work.* (Dianne/Early Board Member: 150-153)

None of the respondents, including those from the representative board, remember having contested elections or formalised roles as the following quotations illustrate.

*Yes, it wasn’t really called a school council but we ended up with a body of people who were interested and committed. I can’t remember there being any elections of any kind.* (Irene/Early Board Member: 69-70)

*The chairperson had no specially designated role and the taking of minutes was somewhat casual.* (Adam/Early Principal: 86)

The governance processes for nearly all schools then developed to a sustaining stage where a few committees were formed and elections were held. At this stage there was more formalisation of roles. These two participants describe the process.

*We weren’t initially incorporated. So we got incorporated and that formalised the structure.* (Mike/Early Board Member: 45)

*At first we used to meet at people’s houses and we got heaps done in those times. Then it began to be held at school and it became more formalised.* (Kate/Inaugural Principal: 100-101)

Table 6.2 gives a profile for the case study schools of the composition of the boards and the extent of stakeholder representation at the time they were initially founded. It is compiled from the Stage Two interviews with founding or early principals and board members. Table 6.3 presents similar data of the operating structures of these same schools today in their present phase and is placed adjacent to Table 6.2 to facilitate comparisons in the areas of stakeholder involvement, board membership and number of committees.
Table 6.2: Board Composition & Stakeholder Representation at Foundation-Ca
de Study Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Stakeholder Involvement</th>
<th>Delegates</th>
<th>Committees Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case Study School 1 (MS 4)</td>
<td>Representative Board</td>
<td>Informal consisting of the founding parents</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study School 2 (MS 5)</td>
<td>Nominated Caretaker Board</td>
<td>3 parents, principal and experts (lawyer, accountant, educationalist)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study School 3 (WS 1)</td>
<td>Nominated Foundation Council</td>
<td>Teachers, non-parents committed to the philosophy, parents.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study School 4 (OIS 7)</td>
<td>Nominated Board with representatives</td>
<td>Teachers, principal, 3 experts and parent representative</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study School 5 (GAS 1)</td>
<td>Participative democracy</td>
<td>Community (parents, teachers educationalists and interested others)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3: Present Board Composition and Stakeholder Representation - Case Study Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Stakeholder Involvement</th>
<th>Delegates Number</th>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Nature of Delegates</th>
<th>Standing Committees Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case Study School 1 (MS 4)</td>
<td>Representative Board</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2 year</td>
<td>6 parents, 1 teacher, principal</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study School 2 (MS 5)</td>
<td>Appointed board</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>unlimited</td>
<td>Wider community (current parents are excluded)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study School 3 (WS 1)</td>
<td>Nominated board &amp; elected representatives</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>3 nominees from Foundation council, 4 elected, principal</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study School 4 (OIS 7)</td>
<td>Representative board</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>6 parents, 1 teacher, principal</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study School 5 (GAS 1)</td>
<td>Representative decision-making board</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>6 community members, past president, principal</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In comparing Table 6.2 and 6.3, changes are evident in aspects of all the case study schools’ operating structures. Although initially operating without formal committees, all the case study schools developed committee structures and formalised the numbers and types of delegates. Table 6.4 shows the present composition of the boards and

17 M=Montessori School; W=Waldorf School; OIS=other small private school.
18 As most committees operated informally, numbers were not always known
19 The committees and terms are explained in conjunction with Table 6.5.
councils in more detail for the other nine schools in the study. It confirms the move to more formalised procedures for most schools, with one exception (OIS 2).

Table 6.4: Present Board Composition and Stakeholder Representation—Other Research Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Stakeholder Involvement</th>
<th>Delegates Number</th>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Nature of Delegates</th>
<th>Standing Committees Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MS 1</td>
<td>Representative board</td>
<td>15-16</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>12 parents, 1 teacher, principal, 1-2 nominees</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS 2</td>
<td>Representative board</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>12 parents, principal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS 3</td>
<td>Representative board</td>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>8-10 parents, 1 teacher, principal</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 1</td>
<td>Representative board</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>eight member of the association(^{20}), principal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 2</td>
<td>Participative democracy</td>
<td>no limit</td>
<td>unlimited</td>
<td>parents, teachers and students</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 3</td>
<td>Representative board</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>6 parents, 1 teacher, principal</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 4</td>
<td>Representative board</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>6 parents, 2 teacher, principal, 3 students</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 5</td>
<td>Representative board</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>4 parents, 3 from the school association, 1 teacher, principal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 6</td>
<td>Representative board</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>3 parents, 1 teacher, principal, 2 students</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The composition of all these current boards covers a spectrum in representative government format. There are some extremes with most falling in the centre with representative boards (see Figure 6.1). Operating structures range from a participative democracy through to a wholly nominated board. At one end of the spectrum is OIS 2, which endeavours to run in the format of a direct democracy\(^{21}\) with all decisions except financial ones being made by consensus as Olivia explains.

*Our governing body in our constitution consists of any group of teachers, parents and students who meet together for the purpose of governance. So whatever comes up – it could be an ad hoc group, it doesn’t have to be a continuing group according to our constitution. … It could be everyone in the school. They have to be parents of children in the school, children in the*

\(^{20}\) Association includes parents, past parents & teachers.

\(^{21}\) Direct democracy is used here to mean that all community members can represent themselves directly on the governance council, representatives are not used.
school and staff. There has to be some representation from all of those. We operate by consensus. (Olivia/Inaugural and Current Principal: 10-15).

Figure 6.1: Spectrum of Parent Representation

In contrast to OIS 2, most schools have boards that are either fully or partly representative, ranging from direct representation of all groups to more restrictive representation. One Montessori school, MS 5, has a self-appointing board of community leaders, friends and ex-parents but does not include any representatives from the current parent body or staff. The principal and bursar sit on the board, but without voting rights. OIS 4 and OIS 6 have representative structures but operate with a more direct voice of the school populace by including students on the board and by not delegating to committees.

Another model that fits in between MS 5 (nominated) and the representative boards, is the Waldorf school, WS I. It is partly representative and partly appointed as the majority
of board members, in particular the executive, are nominated by two other governing structures within the school: the Foundation Council\textsuperscript{22} nominates three members (who may or may not be parents) and the College of Teachers\textsuperscript{23} nominates up to two teachers. The Educational Administrator (Principal) is also a member. Three members are elected from the parent body. The office holders, however, must be from the Foundation Council. This would be very similar to boards of larger independent and church schools that nominate members from various stakeholder groups, such as religious and alumni associations, and operate somewhat removed from the school community.

The government school, GAS 1, is placed on a spectrum towards the greater parent participation end. However, although it has a representative council made up of elected community members and staff with a say on issues of school development, a centralised and bureaucratic government department has overall control of the school. The school council is informally guided by a direct democracy group from the community but does not have responsibility for the school and has no say on educational policies. Representatives of the school council are involved with Education Department officials in interviewing and selecting staff, including the principal. This degree of commitment and involvement is more than any other government school council has at this time in Western Australia (Angus, 1995).

The remaining eight independent schools are in the centre of the spectrum in terms of the level and type of representation of the parent body. Their boards consist of

\textsuperscript{22} The Foundation Council was originally composed of original founders of the school and now includes others whom are held to be committed to the ‘good’ of the school. They are self-selecting.
\textsuperscript{23} The College of Teachers had representatives from each area of the school and was responsible for pedagogical decisions but has been disbanded since this research began.
representatives primarily elected from the current parent body and also include the principal. In all cases but one of these eight schools, principals have voting rights and in five cases an additional teacher member has voting rights as well. Although Tables 6.3 and 6.4 give the structure for these schools at the time of writing, several schools indicated that further modifications were likely in terms of number and composition. The school MS 4 is planning the most radical change in the near future, moving from a representative council to a largely nominated board as Roger describes.

*It’s governed by a council structure with a movement towards a board in early next year. … So what we are doing is putting together a sort of White Paper by the end of the year, which will have the structures, the roles and responsibilities, the entire thing laid out, an amended constitution and the preparation for transition and so on.* (Roger/Current Principal: 18-23)

This movement from informal to formal procedures, from no constitution to becoming legally incorporated, covers over the messy realities of what occurred in some of these schools. To receive funding schools had to adopt more formal structures and be more aware of procedural matters. They also changed structures as previous ones were not working. Jack explains.

*There was a very black period when the committees withered away and the council became a token partnership. The College [of Teachers] got stronger and stronger and probably the council got weaker and weaker. Then the college got divided so no one could make decisions. It kind of all fell apart in the mid nineties and what came out of that was a new structure, which was superimposed, if you like, on the old.* (Jack/Early & Current Board Member: 177-182)

OIS 7 has changed from a largely nominated board to a representative one five years after foundation. GAS 1 has also modified its initial founding model to a more formal and representative one. Initially the informal community group was similar to the direct democracy format of OIS 2 and the school council simply ratified decisions.
Committees

The case study schools used for Stage Two and Three of the study did not operate with formal committees in the collective/pioneering stage and most only developed a few committees in the sustaining/pioneering stage, as Nancy describes.

*I don’t remember having committees for quite a long time. Then it got more complex and there came a stage where you started drawing diagrams.*

(Nancy/Early Board Member: 83-85)

Present Phase

In the Stage One and Stage Two interviews there was general agreement that the overall direction of schools necessitated decision-making and management in the following areas: finance, education, staffing, building and grounds, parent liaison (communication) and fundraising. OIS 2, with its direct democracy, handles all concerns at whole school level except finances, which are the principal’s sole responsibility. The principal and teachers in this school are the de facto executive. Olivia explains.

*The parents have no say in finance. … Generally the parents are prepared to leave it to the staff.* (Olivia/Inaugural & Current Principal:16-17)

This school was clearly formed around the principal and her energy and vision, Caldwell’s (1998b) ‘heroic leader.’ It has not changed structurally, retaining most aspects of this pioneering phase. However, the other schools have, following initial foundation, set up sub-committee structures to deal with the areas of management and decision-making. Some schools also mentioned having standing or ad hoc committees for other areas such as planning, after-school care, library, child abuse prevention, and HIV AIDS (see Table 6.5). This substantially increased the number of meetings, often also increasing the burden for those involved. Eve describes one model at her school.

*So we had what was called the sunflower model with all these different petals. Ten or twelve committees set up and the parents were going to come in and help but it never really bought into the practical realities.* (Eve/Early & Current Board Member: 325-327)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>Finance</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Staffing</th>
<th>Building &amp; Grounds</th>
<th>Parent Liaison</th>
<th>Fundraising</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GAS 1</td>
<td>DET²⁴</td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td>Ad hoc</td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td>Community Meeting</td>
<td>Levy</td>
<td>Classroom support Child support (Standing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td>Planning (Standing) Library, Child Abuse, Aids (all Ad hoc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Council Portfolio</td>
<td>Principal’s portfolio</td>
<td>Ad hoc</td>
<td>Portfolio of council</td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td>Portfolio of council</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td>Ad hoc</td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td>Portfolio of council</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td>Ad hoc</td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td>Advisory Levy/ some Ad hoc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bursar &amp; Board</td>
<td>Principal’s portfolio</td>
<td>Ad hoc</td>
<td>Board</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Council Portfolio</td>
<td>Principal’s Portfolio</td>
<td>Ad hoc</td>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>Board</td>
<td>Standing Committee Board Portfolio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principal Portfolio</td>
<td>Principal and Staff</td>
<td>Principal and Staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ad hoc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td>Principal’s Portfolio</td>
<td>Ad hoc</td>
<td>Ad hoc</td>
<td>Board</td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principal’s Portfolio</td>
<td>Principal’s Portfolio</td>
<td>Ad hoc</td>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>Board</td>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Ad hoc</td>
<td>Ad hoc</td>
<td></td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principal and Board</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Board</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ad hoc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td>Ad hoc</td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td>Ad hoc</td>
<td>(under parent liaison)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Planning (Ad hoc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WS 1</td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td>Principal’s Portfolio</td>
<td>Board</td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following definitions convey the way these terms are used in this table:

**Terms**

*Portfolio* – board member portfolio without committee support.

*Principal’s portfolio* – defined as principal’s responsibility.

*Standing* – committee established for a minimum of a year and convened regularly to investigate issues and make recommendations to the board.

*Ad Hoc* – temporary committee convened to address an immediate issue.

²⁴ Department of Education and Training
As Table 6.5 shows, there is considerable variation in the number of standing committees. MS 1 and OIS 7 have the most developed committee structure. At OIS 4 and OIS 6, principal and board deal with most matters at level without delegation to standing committees. At most schools ad hoc committees are formed when needed for staffing issues and for fundraising purposes.

**Board Roles and Behaviours**

Not surprisingly, the interview data indicated a distinct change in board members’ roles and behaviours from a case study school’s foundation to its present. This was particularly so in regard to the expectations board members placed upon themselves and others. There was also a difference in how formalised and clearly defined the roles were within the structures. It was not so clear whether these are a result of developmental stages or the external changing environment.

*Pioneering Phase*

**Collective Stage**

This stage of the pioneering phase is characterised by the dedication of nearly all the volunteers who founded the schools and the high personal investment of time, expertise and sometimes money, necessary. Two board members describe their view of this period.

*You do use people. People come and go and feel used.* (Jack/Early & Current Board Member: 420)

*They were [when the school was established] enormously motivated, dedicated parents who were prepared to sacrifice everything, including their children, to establish the school.* (Gail/Current Chairperson: 90-91)

Several board members reported contributing 20 to 25 hours a week to the school as these two examples demonstrate.
I know for us it cost us thousands of dollars just to be part of that group setting up the school. I hate to think of the hours, and hours, and hours, and money we spent just to set up the school. (Rita/Early Board Member: 161-164)

Certainly when I was involved in this there was a huge amount of work and school commitment at a very, very deep level. Both on your time and your interests and money wise, everything. Emotionally it was quite harrowing. (Eve/Early & Current Board Member: 77-80)

Early principals at these sites were expected to be just as dedicated to the mission as the parent volunteers and to give generously of their time and services. The following two examples are from principals in the foundation periods, although Donald’s school was established in 1974 and Simon’s school as recently as 2000.

I was a full time teacher and I never had time off for administration. In the early days it was done in my own time. (Donald/Inaugural Principal: 178)

I and the other main teacher accepted just a token amount in salary on the understanding that some time when the school was registered we would be paid back. That hasn’t happened yet. (Simon/Inaugural & Current Principal: 161-163)

This level of commitment cannot be maintained forever and most of these initial pioneers become ‘burnt-out’ or disillusioned and are replaced, as these examples illustrate.

I didn’t want to get involved again. I thought I would have done but I had really been so involved in those first few years that I just didn’t want to get back to that stage again. (Dianne/Early Board Member: 48-50)

When parents are involved at that level they really put their heart and soul into it. They work tirelessly but they also burn out a lot and they get disheartened when things don’t go their way because they’ve put so much into it. (Rita/Early Board Member: 155-158)

The roles these early pioneers took on tended to be overlapping with no clear divisions or formalisation. They employed staff, organised premises, took enrolments, managed the finances, or whatever was needed.

In the beginning everybody just learnt on the job and it was very hard. So you were trying to do everything. You wrote submissions, you cleaned the
toilets, you baked cakes, you taught the children, you did everything.  
(Eve/Early & Current Board Member: 275-278)

I can remember a day when I had the school brochure being written and cut and pasted on the kitchen table and then the phone would ring and it would be someone for grants. Then the baby crawling across and me thinking about tonight’s meeting and so on for tomorrow. That’s an extreme picture but it was a few of us doing a lot of jobs … it was a huge commitment.  
(Nancy/Early Board Member: 212-220)

The teachers were also expected to be dedicated and generous with their time, energy and resources, often with less remuneration than elsewhere as these two examples illustrate.

*He was a complete match for me. He was a fellow who was mechanically minded, he had a great rapport with kids and he never thought about the hours he worked.*  
(Donald/Inaugural Principal: 103-104)

*Teachers worked for less than award wages and we borrowed equipment but we survived.*  
(Lynne/Early Board Member: 97)

The following examples reveal the sense of mission that most participants articulated when talking about their role and that of others in the beginning.

*We felt we were trying to do things for the general good of the community rather than for individual children.*  
(Irene/Early Board Member: 52-53)

*You see the people who come along, they just have stars in their eyes, they are switched on.*  
(Mike/Early Board Member: 344-345)

*In making the school work for their children there’s a drive there that is very close to their heart that helps them do the work.*  
(Kate/Inaugural Principal: 117-118)

It is interesting to note that the early board members from one of the case study school’s established after 1990 talked more about management, finances and long-term goals, than other early board members did.

*The board could administer. Come up with policies and procedures.*  
(Lynne/Early Board Member: 181)

*The role of the board was to facilitate what the principal wanted to achieve, to set out the guidelines, to work with the principal to achieve those guidelines, to provide expertise in the running of the school in areas where*
the principal can’t be expected to have that expertise, such as legal, business, architectural etc. (Sam/ Early Board Member:23-29)

This is also the only school at present with a wholly nominated board and was established as the result of conflict over mismanagement and vision at an earlier school. This more managerial focus with less emphasis on mission may be as a result of these factors or it may be an indication of wider societal changes at work rather than just developmental stages. Current board members of the most recently established school, OIS 6, were not interviewed as this was not a case study school, however, the principal did articulate a more mission and less managerial focus in his interview.

Well the vision is to take that group of people who want to own their own school, who have a vision for maintaining and controlling their own education, and to provide them with the opportunity and to seek every avenue to provide the where-with-all to make it possible. … I enjoy working with students and the more that you take a managerial role, the further you get away from the students. (Simon/Inaugural & Current Principal:319-330)

It may still be that some independent schools are resisting the push for schools to become more managed, however, as this school is in its early formation period, it may still follow the trend towards a less representative council and seek board members with specific expertise.

Sustaining Stage

After a period of one to five years the case study schools found it necessary to formalise, if not clearly define, the roles for councillors and to establish a few procedures as these examples illustrate.

I would say a year or so after that it became more formalised. (Dianne/Early Board Member:29)

Also at this juncture of participatory meeting development, the need for more formal meeting conduct and procedures was only just being addressed and not necessarily acknowledged. (Adam/Early Principal: 98)
The need to form committees was also realised. Vic describes the process at his school.

*There was one guy who did a lot. … He just said we need some committees; we need to have a building and grounds committee; we need a finance committee. He actually defined what these committees needed to do. He wrote down exactly what they needed to do, clarified all the roles.* (Vic/Early Board Member; 93-97)

There was still high energy and commitment needed from council members, as Vic and Mike describe.

*I deliberately said okay I’m going to go careful here. I won’t get involved. I’ll come to the Busy Bees. Do all the things like that. That lasted for the first year then I got sucked in. … I could feel it sapping the strength out of me. I used to put in a lot of time on the school grounds.* (Vic/Early Board Member: 48-50; 148-149)

*We had an executive and I know some nights when we were talking heavy finance and so on. The four of us wouldn’t finish till two or three o’clock in the morning.* (Mike/Early Board Member: 156-158)

However, the mission was passing on to the principal and staff in most cases as the principal, increasingly, became the spokesperson for the school and took over a lot of the decision-making. This was possibly a result of the changing nature of boards and councils with their rotating membership, and families leaving and joining the school as well. The original pioneering group became exhausted leaving the principal as the most stabilising entity. Dianne explains.

*I think she [the principal] was there for a long time and she was such a constant. I think it must be hard for parents who come into a school where it has already been set up to feel they have control.* (Dianne/Early Board Member: 280-283)

In the independent schools it was often the charisma and vision of the central teacher or principal that the school formed around. This ‘heroic’ leader became the foundation upon which the school was built and most early principals reported freedom from council interference.
On the other hand, I have to thank the management committee, really I cannot think of them as ever overstepping me on an educational matter. (Dan/Inaugural & Current Principal:108-109;1)

We had the school council that was just there to mainly look after financial things and make sure we were on the right track financially, budget wise etc. But any decisions on the school we just made ourselves. We were completely independent. We just said what we were going to do. (Donald/Inaugural Principal: 33-35)

All these early principals were clear that their role was primarily educational, as Kate makes plain.

My role was definitely education. The educational matters were clearly the responsibility of the educationally-trained staff. That was my responsibility. (Kate/Inaugural Principal: 176-178)

But the role, for some, also entailed some management and administration. Like early board members, their roles were not formalised or clearly defined and they gradually took over the role of a de facto executive. Although supported by parent councils or boards, often they were the ones dealing with the everyday decisions and tasks involved in running a school and without the assistance of administrative staff, such as secretaries or bursars.

I was a full time teacher plus full time administrator, plus the only one who knew most of what was going on. (Donald/Inaugural Principal:181-182)

Present Phase

Responses in the interviews of current or recent principals and current chairpersons revealed a consistency in the view of the central role of boards as being the financial and policy direction of the school and the provision of support for the educational
programme. Holding the vision was not mentioned as a role for present boards except for WS I, which was the only school that had a separate entity, the Foundation Council, for defining the direction and maintaining the vision of the school. One Foundation board member, however, described it as a much more prosaic job.

_I used to feel that I was part of the brush and broom set that came along and tried to clean up after this particularly troublesome humpty had grown wings and flown off but left a bit of a mess behind him._ (Eve/Early & Current Board Member: 370-373)

The school council in this school is concerned with management and includes the principal and three representatives from the Foundation Council. However, it is the Foundation Council that is responsible for preserving the vision of the school. Jack defines the Foundation Council as follows:

_It’s not based on membership of the society or even long term service. It’s basically like-minded people who can be relied on and can provide continuity._ (Jack/Early & Current Board Member: 113-115)

A board member from another school specifically distances the board from this ethos setting role.

_I know with some schools the board sets an ethos almost for the school. I don’t know how you could do that with the set up we’ve got at this school. I think the ethos comes from the principal._ (Max/Current Board Member: 57-59)

Generally board members’ current roles are presented very clearly as ones of management and overview. Staffing and industrial matters are important aspects of these, although usually done in conjunction with the principal as Tania and Oliver explain.

_They [parents] choose the teachers and so does the principal and so do the teachers. So there are three different groups that come together to choose [the teachers]._ (Tania/Current Board Member: 98-99)

_[The roles of council] are the employment of staff and making sure industrial issues are well taken care of. Another one is the maintenance and well-being of the physical building and the well-being of staff. ... it is also part of their function to ‘talk up’ the school._ (Oliver/Recent Principal: 417-426)
Most schools appear to be moving into or are in the Corporate Phase with an emphasis on long term planning. What is not clear is whether this is a function of development or the influence of the corporatisation of the educational environment reported in the literature (Hatton, 1998a; Meyer, 2002; Reid, 2000). Certainly participants from the long established schools talked of the need to become more business-like, as these examples show.

Funding is one issue that affects all independent schools. So we are going to have to become, in a way, more of a business, in a sense. We will have to start investing and planning ahead a lot more. (Fran/Current Principal: 71-74; 2)

It is actually like a business and when we were administrating it we had to look at it like a business. Whereas teachers are just worried about the education. (Lynne/Early Board Member: 221-223)

The [role is] broad planning issues, financial, legal or constitutional, the big planning, directional, and strategic planning. … Ideally I think this school needs a business manager who could take a lot of the financial day-to-day work. (Gail/Current Board Member: 63-79)

Principals are increasingly referred to as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and councils compared to boards of directors.

It’s actually structured more like a board of directors. … It sort of keeps the board at arms length from the school, which is probably a good thing. … My own view is that the principal is like the CEO. The board sets policies and the principal is the professional, the CEO is left to run the school. The board only interferes when there is a request for assistance or if there is a need. (Max/Current Chairperson:15-29)

The principal certainly has a very significant leadership role in a school. They are the chief executive. They are there five days a week, eight till six. The council and the chairman are only there once a month at a council meeting and a few other times for other bits and pieces. So it’s the principal running the show as say the chief executive officer of any operation would be. (Len/Key Informant: 144-148)

There were three schools that did not have an emphasis on the language of business and enterprise. These were the direct democracy school, OIS 2, and the newly established
school, OIS 6, which appear to be still very much in the pioneering phases, while GAS 1, a government school established to give parents more of a say, articulated the council role as supporting teachers and bringing the parents into the decision-making.

The teachers aren’t just there alone trying to deal with the children but we are all on side together. (Tania/Current Board Member:83)

When asked directly about their own role, the current chairpersons talked about running meetings and setting agendas. It was described not so much as a leadership role as one of coordination and facilitation as Max illustrates.

I suppose my view is just governed by experience that the best thing a chairman can do is be a facilitator. (Max/Current Chairperson:32)

Two principals, however, described the chairperson’s role as critical to their position and ability to do their job.

I must say the style I found very comfortable was one that gave my role the greatest support. It certainly made my job a lot easier. (Oliver/Recent Principal:302)

They [chairpersons] can protect you in a way. I only had the privilege of that for about two years. You are so vulnerable. You watch the processes with people going on council and who is going to be chair and you watch their motivations and go, “oh here comes another difficult period”. (Nina/Current Chairperson: 199-203; 2)

What the data does make evident is that most current principals understand that their role has and is changing in ways they feel they cannot control.

I guess the other thing that has changed is the amount of paperwork— the amount of accountability. I guess initially it wasn’t a big burden with the outcome statements because it was similar to what we were doing with student-centred learning but we do find collecting up the paperwork is really horrendous. … We ask this question every year when we are doing the grants. When we are applying for nine or ten grants and we are getting a few hundred dollars. The hours that are spent are just extraordinary. (Megan/Inaugural & Current Principal:143-146, 257-260 ;2 )
The role will become a managing director. If you are large enough to have the benefit of some deputies or so on there should be some delineation of roles. One might be primarily involved in the business side of things and the other on the educational operations. (Roger/ Current Principal:172-175)

There is recognition of an ongoing transformation in the mix of educational and administrative duties and in the range of skills that principals need. At foundation most principals were also full-time teachers with administration aided by parent volunteers. Now only 2 out of the 14 schools, OIS 2 and MS 5, have principals responsible for a class. These principals have some relief of a few hours during the week. In the other schools, principals may take on some teaching duties, but no more than a few hours a week, and they are not primarily responsible for a class.

Decision-Making

Understanding the way school councils undertake decision making is fundamental to understanding what governance entails within a particular school at a particular time (Johnson & Scollay, 2001; Limerick, 1995). For the case study schools in this research the degree of formalisation, the time allowed for consideration and the amount of clarity around who makes what decisions and how, evolves over time. At the same time the degree of wider consultation generally lessens.

Pioneer Phase

Wood (1992) found that decision-making in an organisation’s founding period was generally ‘on the run’ and as situations arose. This was also indicated as typical of decision-making by the early principals and board members interviewed for this research. Those who could, often the principal or the core group of parents, dealt with the issues on the spot as Nancy explains.
We were always around. Every day really someone was there. Even when the first person was employed, his role was pretty well just financial. The teachers would have to lean on anyone who was available. (Nancy/Early Board Member: 140-143)

Processes for differentiating decisions in different areas were usually not in place and were only developed and formalised after some time.

A lot of it just seemed to happen — there were obvious people to do things. It was all very small so it was sort of known who could do which particular things. I can’t remember a lot of it being particularly formalised. (Dianne/Early Board Member: 130-133)

It was expected in some schools that there would usually be some form of wider consultation, as Adam and Kate describe.

Decisions reached in this situation [council meetings] were referred to the wider forum of community meetings for further discussion or ratification. (Adam/Early Principal: 63)

One of the things that was agreed was that whenever a matter was very important and involved a difficult decision, it was never resolved in one meeting. There was a discussion and then it would come back to the next council meeting. That was good because it gave you time to check it out with other people. (Kate/Inaugural Principal: 71-74)

The following examples illustrate that when issues were taken to a group, decision-making was often expected to be by consensus and this meant long and demanding meetings.

It became evident during my first year at the school that decisions were made through consensus. (Adam/Early Principal: 90)

So I wanted everyone to agree. Basically I think I was working with consensus. I certainly think on the major issues you had to have consensus or it didn’t work. We were too small. (Nancy/Early Board Member: 154-157)

I mean meetings that went on until two o’clock in the morning week after week after week. (Irene/Early Board Member: 177)
With GAS 1, a school that strived for democracy and community empowerment, there was a growing sense of the need to change. It led Adam to the observation that no one appeared to be in charge.

*However, this egalitarianism, though initially perceived by some members as a strength, during 1989 came to be perceived as obstructive to the process of reaching decisions and seeking attainable goals and this resulted in meeting procedures becoming more formal. … nobody was responsible for seeing that particular measures were carried out and even the most simple administrative tasks took on dimensions quite at variance with their content or importance. It was almost as if there was a tacit fear that formalising the roles of some individuals would detract from the preferred democratic model. Consequently the very real frustrations of some of the stakeholders and the necessity to give some direction to an innovative educational initiative were never really addressed.* (Adam/Early Principal: 86)

The focus of issues and consequent decision-making also changed for the schools as they developed. The following quotation articulates how these changes were viewed by one of the participants.

*Yes, and the goal at that point [early years of the school] was getting something to happen for the children. And then as the school develops, it’s time then to look at the adults’ needs and see how they can be better met. I’m thinking about staff facilities.* (Kate/Inaugural Principal: 642-644)

**Present Phase**

In theory, for most schools today, the responsibilities for decision-making are divided between the board and the principal, with the principal being responsible for educational and the day-to-day decisions and the board for the financial and policy decision-making. However, the boundaries between these areas of decisions are still often blurred and unclear. Some boards want a say in most decisions and some principals want to control finances and direct policy. Rachel describes her experience.

*But certainly all the time I was involved up until the time I left the council, I had been very clear about the fact that the council’s role was to manage the school’s finances and the principal’s role was to manage the educational programme. That was a fairly clear dividing line. Some people at various*
times tried to blur those boundaries. But up until I resigned, it had been clear. But it was altered at the end and then became a problem.

(Rachel/Recent Principal:31-33)

The study found that the decision-making processes generally reflect the operating structures. So in MS 1, for example, with most standing committees, issues were delegated to the committees for discussion and investigation and recommendations were then made to the board. The process was often lengthy as this quotation describes.

Say someone wanted the council to look at something in particular. Maybe it would be a new building or a group of parents who wanted after school care … The parents could write to council if they had a problem and council would discuss it; the principal could bring it up or a councillor could raise it if the parents spoke to them. Council would then discuss it and send it to the appropriate committee. If it was something to do with building, then it would go to Building and Maintenance. They would have a meeting to talk about it, look at the problem and decide how it could be solved and what the cost would be and then that would come back to council with a recommendation as to what was the best way to solve it. Then council would make the decision. Finance would also have to agree that it could be funded. Then it would go back to Building and Maintenance to actually do the organising of it. A procedure for this was laid out in the council guidelines, parent’s handbook and in the teacher’s handbook. (Rachel/Recent Principal:44-46)

MS 2 had fewer standing committees but had guidelines for issues to be thoroughly investigated before decisions were made. MS 3 also had fewer committee structures and instead had a policy that each issue would be aired in the community.

Well, I would go to the board—say if we were changing the age children moved25—and they would discuss it and talk to the other teachers. Then we would have a round robin on what people thought and we would look at implications and then make a decision. (Mary/Recent Principal:42-45)

In the direct democracy school the power was firmly with the status quo. Nothing could be changed without unanimous agreement of the principal, staff, and the attending parents. Olivia describes the process.

25 The age children moved from one multi-aged grouped area to another (from 3-6 to 6-9 or from 6-9 to 9-12 years.)
To change anything, everyone has to agree. For instance, we had a rule that the students weren’t allowed to buy cakes. This took ages for everyone to agree [to make a change]. (Olivia/Inaugural & Current Principal: 27-28)

Decision-making became more formalised over the schools’ development from foundation to the present. It became accepted by most that the processes of decision-making had to become more streamlined and efficient in response to what was considered necessary for survival. Documentation and procedures were put into place in order to become more professional and equitable. Oliver and Fran explain.

Lots of factors were shaping how either the school needed to make changes or I don’t think the school would exist. (Oliver/ Recent Principal: 590)

It's taken management where it needs to be, which is to a more professional realm and so that we have effective decision-making. So the decisions are made efficiently and quickly and effectively. And the tough stuff is really dealt with. The tendency before that was you could always keep discussing it and the board has perhaps received a bit of flak for that. It's actually been healthier. People know where they are. It's been cleaner and healthier and generally it's been a good response. (Fran/Current Principal: 284-286; 1)

The study shows that as these independent schools got bigger and better established, communication with the wider community became more formalised with procedures set out in policies and published in handbooks. Parent involvement was likely to become less intense and more focused on the classroom level than in the past. The following examples discuss this trend.

[Parent involvement] is much less now and I guess that is sad in a way. And their involvement with the children becomes a little more remote than before. But I think the school still offers parents the opportunity to be really involved if they want to but not on the management side and I think that is much healthier. (Rita/Early Board Member: 165-169)

They [parents] have been pushed out of it. I think for some parents they would find it hard to see where they fit but we feel it’s a healthy move because they should not be making some of the key financial decisions without knowledge. (Fran/ Current Principal: 298-301)

With the implementation of more committees in many schools, meetings are more frequent and the work and time commitment continues to be demanding.
Sure my work changed but the volume didn’t. I can’t say it got any easier. (Dan/Inaugural & Present Principal: 25; 2)

Quite often the meetings would go on for three or four hours. But they were information sharing times; they weren’t times of stress and crisis. (Oliver/Recent Principal:141-143)

Several participants talked about the difficulties that resulted from having these various decision-making groups. As Gail explains, it becomes a challenge to keep the various groups coordinated and going in the same direction.

So decisions are ad hoc and they don’t always carry us in the same direction. They sometimes end up conflicting. They are also more responsive than proactive. (Gail/Current Chairperson: 187-188)

ISSUES AND CRISES

This research illustrates that early and present board members perceive some different issues as important to school governance. The two groups also identified differences in the crises they had to deal with. There were some issues, however, such as financial stability and obtaining and keeping staff, which appear to be important right throughout a school’s history.

Pioneering Phase

The issues recalled by respondents from the foundation period of a school fell into the areas of burnout of parents and staff, staff recruitment, financial and management struggles, and the conflicts that arose over what values looked like in practice. These issues often led to economic difficulty, splits and divisions, and groups leaving. Just surviving was a challenge. Irene explains.

I think if we’d had more support, we would have had more success. Because we often spent a lot of time and energy on trying to sort out the things we didn’t really have the background or knowledge for doing. If somebody could have come in and given us more direction, I think we would have sorted things out better. (Irene/Early Board Member:173-176)
One participant advises future board members to be aware of that moment when they have done all they can for a school and be prepared to let go.

*I think I would watch for that moment when it ceases to be a picnic. The edges [of responsibility] keep going out and in my mind there is a kind of crisis, which has maybe gone on ever since, and it would be at that point I would say the time has come[to let go].* (Nancy/Early Board Member: 223-227)

Other schools established in the 1970s and 1980s did not survive. One board member from a case study school comments on the demise of one of these earlier schools:

*I guess the destructive parents, where negativity builds negativity and it’s very easy to follow a negative lead. So I guess at the end of the day they won the battle and it was really, really sad because the pawns were the kids. So they went out [after the first site was lost due to financial problems] and set up another school site but it was dead anyway. About two years after that it was totally disbanded.* (Lynne/Early Board Member: 39-45)

Finding and keeping staff has always been difficult. As these early board members remember, there were problems with finding the ‘right sort’ of teachers and then with protecting them from demanding parents and other stresses.

*They left* for all sorts of reasons other than dissatisfaction. *When we were having trouble with principals or parents, they did get very tired. There were other staff who came for the wrong reasons.* (Irene/Early Board Member: 321-322)

*Often problems arose around employing suitable staff. Then having employed someone and not being happy with the decision and not knowing how to handle it. Then if you weren’t particularly happy where did you go to for someone better anyway.* (Dianne/Early Boar Member: 195-197)

*The council really wishes to see that the teachers don’t burn out. This is a real problem in these schools. I think all independent schools have this problem, how you work with that and how you sustain and nourish people so that they can keep going.* (Eve/Early & Current Board Member: 230-233)

Teachers and principals suffered burnout and stress from the demands of teaching in these schools, as these two participants describe.

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26 Parents from this school went on to found one of the schools in this study in 1990.
One girl said, “I can’t cope because it’s like teaching in a goldfish bowl.” [parents have access to the classrooms whenever they want] Everybody knows what everyone is doing because it was completely open plan. (Donald/Inaugural Principal: 184-185)

I think anybody in this job is definitely going to burn out. It’s a real life style and a huge commitment. (Nina/Current Principal: 125)

Several financial crises were recalled. While some were caused by external factors beyond governance control, many were the result of mismanagement and a lack of expertise, as Megan relates.

Not intentional [mismanagement] but people had roles and didn’t always know how to conduct them. A whole lot of inexperienced people who put up their hands and said I’d like to be on the committee, and then they were delegated a job that they didn’t have the skills for. (Megan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 220-222; 2)

The loss of enrolments through conflict and dissatisfaction also had financial implications, resulting in a cost in human resources as well. These conflicts arose from differences in expectations and what values and visions looked like in practice.

We had a bit of a crisis after about two years. Really it was between parents and it was initiated from a problem with a student in the classroom and the directress handling it in a particular way. (Dianne/Early Board Member: 60-62)

People use the same words but have a different picture in their head as to what the words actually mean. (Nadine/Early Board Member & Early Principal: 23)

The high expectations and emotional involvement of those concerned often led to a sense of bitter disappointment and a sense of failure when conflicts arose, as Rita explains.

I think they get devastated. They think they’ve given their heart and soul and become so involved and they don’t get any remuneration … To me the risk of destruction isn’t worth it because the children get distraught. Everything falls apart and the parents rip them out of school. The expectation is that it will be a happy community and it’s devastating when it’s not. (Rita/Early Board Member: 159-173)
The resolution to these situations was usually that groups left the school, the loss of enrolments then adding financial stress to the other difficulties.

*It was sorted out because people left the school. Those who stayed totally supported the directress. It ran very, very smoothly then for sometime.*

*(Dianne/Early Board Member: 70-72)*

*So we had a big meeting in a hall, and he said what he would do, and I said what I would do, and half the parents went with him and half went with me.*

*(Donald/Inaugural Principal: 46-47)*

Once the collective stage had passed and schools moved into a sustaining stage with a need to formalise and clarify roles and responsibilities, power struggles and conflicts arose around definitions and boundaries (see also Chapter Six).

*I let everyone have his or her say and we finished with a vote. He lost the vote and he just lost it completely. He stormed up to me and threw stuff at me. This abuse went on for about five minutes and then he walked out.*

*(Vic/Early Board Member: 42-45)*

These same sorts of issues led to crises in the present phase as well.

**Present Phase**

In the present phase, interviewees identified getting and keeping skilled and professional people on the board as crucial to their success as Megan and Dan explain.

*It has managed to achieve a lot in a short while and has involved some excellent people with the expertise, knowledge and contacts that were necessary at each stage.* *(Megan/Inaugural & Current Principal:103-104; 1)*

*That is the other reason why we've been pretty stable is that we've never had a large turnover of board members.* *(Dan/Current Principal: 300-301; 1)*

These two principals describe not being able to recruit the right people to the board as limiting and the cause of many difficulties.

*It is very hard to get a nice cross-section, balanced council and because people are making decisions in areas that they are not very expert in, some of them will react by not wanting to make any decisions and leaving it all to the principal. Others will react by being extra pedantic about everything and wanting to take over.* *(Rachel/Recent Principal:57-59)*
I think the other problem is that people take on the chair when they haven’t got the time. They have the energy then something comes up in their job and they are off to Sydney for four weeks or something … They often don’t quite realise what they are committing themselves to either. You know it’s one of those situations at the AGM where it’s the person who doesn’t look away who gets the job. That’s not really satisfactory. (Nina/Current Principal: 207-213; 2)

Related to the difficulties of obtaining board members with expertise and managing the different personalities, come issues to do with the professionalism of board members. As these two examples demonstrate, concern is expressed about parents maintaining objectivity, impartiality and confidentiality. These kinds of concerns were not issues in the early pioneering phase where parents were the driving force behind the schools’ establishment.

Certainly parents being parents at the time is a big problem because it’s hard for them to be objective. (Rachel/Recent Principal:36)

And sometimes they just know too much. They've heard something at the board meeting and they just can't keep their mouths shut. The cons are that very often decisions are made on emotions if the parent has a child in that classroom. (Mary/Recent Principal:53-57)

It seems the role of the lay volunteer board member is being challenged in some schools and the increasing recruitment of experts means that in some schools, the principal’s power is further entrenched.

I’ve recommended very strongly in our school that we rework the role of volunteers in the management level because council members who are volunteers have often quite critical roles in our schools and I just think we are too big for that. (Fran/Current Principal: 19-21)

I prefer not to cut across the tracks of the principal who I think should be the main figure head for the parents and staff … I think it would be very deleterious to the whole process if you had experts interfering [in the educational area] because that could lead to real problems. (Max/Current Chairperson:38-55)

In other schools, however, there is still some blurring of boundaries and struggles for power as Ross reveals.
No I was interested in joining council because I could see at the time that the community school had a lot of merit but unfortunately it was factionalised … They [the people on council at the time] just wanted to run the place. They felt they had the answers but they had no educational qualifications to be telling people what my child should be learning. (Ross/Current Chairperson: 28-29; 46-48)

In this phase, as in the pioneer phase, the solution is for groups to leave.

They went around spreading spurious rumours and nonsense in the car park … They picked on her [the principal] in a very unfair manner. It was totally unethical what they did to her. Virtually they were destroying her reputation and destroying her ambitions. She needed support, so basically a number of concerned parents ganged up at a council meeting and objected to the faction running the council —who interestingly were a bunch of ex-pats on wealthy ex-pat salaries who seemed to have some kind of idea that they were our colonial masters. So they decamped and went on to create havoc at several other schools. (Ross/Current Chairperson:36-46)

It was a power struggle between strong people within the college about who was going to be running the high school. It was resolved because one lot left. They basically said "I can’t work with this any longer." (Jack/ Early & Current Board Member: 308-312)

The continual changeover of individuals, parents, students, and particularly teachers and board members, is also more of a problem in the present phase than at foundation. In the pioneering stage the core group of parents tended to stay involved for longer periods, although eventually they burn out. The principal was also generally long serving (see Chapter 8). It is interesting to note that WS 1, which also has the Foundation Council, has two board members that have been associated with the school from its very earliest years. Maintaining continuity of ethos and vision, always difficult, becomes more problematic the more changes there are at principal and board level as these three participants explain.

I guess every year, the changeover, you lost momentum. (Kate/Inaugural Principal:99)

Small schools do have a problem in maintaining the momentum over several years because it’s the teacher or the principal plus a small group of parents who are avidly in favour of this particular philosophy or what-have-you. You might wear the teachers out, you might have an unsuitable teacher but
in any case the parents are only there as parents for so long and then they move on and you don’t have that continuity. (Len/Key Informant: 64-69)

They go through this period where they fall apart for a while and some of the families go and it’s just this natural shedding and the school reinvents itself again about every seven or eight years. There are a lot of casualties along the way. I think that is part and parcel of small schools. (Jeff/Key Informant: 427-431)

Nearly all interviewees talked about the need to be more professional and business-like but only one school reported having a formal induction programme for new board members or a school-wide evaluation process, although several indicated that these were areas that need to be addressed.

And I think that’s a new thing [board training] for independent schools because we picked up on that type of council education through the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia in-servicing. (Oliver/Recent Principal: 218-219)

I think we have been relatively poor about induction, not through desire but for practical reasons. (Dan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 123-124;1)

It seems that schools are instead opting for board members with expertise in particular areas and who know their place, rather than educating their stakeholder volunteers as Rita and Roger's responses illustrate.

I think we wrote a list of where we wanted them to come from. Somebody who was a lawyer, somebody who was an accountant. So we actually wanted to have on the board people who would be beneficial to the school. (Rita/Early Board Member: 75-78)

Councils simply can’t deal with those issues at that level and in many ways nor should they have to. It just confuses things and for most of them the answer will always be don’t increase my fees. Don’t do this, don’t do that! They are too involved. (Roger/Current Principal: 148-150)

The choice of people with particular expertise, although this may be different from how they use that expertise as a member of a board, has still distanced the governance process from the majority of stakeholders and developed an ‘us and them' mentality, as these three examples make clear.
It became harder and harder to maintain that feeling of ownership as the school got bigger and bigger and a lot of people didn’t feel it at all. (Rachel/Recent Principal: 54-55)

Last year there was a little group appointed by the council to try and talk to some of these aggrieved parents who were very bitter about things. This group did meet a few times. (Eve/Early & Current Board Member: 550-552)

The school is currently dealing with that issue of the council being seen as the ‘in-crowd’ in the perception of some of the rest of the parents. (Dan/Current Principal:73-75; 2)

In the present phase many of the pressures schools face are considered by some participants as being beyond the skills of elected representatives and thus too difficult for parent or volunteer councils.

Most of them didn’t have any expertise in the area of management and yet they wanted to keep control. I think quite often this happens in the area of community-based groups. Even in the current literature we talk about not just parent-run but parent-owned schools. I think that is partly what happened. We got enthusiastic about it all but because we don’t have the expertise and now we don’t have the time, with both parents working all the time, it all just falls apart. (Roger/Current Principal: 102-108)

You see, our school’s problem is a complex one and behind all the complexity sits a council, which seems not only to be out of touch but not very able in an ability kind of way. (Kerry/Key Informant: 91-91)

External pressures come from government accountability demands and the need to be more bureaucratic and professional as Roger and Megan explain.

At the same time trying to balance the pragmatics of it. If we don’t do that what will happen to federal and state funding. We need the funding. We sign a document that says we will do assessment, you’ve got no option. You either do it or we close down. (Roger/Current Principal: 140-142)

We are not seeing the [small] schools starting now either. They are starting schools that grow rapidly to twelve hundred. It’s the economies of scale. I think maybe we are the dinosaurs and are dying out, maybe small schools are. I think that’s the issue with the amount of documentation and the amount of admin needed these days that it is actually putting small schools out of business. They either have to get bigger so they have the staff to share the load or they are just folding. (Megan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 51-56; 2)
Roger considers that parents are generally relieved not to have governance responsibilities.

*I think from their [parents] perspective leaving the running of the school, well the operational side of it, to the people employed and having the confidence in that, is a relief rather than them having to take on responsibilities.* (Roger/Current Principal:156-158)

The clash about values in the present phase then is not so much about what values look like in practice, although there may be still some of that, but whether the values or at least the vision needs to change as a result of these external pressures.

*But I think it was a healthy thing to do. To say to parents, “Look there are issues around confidentiality, there are issues around the best interest of the school, there are issues around industrial processes, there is a response to curriculum initiatives, and those things being so you might not necessarily have the school you want.”* (Oliver/Recent Principal:224-229)

School principals and councils find they are dealing with changing and conflicting community demands and expectations.

*I guess one of the biggest changes is in parent expectations and I need to say it’s actually a lowering of parent expectations in terms of philosophy. When we first started parents came really committed in that Montessori was really what they wanted and they backed it up in the home and it was the philosophy they were committed to. You would have almost a full turn out to parent night, especially on topics to do with philosophy. I don’t find they are committed so much to the philosophy as convenience now.* (Megan/Inaugural & Current Principal:103-108;2)

*She’s had troubles [the present principal]. See I just go by the newsletter but when you start going into upper and middle class and professional people, there are always awkward questions going to be asked at some stage. The awkward questions might be when are you going to start French, when are you going to do this, when are you going to start that. They don’t look at what they already have.* (Donald/Inaugural Principal: 236-240)

Difficulty in obtaining suitable staff is a continuing problem. As well, a growing sense of staff empowerment has also become an issue that schools have to deal with, as Kate and Mike describe.

*There was a growing expectation by staff to have more say in the running of the school and that included the way the budget was structured. … It was*
when the staff got to a point where we had a lot of very experienced staff who, I guess, wanted more out of their work. They then started pushing the boundaries of what they were responsible for in the school. (Kate/Inaugural Principal: 278-279, 355-357)

At this school I think it actually ended up with support for different groups of teachers and that just crucified the system. Certain teachers didn’t want to work as part of a team and they got the ears and the eyes too of certain members of council. (Mike/Early Board Member: 130-135)

Teachers have also become more industrial, seeking better pay and conditions and schools have accepted the need to improve them.

As the staff became more established, long term, there was less willingness to give up their own time. There was a push for, “We want to have the same conditions as the teachers in any other school.” And yes that was great, but at the same time it took away from the spirit in the school. (Kate/Inaugural Principal: 777-781)

I was very much part of the evolution toward making sure that teachers were remunerated equally. … That very much happened because of a necessity to change. The industrial relations climate of the mid-eighties was saying to schools either look after your staff or we’ll intervene through industrial processes. Also making sure good staff stayed. Why would someone work somewhere when they could work somewhere else and receive a lot more money? (Oliver/Recent Principal: 572-577)

While financial and funding issues continue to be of concern and one of the schools involved in this research closed during the period of this research for these reasons and another is under threat of closure, the other schools in the study have survived for a considerable period of time now and have reached a measure of security and stability in this regard. Roger and Max express the continuing concern in this area.

Yes, it’s a bit worrying. When I look at the salary increases in the last year, you just never get in front. There are those sort of pressures. (Max/Current Chairperson: 150-151)

Funding and finances continue to be problems. It will be a continual problem. I think we are stabilising a lot of those things by examining the policies that will either drive it or inhibit it. (Roger/Current Principal: 332-334)
Increasingly the challenges confronting board members and principals are the forms of leadership needed in the present context and the skills required by the principal's role. Principals are finding that the job is changing whether they like it or not as it becomes more and more demanding at all levels.

If you asked me a few years ago, I would have been really raving about it and positive. But at the end of my time, I feel exhausted and defeated. (Nina/Current Principal: 66-67; 2)

I finally realised I just needed more time. It is a huge full on job emotionally, physically and just in pure hours. (Dan/Current Principal: 4-5; 2)

Schools are finding principals increasingly difficult to recruit as these two quotations demonstrate.

And finding those principals who have got the talent, the energy, the enthusiasm and the skills. You have to be around a little bit before you have all that. Then you pay them a pittance. (Vic/Early Board Member: 351-353)

What I found was that the number of applicants was quite limited. There are a few other schools looking for principals at the moment and I heard that they also have the same situation, despite advertising and advertising. (Nina/Current Principal: 132-134; 2)

Megan and Nina discuss how applicants and their motivations have changed, maintaining that it takes a sense of passion to be a principal in these schools.

But it’s a different sort of person coming in too. I think we were the end of an era. The new people that I see within the principal’s group are more business-orientated. They come from a business aspect. They love that side of it. Whereas we’ve come from the teaching side and we’re energised by that. It’s whatever your passion is. … You don’t see the loyalty to schools any more. The principals stay for two or three years then they move on to their next career path. They actually see it as a career. They don’t see it as a life’s passion and when you go to a Head’s of school meeting, you actually hear them talk in a different way. (Megan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 30-39; 2)

But you need people who have got a special extra kind of commitment. What I’ve seen is that where they’ve made an appointment from the Education Department, they’ve lasted about six weeks. They come in, sit in the office, go home at three o’clock and go, "oh well what is all the fuss about it’s home time". They just can’t do the job with that public service attitude because it’s a life style not just a job. (Nina/Current Principal: 140-144; 2)
As one board member put it commenting on principal burn-out,

*I think you just need to expect to lose them. To turn over a principal every five years and plan for it, either that or have some way of letting them recharge their batteries every five years.* (Vic/Early Board Member: 423-425)

Others saw what was happening as part of a cycle related specifically to the leadership role but also probably an inevitable process.

*That’s probably why you get this cyclical thing. You thrive on the energy of the new principal and then the principal burns out and there is a changeover period.* (Vic/Early Board Member: 348-350)

*I think that’s part of the cycle too now. A. reckons it’s a six year cycle and it happens every six years regardless . . . There was one (conflict) the year before I started here. So that was six or seven years ago. So you can see it, here is the cycle [my resignation].* (Nina/Current Principal: 84-85 & 95-96; 2)

Megan also comments on this cyclical aspect and on what this loss of mission means for principals and their schools.

*And they [principals] could wear all the extra work and the bumps that come along because they could get up in the morning and look forward to seeing the kids. I think as their schools got bigger, they’ve had less contact with the students and then within twelve months or two years later they leave. They just don’t have the same joy. . . . It is changing and once you’ve lost the people who have started schools or were there in the early days, well I think that is just a natural evolution that will come. Because they have given their whole life to setting up those schools and often their whole family has been involved as well.* (Megan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 9-12, 46-49; 2)

Some of these pressures that schools are experiencing, the need for more professionalism and business-like management, are also reflected in the documents schools produce. The evolution of school documents, particularly school prospectuses, demonstrates this trend.

DOCUMENTS

The progression to a more image-based approach to school documentation and promotion, particularly that produced for public dissemination, is investigated by
comparing documents created in a school’s foundation period with those produced in
the last few years. The documents collected for the pioneer phase are school’s early
prospectuses and the “Directory of Small Independent Schools and Community Schools
in Western Australia” booklet from 1985. In 1985 most of the schools in the study were
in their foundation phase. Ten of the independent schools in this study were in existence
when the booklet was produced and appeared in this booklet. It has fourteen other
entries but only five of these other schools are still operating. The information for the
booklet was supplied by the schools themselves and was compiled as a means of
promotion for the schools.

**Pioneer Phase**

*Prospectus Genre*

The school prospectus genre for these early texts consists of a short history or
introduction to the school, a statement of its philosophy, curriculum description,
enrolment procedures or application forms, and statements about parent’s obligations
regarding their contributions and involvement.

Parents are encouraged, indeed are expected, to play a full part in the life
of the school by participating in regular working bees, assisting in fund-raising ventures, attending parent education/discussion evenings and
helping the teachers on such occasions as school outings. (School
Prospectus MS 1, 1982)

It is vital that in this school the best aspects of home life exist. The child
must feel secure, motivated, happy and experience success. Consequently
there must be real cooperation between home and school. We encourage
parent involvement, advice and participation. (School Prospectus OIS 3,
1984)

These documents stress, by centrality and by the space the topic occupies, the particular
approach and philosophy they are offering. In some cases this is accomplished by
posing common questions parents might want answered, such as “Why do we introduce
cultural learning?” or “How does individualised instruction really work?” or by

comparing the curriculum to what is more commonly available.

We have tried to avoid being labelled. Over the years we’ve been
variously called an Open, Progressive, Innovative, Traditional or
Community School. We are in fact a balanced blend of all of these. Recent
educational research comparing ‘traditional’ to ‘open’ schools found that
the best results are achieved by a mixture of the two. (School Prospectus OIS
7, 1984)

The physical resources of the school are not generally emphasised in these documents,
although the environment and location such as ‘beside the sea’ or ‘situated on three
acres in the hills,’ is usually included. Several prospectuses list or mention the people
involved. One of the schools includes the heading:

People: The main resource
Teachers, children and parents are the school’s greatest resource. (School
Prospectus OIS 5, 1984)

The format for the entries in the “Directory of Small Independent Schools and
Community Schools in Western Australia”: school name, school philosophy, school
governance, age range, number of pupils, fees and contact details. The entries are brief
and strictly informative. Twenty-two of the twenty-four schools listed in the booklet
give governance and ownership as being by elected representatives of the school
community. Of the other two, one is a Christian school owned and governed by the
church, and the other is listed as being owned by the principal. The foreword to the
booklet clearly states its aim to promote the listed schools but warns that demand for
places exceeds supply. The listing of schools aimed to increase the opportunities for
networking between schools and increase the awareness and access of the general public
to these schools.
Presentation

These early documents are not sophisticated or professional in appearance. Only one is professionally printed in brown and black on textured paper. The other prospectuses were clearly produced by parents or office staff. Generally photocopied, black and white on office quality stationery, they are stapled or simply loose leaf and folded. This is true even of the prospectus from the school established in 2000, which is two A4, single-sided sheets folded into thirds. Although all but this one predates the desktop publishing facilities of modern offices, they are also indicative of a time when there was less importance given to image as a strategic device for promoting schools. They reflect the pioneering focus on foundation and mission rather than image and on their aim to be alternatives to more traditional forms of education. Perhaps the high demand for places of the era, mentioned above, was also a factor.

As well as being unprofessionally produced, the layout of the text in all but the 2000 prospectus is crowded and linear. There are wordy explanations and details provided under many different headings. The 2000 foundation prospectus, in contrast, uses the device of snappy dot points more typical of documents of today. From information obtained from a range of documents, it is seen that very little changed in regard to style and presentation of prospectuses until the mid-1990s. For example, the school established in 1991 produced a version of its loose leafed prospectus printed in blue ink in 1994. However, in all other aspects the document remained unchanged.

Language and Iconography

Today a logo is a necessary part of a school’s corporate image. Slogans are also used to summarise a school’s values and its philosophical position. Only one of the foundation schools in this study made use of a logo and displayed a slogan or motto.

Helping them to help themselves. (School Prospectus MS 1, 1982)
This suggests little focus on such techniques for schools of the earlier period. The other prospectuses do include a few photographs, generally blurred and indistinct, of children and in two cases, sketches of the building and landscape. The photographs depict images of smiling and engaged children. The language employed is generally factually orientated, although there is liberal use of terms such as whole child, independence, individual development, innovative, caring, respect, family-orientated and cooperative.

Present Phase

Recent prospectuses or handbooks were collected for all the schools in the study with the exception of the school that has since ceased operations. These are compared under the same categories of genre, presentation, language and iconography to the early prospectuses.

Prospectus Genre

The school prospectus genre for these recent texts has changed little and consists of much the same elements as the earlier texts. They include, generally in this order, a short history or introduction to the school, a statement or outline of philosophy, a description of curriculum areas and enrolment procedures or application forms. Parent involvement continues to be mentioned as an important aspect of these schools, although less in the prospectus itself and more in the accompanying information ‘pack’. Where references are made in the prospectuses, they are often more general than before and made in passing.

We encourage parents to reinforce our standards and work closely with teachers. (OIS 1, 2000)
The philosophy and curriculum continue to be central, occurring early in the format, although the focus is now less on being an alternative to other educational sectors and more on how they in fact meet state requirements and incorporate student outcomes.

The school teaches all key learning areas of the Curriculum Framework. (OIS 5, 2003)

The primary programme fulfils government syllabus criteria. (MS 3, 2003)

There are additional headings to those seen in the earlier prospectuses, such as social responsibility, discipline and special needs.

There are few discipline problems in a Montessori classroom because of the strong sense of order, which balances structure and freedom. The concept that freedom carries responsibility is introduced from the time a child enters the school. (MS 4, 2003)

A specialist teacher is provided to assist those children with needs not easily catered for in class groups. (OIS 7, 2002)

Presentation

It is in the area of presentation that the most dramatic changes can be seen in most of the modern prospectuses from the research sites. There is now a larger range of formats with five prospectuses using an A4 quarter folded, double sided presentation, four are presented in varying sizes of a booklet form, one is a large folder with a pocket for inserts and two of the schools seem to have no generic prospectus but only provide prospective parents with a pack of photocopied information pages.

Three of the prospectuses are not professionally produced and do not incorporate photographs. One of the booklets is made up of unstapled, photocopied pages. Another booklet, from the government alternative school is called a handbook and consists of stapled photocopied pages with a printed cover that is not particularly attractive. This handbook was originally produced in 1989 and has not changed substantially since then.
Another school has a folded version with simple folded photocopied sheets on coloured paper.

However, seven prospectuses are more sophisticated and very professionally produced. They make use of glossy paper and bright or subtle colours. There is a distinct shift from the verbal to more visual forms of presentation with attractive colour or tinted photographs dominating the layouts in all but one of these. The photographs give a visual presentation through the use of ‘snapshots’ as part of the narrative of school life. As the school prospectus is aimed at prospective parents, conservative elements are still common. There is little use of ‘tilted’ grids and other devices, such as obscured and disrupted text or dot points for rapid access to information, that are common in the graphics of professional documents and advertisements today. The material is still organised in a linear form with wordy text and lots of information. However, one prospectus does make use of curved headings, three use some dot points, one uses framed text, and another, rather than glossy photographs, has faint, tinted photographs as a background to the text. In general the text is less crowded and more accessible than with the early prospectuses.

Language and Iconography

Nine schools are now making use of a logo and four schools employ a slogan or motto in their documents.

Aim for Excellence. (OIS 1, 2000)

Meeting the real needs of children. (OIS 3, 2003)

Discovering the individual possibilities within every child. (OIS 5, 2003)
Unlike the larger independent schools, there is no reference to the date of establishment on the cover and only one logo is a traditional shield design. The other logos are more environmentally iconic with stylised devices such as a butterfly, trees, a beehive, a river and a building. One has stylised people and another is a triangle with a Q. The photographic images employed are still of happy and engaged students in various learning situations. Only two, however, have technology references, such as showing students using computers.

The text generally utilises impersonal prose with the mode of address being indirect and informal. It tends to refer to students in the collective rather than the individualised sense.

The children are encouraged to pursue their interests and create their own work habits, which the teacher monitors and facilitates in a dynamic way. (MS 3, 2003)

Like the language of the earlier prospectuses, terms such as wholistic, independence, individual, innovative, caring and respect are common. The notions of social responsibility, discipline and excellence are now also included.

Similarly children with exceptional ability in a curriculum area will receive the stimulus of challenging activities. (OIS 7, 2003)

Overall there is less emphasis on passing on factual information and more articulation of the ethos of the school.

It is a place of possibilities, where education is fun and the success of every child is important. (OIS 5, 2003)

There are more references to the resources the school offers such as access to computers, creative playgrounds and specialist programmes, such as foreign languages or music.
The two schools that featured students with computers in their prospectuses were also the only two schools with professional and interactive web sites that included virtual tours of the school, photos of personnel, work galleries, games and activities, as well as the usual information and promotional formats. Other schools did have web pages linked to educational sites but they were mostly brief and non-interactive, and were not as impressive as these two. These two schools are obviously positioning themselves as modern, innovative and technological schools preparing their students for the future.

The web site from one of these schools explains how it has changed.

The school is the oldest ‘alternative’ school in Western Australia … It was considered very innovative and radical at the time … We are now more of a ‘community’ school than an ‘alternative’ school. (OIS 5 2003)

The majority of prospectuses of the present phase are indicative of how schools endeavour to present themselves in the education market of today, as more professional and corporate in approach. The schools are more conscious of the need to influence the educational choice of their consumers, prospective parents, and to increase, or at least maintain, their share of enrolments. The public documents, such as prospectuses, that they produce are generally more sophisticated, more visual and more iconic than in the past. Two of the schools make reference to the school having and valuing school uniforms. According to Symes (1998), these are discourses of education that are in accord with parental expectations of the performance and ethos of independent schools and differ from parental expectations of governments schools. It is interesting to note that the one government school in the study still has an old-fashioned prospectus, displaying a stylised tree logo and no photographs. It has yet to respond to the marketing imperatives felt by nearly all the other schools.
The more conservative independent schools are also changing their images, incorporating much of the rhetoric of the community school sector. There are more references, visual and textual, to family, individual needs, supportive environments and even innovative curricula. The two forms of independent schooling, traditional and alternative, grow more like one another as they consciously employ many similar impression management strategies. The schools that come from the community involvement movement, however, do maintain some distinctions from the traditional independent school sector image. Unlike other larger and more traditional independent schools, these schools are not making focused use of traditional or ecclesiastical images or references, such as imposing architecture, un-stated affluence, traditional uniformed students and conservative values. Only one prospectus includes a map showing the location of the school. Although no longer stressing their alternativeness or the same level of parent involvement, these schools are generally still promoting themselves as happy, forward looking, successful schools that offer a nurturing and supportive environment, and where students are catered for as individuals.

CONCLUSION

Based on my interviews I modified Wood’s (1992) model. The idea of cycles or phases of development in governance emerged from the interviews and was applicable to these schools that changed in many aspects over time. The operating structures, in the forms of board composition, stakeholder representation and committees, became more formalised, eventually exhibiting the characteristics of the super-managing phase described by Wood’s model. In the super-managing phase, boards generally become focused on policies, delineating roles and establishing procedures. Many committees
were created, staff became more involved, and decision-making became more time consuming. For the first time the principal’s vision was challenged by board members or the other teachers. Crises developed from the splits and divisions that resulted. One participant postulated that:

*Though the ups and downs of the early years left hard-to-heal wounds, it was still a necessary stage. Perhaps it is necessary for some people to go through particular traumas, to learn first hand of the problems that emerge in any group setting, before they can deal with the dynamics of a particular situation.* (Adam/Early Principal: 87)

All of the schools in the study, except for two, the direct democracy school and the very newly established school, have been through this evolutionary process and the supermanaging phase. Many appear now to have, or to be developing, characteristics of the corporate phase as they become focused on being more professional and competitive in the market-orientated context within which they find themselves. One school, MS 5, seems to have moved rapidly to exhibit many of the characteristics of the ratifying stage. This is most probably due to the decision at the schools foundation to be more professional by setting up a fully nominated board. Only in the direct democracy school, where power remains with the status quo and therefore, essentially with the inaugural principal of twenty-eight years, has little change taken place. In this school the structures, roles and behaviours have altered little from the founding period, although the principal does lament some loss of the original pioneering spirit in order to meet changing expectations.

*People expect you to have computers and so on. I don’t decry computers. I wouldn’t be without them but they take space. I think when we were poor and had to struggle we met the needs of the child better. Our struggle communicated to the students and parents and they joined the struggle much more closely so they were working with us to meet their needs.* (Olivia/Inaugural & Current Principal: 40-42)
In the corporate phase there is a reliance on bureaucratic procedures and the oversight of
the school by more expert board members. Power is generally placed with the principal
as they are relied upon to manage and run the school. The position is seen as that of a
chief executive officer who reports to the board but has a great deal of freedom under
the policies and procedures established. The board relies on the information and reports
from the principal in nearly all areas, although a few of the schools also have some
administrative staff such as bursars who also report. At the same time teachers are more
likely to challenge the principal and take issues to the board. This often leads to
conflicts and divisions. The principal who often no longer teaches loses contact with
parents and students and is therefore isolated. As more is asked of them, they are also
positioned as a line manager between the board and the staff who they now evaluate. If
the principal survives and adapts to this corporate role, then a ratifying stage may follow
where they enjoy little interference and boards simply endorse their decisions. If there is
a serious threat to a school’s survival, however, then schools may literally fall apart and
start again with a new principal and more harmonised stakeholders, and a short
pioneering stage follows, starting the cycle again.

All of the case study schools have many of the characteristics of the corporate phase.
The argument as to whether the changes in these school’s characteristics is evidence of
phases of development or the reflection of external trends in governance styles, is
discussed in detail in Chapter 9, following the interview data being examined under the
lens of two other frameworks. Table 6.6 gives a summary of the present characteristics
of the case study schools in terms of the phases of development in school governance
framework and indicates clearly that most could be situated in Woods (1992) corporate
or even ratifying stages.
Table 6.6: Present Structures and Governance Attributes of the Case Study Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board or Council</th>
<th>Case Study School 1 (MS)</th>
<th>Case Study School 2 (MS)</th>
<th>Case Study School 3 (WS)</th>
<th>Case Study School 4 (OIS)</th>
<th>Case Study School 5 (GAS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Board Members Roles &amp; Behaviour</td>
<td>Financial &amp; policy direction Long term planning Staffing supportive Relies on principal as CEO</td>
<td>Financial &amp; policy direction Long term planning Staffing supportive Relies on principal as CEO</td>
<td>Financial &amp; policy direction Long term planning Staffing supportive Relies on principal as CEO</td>
<td>Financial &amp; policy direction Long term planning Staffing supportive Relies on principal as CEO</td>
<td>Involving parents Some policy decisions Staffing supportive Relies on principal as CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making</td>
<td>Most decisions made by professionals</td>
<td>Most decisions made by professionals</td>
<td>Most decisions made by professionals</td>
<td>Many decisions made by professionals, some by committees</td>
<td>Most decisions made by professionals, Education Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent difficulties &amp; crises</td>
<td>Staff wanting power Lack of expertise Lay volunteers Financial mismanagement Leadership Recruitment</td>
<td>Financial Loss of mission</td>
<td>Financial Staff wanting power Factions</td>
<td>Principal’s vision challenged Factions Lack of time of chairperson Burnout Leadership Recruitment</td>
<td>Loss of mission Commitment of principals &amp; staff Factions Leadership Recruitment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If other schools move into a ratifying stage at sometime in the future, it will be interesting to see if the pressures they face to re-image and even to change previously held values lead to further crises. There is already some indication of this as all of the case study schools, and most of the other schools in the study, are already distancing parents and stakeholders from everyday management responsibilities. Already it is perceived that more expertise is required of board members and that lay volunteers lack
skills and objectivity. The number of committees is being reduced and principals are given more decision-making discretion. As administrative practices are trapped in the discourses of efficiency, productivity and accountability, it appears those serving on school councils have already begun to regulate themselves to accept the power and influence of principals and administrative staff.

It may be that councils were always dominated by a relatively small elite group of parents and teachers who were recruited rather than elected but now they are increasingly chosen for their expertise rather than their commitment and willingness to work. I argue, that the majority of stakeholders, as they become more distanced and disenfranchised from the process, will view the governing body and the principal with increasing mistrust. For many schools this impacts upon their identities and irrevocably changes their core values. The implications for loss of community and parent empowerment are discussed in detail in Chapter 7.
CHAPTER 7

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AS COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

In the end it’s the parents who decide whether the school is going to fail. Put too many parents off side and you don’t have anyone to govern any more. (Gail/Current chairperson: 245-246)

INTRODUCTION

The literature suggests that it is the loss of a sense of community in schools and a lack of a unifying community in the wider context that result in such mechanisms as school councils being imposed. This search for substitutes to ‘authentic’ community relies on the rhetoric but often pays only lip service, to ideals like participation and empowerment (Greenleaf, 1977; Scrinnis & Lyssiotis, 1995). In many Western Australian government schools, only surface agreement is obtained to what are really imposed goals and values, and dissenters are isolated or marginalised. This, historically, has not been the case with independent schools where councils are more an organic part of the schools.

This chapter focuses on the metaphor of schools as communities and governance as a means of community empowerment and involvement. Community is used here
primarily to mean parents but in some instances includes other stakeholders such as teachers and students. Where respondents consider members of a wider community to be part of the school community, this is noted. Involvement is a term sometimes used to denote any school-parent participation at any level but more often refers to a low level of interaction or participation (Limerick, 1995). For the purposes of this study, the stronger paradigm of empowerment is selected and includes within it different levels of participation. Any involvement or participation of parents is taken here as a measure of empowerment in that it is a means of increasing knowledge and understanding of school processes and structures.

To examine these issues within the selected research sites and to develop a framework of community empowerment applicable to schools, the raw data from the transcribed interviews were categorised and coded to allow consideration of what they reveal about schools as communities and community empowerment over time. The discussion of the data from the interviews addresses the issue of whether empowerment strategies such as school councils are successful in increasing meaningful participation in decision-making and examines the ways influence and authority are manifested and retained. The study also questions whether schools can continue to envisage themselves as communities when many of the characteristics of professionalism, efficiency and marketisation, and management practices work against this view. Therefore, the senses of community that exist and the ways they are maintained or weakened are also investigated.
COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

All the schools in this study had their origins in the period of the alternative schools and community empowerment movement of the 1970s and 1980s. They were founded with the energy and participation of parents and on the principles of parent empowerment and greater responsiveness to the community (Dudley & Vidovich, 1995). Jack recognises the difficulties of keeping these ideals alive over time.

*It’s like an advanced form of democracy. The task of trying to keep that energy coming in over time and still have decisions made is quite demanding.* (Jack/Early & Current Board Member: 283-285)

To investigate parent involvement, a *Community Empowerment Framework* (Table 7.1) was developed drawing on the work of Limerick (1995) and Thody (1999). Three levels of participation, assisting, advising and deciding, are investigated in terms of how they relate to the domains of pedagogy, administration and policy and thus contribute to community empowerment overall.

**Table 7.1: Community Empowerment Framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOMAIN OF PARTICIPATION</th>
<th>COMMUNITY LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ASSISTING Support and assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom and Pedagogical Domain</td>
<td>Parents assist in classrooms, support reading, homework programmes, etc. Observe and consult with teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration Domain</td>
<td>Community members give time to managing or looking after areas such as uniforms or bookshops, libraries, gardens or helping with Open Days &amp; publicity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Domain</td>
<td>Groups support implementation of policies decided by others eg. Building playgrounds, camps, excursions, health policies, and fundraising.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Community Participation: Assistance and Support

Parents are expected to participate at the assistance level across all the domains in all the sample schools. In many schools it was considered more an obligation than a right, although this assistance was not always easy to obtain. Most schools do not have a clear written policy on this participation but all the principals interviewed felt the expectations for parental assistance were clear as these examples show.

Not a written policy, but it [participation] was explained to them on entry to the school. (Tim/Recent Principal:23)

Parents are expected to be involved and that is explained to them on entry. (Megan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 43; 1)

Classroom and Pedagogical Assistance

In all schools parental assistance to the classrooms and support of the educational programmes was encouraged but the nature of the participation was primarily left up to the individual teachers.

There is nothing laid out but individual teachers get as much support as they want. (George/Current Principal:24)

Usually it’s Children’s House [pre-primary] but I’d say all classrooms use adult helpers at various times. Some regularly but mostly one off. Camps heavily and excursions yes. Camps we had to have criteria to limit the number of parents. (Dan/inaugural & Current Principal:134-136;1)

The government alternative school actually encouraged parental input into the educational programme. Parents were not just supporting teachers but contributing independently by sharing their skills or experiences with the students.

The whole aim was that parents were to be involved in any aspect of the education of the children that they were capable of. We recognised that some people contributed best by being at busy bees and some people had particular skills that they could come and share with the groups … for example somebody used to take the kids fishing, you couldn’t do that now, my brother came and did a kite workshop, and someone else came and did oral history. (Irene/Early Board Member: 113-119)
They were actually participating in the learning program and the operations of the school. They are not just the people who come in and sell uniforms or work in the canteen. They are actually there participating in the teaching. We had a lot of parents who were at university, a lot of them were working in quite interesting industries, and they used to bring that expertise to the school. They could teach a certain concept a hell of a lot better than the staff could and we were the first to admit that. (Jeff/Key Informant: 172-180)

Kate describes parent participation as parents supporting their child through regular meetings with teachers and developing an understanding of the philosophy through classroom observations. There was also an expectation of a substantial commitment to support fundraising campaigns.

When parents were interviewed to come in to the school, it was made very clear to them what commitment to the school meant. The kind of school we had – to keep working meant not just commitment to their child’s education and keeping close contact with the child’s teacher, but that they would make regular observations at least once a term and they would meet with them when interview times were set up. So there was the educational commitment, and then there was the commitment to the running of the school. Because our school had a huge fundraising, that was very clearly spelled out – the expectation of that. (Kate/Inaugural Principal: 160-167)

In fact for this school, in its earlier days, fundraising and being involved in running the school were more than an expectation, they were a non-negotiable obligations.

There were really these three aspects that they had to be aware of and they were non-negotiable. (Kate/Inaugural Principal: 168-169)

For instance, initially it was just expected that people would do it and then we got people coming along and saying, “Well, why should I? I don’t want to!” So then we decided when you joined the school, you made a commitment to do whatever was decided. (Dianne/Early Board Member: 230-233)

As time went on it became harder to keep this level of support as Vic describes.

As the school got bigger in some ways it got harder. You’ve got parents who just wanted to drop their kids off and didn’t want to be involved. They’d say can’t we just put in an extra fifty dollars a term and have it done and not worry about it. (Vic/Early Board Member: 161-165)
Today, a change to this expected degree of parent commitment is apparent from the interviews of current board members. Although the opportunity is still there, parent support has become less. Tania and Gail make this plain.

*You know it’s the same people over and over. Like my friend said you’ve just got to concentrate on what gets done and the people who are doing it and not worry about the others.* (Tania/Current Chairperson: 24-26)

*It’s very hard to get parents. For a supposedly community-based school, it’s the same dozen faces that turn up all the time. It’s just hard to get people to put their hands up for anything. … Yes, we want more involvement they say. But if you ask them to do something specific, then it’s not this week.* (Gail/Current Chairperson: 86-87; 142-143)

An acceptance has come, over time by most, that parents’ willingness and ability to give this assistance has changed. Parents, it is understood, have become more committed elsewhere and have less time to give than in the past. These two examples illustrate this view.

*At the time it was a low socio-economic area and Mum was home with the kids and Dad was out working so Mum was delighted to come and work at the school. Now they seem to be dual working parents or single parents.* (Irene/Early Board Member: 352-354)

*We also have our percentage of parents who don’t want to hear a thing about it once the kids come to school. They never come to meetings. They sign a piece of paper when they enrol saying they’ll attend every meeting and that’s the last we see of them. It didn’t used to be that way.* (Olivia/Inaugural & Current Principal: 21-22)

**Administration Assistance**

In the early years of a school, parent volunteers gave quite extensive support in the administration domain. Parents took on a range of administrative roles, acting as enrolment officers and even managing the accounts.

*We had a fairly professional management team. There was an architect, he was president. Then someone else was treasurer and I did government funding. The treasurer was amazing, he could just look at figures and know whether they were going to work.* (Mike/Early Board Member: 91-96)
This support, however, was not always effective and caused difficulties for several schools as these two examples explain.

Many of them were willing volunteers but didn’t quite understand what the job was. That was a problem. (Len/ Key Informant: 72-73)

She worked as an office person in return for a reduction in fees and it didn’t work very well and that was a difficult situation. A big turning point for the school was deciding to replace her with a paid position. (Yvonne/Early Board Member: 46-48)

The school, OIS 6, that was only founded recently, has struggled to find administrative support and has had to move to paid assistance early in its history.

The difference has been that we’ve had a much heavier administration role because we couldn’t hold on to our voluntary administrators or the people in the office. They kept coming and going, coming and going, and we had people who were inexperienced. We are going to pay somebody and that’s very important because it takes the load off me. (Simon/Current Principal: 232-235)

Today all schools in the study have some employed office staff. Although parent volunteers, when they can be found, may assist with photocopying and so on, their assistance is more likely to be limited to managing areas such as the library, the book or uniform shop, or assisting with open days and other forms of promotion.

It’s good to have parents around at open days. To be positive and answer questions. (Ben/Current Principal: 39)

Policy Support and Assistance

For this community empowerment framework, the policy domain incorporates the protocols and documents that underpin the actions of those involved. Although it is recognised that policy is not confined to one level of decision-making, this study is concerned with policy creation and mandated decision-making at council level. Written policies were not common in the foundation years. However, across all schools, there
was a consistent expectation that parents would support and assist with the
implementation of any decisions in the areas of building and maintenance and
fundraising. In one school there was also the opportunity to support the council policy
of induction of new families as Rachel describes.

_Apart from being on council, well there were all sorts of things. Under the
communications committee, there was a committee, which was set up to be a
support and inducting group to new parents. So their job was to look after
new parents and get them involved in the school. They could be part of that
network._ (Rachel/Recent Principal:22-23)

Parents are still expected to support school policies and building projects, although
today this support is likely to be more financial than hands-on unless they offer a
specific expertise. Fundraising committees are still part of some schools, although many
have now incorporated fundraising and building levies instead of direct assistance.
Overall, most participants agreed that the level of support absolutely crucial to the
schools’ early survival, is not so readily forthcoming in today’s environment.

**Community Voice: Consulting and Advising**

*Classroom and Pedagogical Consultation*

In the classroom and pedagogical domain only six schools still regularly and formally
consult with the wider parent body. This is either through education committees,
established forums, surveys or parent meetings.

_[The curriculum committee] is basically established by the teachers and principal but there are certain things like do we want art, music or drama. We usually send out a survey to see what most of the parents think. Then there are the priority learning areas, which are already defined. But then what other sorts of things do we want to bring in?_ (Tania/Current Chairperson: 70-73)

The Montessori schools and Steiner school expect parents to become familiar with the
philosophy and so hold ‘education’ sessions for parents. They are more for information
than consultation as Fran describes.
Parents are required to come to parent education nights. There is one a term and we would expect them to come to three out of the four. (Fran/Inaugural & Current Principal: 140-141; 1)

The depth of commitment to school values and philosophy, however, is also no longer so certain for most, as Megan explains.

For others we are a convenience. We are a close school to where they are. We are a really good, inexpensive childcare. They come because of the caring. … But cost is also a factor at the moment. That’s become the bottom line to a lot of our parents, which was not so evident in the past. In the past this wouldn’t have happened [choosing cheaper alternatives] because they were so convinced of the philosophy. (Megan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 112-113, 180-185; 2)

Most principals do accept that parental suggestions and advice are worthwhile considering. They find that listening and consulting are ways of dealing with dissatisfaction. Fran and Oliver explain.

Parents would have suggestions and where they could be fitted in or achieved and had value across the board, they would be taken on board. (Oliver/Recent Principal: 404-405)

So what we are tending to do now is creating parent forums. So we have actually had three or four of those where we’ve called a meeting because we’ve sensed there is unrest about something. Almost always it’s educational matters. Now if I have several parents from a class or an area coming to me, then I would tend to make a recommendation that we call a forum. (Fran/Inaugural & Current Principal: 237-241; 1)

None of the schools though, not even the direct democracy school, indicated that they were obliged to take advice from parents in the educational domain.

After that there is an evaluation time where they (parents) say, “we think this is great, we’d like to see more of that, we’d like to see less of that.” So there is input. If it’s something precious to us that they are saying they don’t want to see, we justify it in our terms and say why it is there and we want it to stay. (Olivia/Inaugural & Current Principal: 18-19)

In most cases, the principal and staff retain power over what issues are discussed.

Well, there is the education committee where different issues are discussed. This can be difficult with some people having their own issues but I
generally don’t take decisions there that the staff and I are very committed on. We just get on and do it and I tackle it by having a very good campaign beforehand. (Nina/Current Principal: 98-101; 1)

Administration and Policy Consultation and Advice

Parents can have input into the administration and policy domains through the school councils. All the schools at present, except one, make provision for parents to have some sort of representative voice in the affairs of the school. In nine schools, the majority of board members are elected parents. In four schools, elected parents are equal in number or voting power to nominated members, teachers and students. However, in one school, MS 5, parents have no voice on the board. There is a parent consultative group where information from parents and board can be interchanged, but the board does not take advice on any issues, as Max explains.

*It [the Advisory Committee] really is there to provide information for strategic planning.* (Max/Current Chairperson: 96)

The school with the direct democracy model, OIS 2, ensures all community members have an equal voice and an opportunity to be heard. The meetings are open for all stakeholders to participate. In the government alternative school, the wider school community also has a voice through the community meetings held twice a term, although as the current chairperson noted,

*It’s basically the same people at the community meeting as at the council meeting anyway.* (Tania/Current Chairperson: 94)

Four schools have standing committees to liaise formally with the wider parent community. The other eight schools do not regularly consult the wider community, although some do convene forum-like groups from time to time or have scheduled group parent meetings. Oliver gives an example of this process.

*The parent meetings at the beginning of the year for every class level were quite important because the teachers could map out how they saw the year*
in light of the curriculum they were dealing with. That wasn’t to say that parents couldn’t have any input into how it was for their child either. That comes back to the communication process very much responding to the individual within what I would say was a very tight curriculum process but teacher-driven and I think that is important. (Oliver/Recent Principal: 394-400)

Committees are also seen as a means for a wider group of parents to have a say at both the administration and policy level.

That’s why the committee structure was there—to try and get as many people involved as possible. (Vic/Early Board Member: 272)

In most schools though, for most parents, their voice in regard to any domain, is limited to lobbying their elected representatives, the principal or writing to council.

So basically they could write into the council with their concern. (Vic/Early Board Member: 291)

Schools vary as to whether council meetings are open or closed to the wider parent body, although the majority of councils do not allow participation in the meetings from non-members (see Table 7.2). Rachel explains.

Some parents would ask if they could attend and parents were invited to attend on a rotating basis as observers. They could not participate in the meeting. Minutes were available in the parent library. (Rachel/Recent Principal: 46)

Table 7.2: Governance—Openness to the Wider Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Closed Meetings(^\text{27})</th>
<th>Closed but Observe(^\text{28})</th>
<th>Open and Observe(^\text{29})</th>
<th>Open Voice(^\text{30})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MS 5</td>
<td>MS 1</td>
<td>MS 2</td>
<td>MS 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>OIS 3</td>
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<td>OIS 7</td>
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<td>GAS 1</td>
<td>OIS 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>WS1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OIS 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{27}\) Closed: Non-board members do not attend  
\(^{28}\) Closed but Observe: Parents attend by invitation only but cannot speak  
\(^{29}\) Open and Observe: Parents could attend board meetings at any time but not speak  
\(^{30}\) Open Voice: Parents could attend and speak
Those schools that do allow an open voice at meetings usually still require some notification or formality as George describes.

> All the meetings are open and there is an item on the agenda for them to address the board. (George/Current Principal: 40)

**Community Power and Decision-Making**

**Classroom and Pedagogical Decision-making**

The educational programmes remain almost wholly in the jurisdiction of the principal and educational staff at classroom and policy level in all schools. Parents, even at the school council level, do not make decisions in this domain. Two responses clearly illustrate the acceptance of this protocol.

> Parents that are on council cannot interfere with what happens in the classroom or say we are going to sack a teacher we don’t like. Because the responsibility for education and the hiring and assessing and firing of teachers lies with the teachers themselves. (Eve/Early & Current Board Member: 194-197)

> One of the things I was happy to achieve was to have very, very clear curriculum and curriculum policy direction which belonged to the staff. I would give that leadership, the decisions about policy for literacy for example, were very much driven by staff. (Oliver/Recent Principal: 377-379)

One Montessori principal gives the limited expertise parents have of pedagogy and the lack of understanding of the philosophy, for this retention of power being necessary.

> Because you have the imposition of a particular educational philosophical position and the classical situation is that the philosophical, let alone the pedagogical stuff, is little understood by the practitioners, let alone by parents. That is why there is so much mythology and things are much more sophisticated than simply saying I’m a parent and I believe we shouldn’t do this or we should do that. (Roger/Current Principal: 114-117)

In most schools, however, parents are advised of initiatives and are sometimes consulted through education committees.

> The staff and I talked about it [changing a language programme] and went over all the pros and cons and then took it to the education committee saying clearly all the reasons why it was not worth changing. (Nina/Current Principal: 161-163, 1)
The government school, GAS 1, locates power over the curriculum firmly with the principal and staff as well.

_I tell them [staff] we can hear all suggestions but we don’t have to take them. The overall direction and curriculum is the staff’s._ (Sue/Current Principal: 209)

But as this respondent describes, for her, power was primarily with the Department of Education and Training.

_You never felt you were your own boss. You always felt there was still someone controlling you. Whereas at the independent school if you wanted to do something, you put it through council and if council approved, then that was the end of it. Whereas at [the alternative government school] if everything was ticking along nicely, you could get away with things but at other times it just became too hard to take it further._ (Irene/Early Board Member: 240-246)

It is interesting to note that presently, although all teachers of this school are ex-officio members of the school council (Wilson, 1993), council meetings are held during school hours making it difficult for most teachers to be involved.

_No, staff don’t usually sit on council as they are in the classrooms at that time, although if they are around they can be involved. Staff are included on all sorts of things._ (Sue/Current Principal: 84-86)

Teachers do have representation on the councils of nine schools. Where teachers are on council, they are there to represent the staff as a stakeholder group, as Dan and Oliver explain.

_There is staff representation on the board. They can be part of the election for everybody on the board but they are nominated by staff._ (Dan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 55-56; 1)

_The essence of what the staff representative was about was information and to represent staff interests._ (Oliver/Recent Principal: 702-703)

But some, as Len demonstrates, have a different view on the appropriateness of teachers being involved in decision making at this level.
No, I don’t think that is appropriate [having teachers on the council]. I think the board of management has to be separated from the employees of the operation. (Len/Key informant: 158-159)

In most schools, teachers are involved in educational decisions along with the principal and this is their recognised domain of empowerment. Evaluation of the educational programmes, for all schools, is also left to the principal and staff.

We do that [evaluation] ourselves as a staff. Sometimes we would have personnel from a university come and help us do that. But by doing it as a staff I think that’s a healthy process. (Oliver/ Recent Principal: 603-605)

One school has a commitment to outside evaluations of the whole school every five years as part of the principal’s review of contract, although the reviewer is chosen by the principal. Two other principals mentioned some sort of performance review by the board but this is done informally and is focused mainly on administrative areas. For the most part board members say they do not have the skills and it is not a board responsibility. Max and Gail explain.

I don’t think we are qualified to query the educational things or the Montessori side of it. (Max/Current Chairperson: 50)

There again that is not within the council’s role but there is evaluation ongoing all the time. The principal does that. (Gail/Current Chairperson: 124-125)

In the future, however, as all schools have signed up to implement and be accountable for the Western Australia Curriculum Framework, this delegation of responsibility may have to be reconsidered. All independent schools are to be inspected and registered. A failure to show planning, assessment and reporting of outcomes may have financial and other far-reaching implications. In the government school, GAS 1, the education department oversees evaluations completed by the principal.

There is a school review. I do that and it goes to the district office. They talk to staff and to a community member. (Sue/Current Principal: 173)
Administration and Policy Decision-making

It is in the administration and policy domains in almost all the research schools that parents, through councils, have the most opportunities to be involved at a decision-making level. Creation of policy and powers of decision-making are shared between principals and their school councils.

[In the independent school] the power the parents have, to influence everything, the learning programme, all the procedural matters, the appointment of staff, right down to saying we want the building painted this colour [is considerable]. Whereas in this school [ordinary government school]. I would say we’ve got no money to do that and I don’t agree with that colour … In that school I worked for them, for the parents. Here I work for the government. (Jeff/Key Informant: 141-145; 322)

At foundation, although principals would have been involved to varying degrees with policy creation and administration, they were primarily concerned with the educational programme. The administration area was the main domain of councils. Principals, where they existed, were usually full-time teachers and had little time, or often the skills, to be able to take on these responsibilities, although they often had to make day-to-day decisions. Volunteer treasurers kept the books and managed budgets, others made decisions regarding building projects, staffing and funding, as Eve and Jack describe.

We suddenly found we were running all over the metropolitan area looking for premises, writing letters, advertising for teachers, helping prepare submissions and working on the constitution. (Eve/Early & Current Board Member; 83-87)

It then really consolidated around buying the land, getting the buildings up and then putting everything in place to support that. (Jack/Early & Current Board Member: 36-37)

At present there is still decision-making by councils in the areas of administration and management as Fran explains.

I make a lot of recommendations and smaller decisions but any key decisions come to the board of management. (Fran/Current Principal: 35;1)
Some schools are moving to limit the board’s level of participation and input as principals and their administrative support staff gradually take over more of the wider decision-making.

*I think the delineation of roles and responsibilities in governance makes sense. [Leaving the operational side to the people employed] makes it much easier for parents to participate in the other areas quite frankly.* (Roger/Current Principal: 150-152)

In this circumstance it becomes the principal’s role to keep councils informed, to create policies and present strategies for ratification. Sue explains her role in the government alternative school.

*I just give them [council] a rundown of what’s been going on. It’s mainly for information sharing and reviewing policy … Yes and I inform them what the priorities are. I inform them and they are consulted.* (Sue/Current Principal: 62-63; 107)

In WS 1, the council has recently delegated much of the decision-making to a staff management group who is made up of the principal, the financial manager and the operations manager.

*It’s the day-to-day operating of the school that has been changed and shifted around a bit to try and find a better management model with people who are on the ground all the time, who can respond.* (Gail/Current Chairperson: 41-42)

Councils are increasingly concentrating on long term planning and policy creation and stepping back from the operational side of things. Roger explains his understanding of a council’s role today.

*To make decisions about future directions and leave the executive officer to run the thing and monitor the evaluative elements of the school, the accountability stuff and so on.* (Roger/Current Principal: 69-71)

Two school councils already have no responsibility for the administration domain. The totally nominated board of MS 5 has little input into the daily running of the school and
in the government school, GAS 1, this role is not only absent but rejected as a valid responsibility by Tania.

*The government was trying to get the community to become more involved, that is, for parents to do the books and do this and that. I was so against that because we do so much as it is and it's more free labour. I'm not an accountant and I don't want to be responsible for balancing the books and doing all that kind of work. While I really like it that we have a say here, I don't actually want to run the school. I want professionals to do that.*

*(Tania/Current Chairperson: 148-153)*

In the schools where councils still have decision-making powers in the areas of management and administration, with the exception of decisions that involve large building projects and the like, the wider parent communities are generally not involved in management or consulted about administrative issues. The school that is an exception to this is the direct democracy school, OIS 2 where such areas are discussed regularly.

*We also have a parent meeting once a month and that's usually the decision-making meetings where parents go and staff and students go.*

*(Olivia/Inaugural & Current Principal: 17)*

This does create some problems, however, as Olivia explains.

*We are not only staffed by chiefs, in our school even the students are chiefs. We don't have enough Indians.*

*(Olivia/Inaugural & Current Principal: 48)*

In theory, apart from the wholly nominated board, the school councils are meant to embody a form of representative governance but they are far from being truly representative. The data reveals that generally representation is limited in form and process and is not well understood by many stakeholders, as Jack and Dan reveal.

*In recent years there has been an attempt to set up an association of parents as if the parents weren't involved in running the school.*

*(Jack/Early & current Board Member: 171-172)*

*I remember one comment that there was no equivalent to the Parents and Friends in our school and I thought but it’s the Parents and Friends that run the school. If it’s the parent body controlling the school and they feel they can’t get involved, is it them not getting involved or is it the body not giving the right communication.*

*(Dan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 81-84)*
In reality even the wholly elected councils are self-selecting. Participants, even today, report there being very few elections, if any, and as one put it:

*But in practice it really was that a present council member went around asking those people who they thought had something to offer or they thought would be willing to do something. Often they would ask me or the secretary for suggestions. In twenty years I only ever remember one election being necessary.* (Rachel/Recent Principal: 18-19)

Those parents who are considered to fit with the current directions are the ones who are asked to stand by the present board members. One participant questions whether parents are interested in this level of decision-making today.

*They think from the governance point of view, "let those other people think about the issues of future directions and things like that, just let us have a say at some level".* (Roger/Current Principal: 160-161)

None of the schools has established formal mechanisms to canvass for opinions in order to accurately represent their constituents. Although parents can approach individual board members, they must formally write to the whole council in order to have issues discussed. Policymaking and overview are agreed to be crucial roles for school councils in all the independent schools in the study, as Max makes evident.

*The distinction for me is that the board is there to set policy and also to monitor the financial operations of the school.* (Max/Current Chairperson: 41)

Principals are asking for clearer divisions in power sharing and decision-making domains and increasingly councils are drawing their boundaries around policy-making and overview and leaving other areas to the professional staff, as these two examples demonstrate.

*Well, it changed when I took over because I wanted to be clear what my role was. I see it that the council sets the policy and direction and I carry it out. Before I came, they had to do more, but they were happy for me to take charge.* (Nina/Current Principal: 113-115:1)

*The board has a special role, which is worrying about the budget and long term policy decisions. Whereas the principal has the job of running the*
school on a day-to-day basis and dealing with students and the teachers and the parents, in that educational role. (Len/Key Informant: 289-291)

Principals, however, are still very much involved and usually instigate much of the policy making, as Fran describes.

*I make the decisions as to what is for me to address or if it needs to be taken to the board because it’s a whole school policy. Or if it’s a new policy or guideline that needs to be worked out or if it’s because I see something happening, then I might draw up a recommendation and take it to the board.* (Fran/Inaugural & Current Principal: 164-170; 1)

The MS 5 board has a policy-making role, but parents have no input into these policies.

*Policymaking is solely the responsibility of the board in conjunction with or on advice from the principal.* (Max/Current Chairperson: 43)

Overall policymaking in the government school, GAS 1, is also not a decision-making area for the council as it is the province of the Department of Education and Training.

*It would get to the point where I would say, I’m sorry but it’s Education Department policy.* (Nina/Current Principal: 163; 2)

The school council and the wider community of this school are able to make some minor policy decisions that impact on parents, such as:

*Big on the agenda has been our food policy. They’ve also looked at video watching policies and homework policies and things like that. Usually any policy that goes to council has been to staff first.* (Sue/Current Principal: 79-83)

But the council ensures decisions stay within the bounds of the Department of Education and Training, as Jeff and Nina explain.

*I think the school council was put up as some sort of mechanism to ensure that the Education Department policies and procedures were followed in case something really radical came up from the community meeting.* (Jeff/Key Informant: 96-99)

*Even though it had a school council that was more empowered than in average government schools, the bottom line difference is that you get these directives on your fax every few days keeping you in line.* (Nina/Current Principal: 155-157)

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31 Nina was previously a principal at GAS 1
As indicated previously, the parents at this school, seem satisfied with this arrangement.

I think the parent community feels really involved in the running of the school and having a say. So it’s not just being trickled down to us from above. We are part of it. There is that sense that we are working together… Education policy may hold sway but it doesn’t mean I don’t feel like I have a voice. (Tania/Current Chairperson: 109-111; 155)

One of the contributions school councils and boards make to the wider community that is rarely mentioned in the literature, but arose in this study, is in the area of human capital. Several of the early board members spoke of how being involved in governance extended their own skills and development. Jack, Nancy and Irene explain.

It does extend people when they have to work in this complex organisation. It’s certainly been the case for me. (Jack/Early & Current Board Member: 455-456)

So for my involvement I’m really glad I did so many things because it helped my understanding and professional development. (Nancy/Early Board Member: 234-235)

One of the best things, of course, was watching parents grow. That’s part of the whole thing about alternative schools, we focus on the kids but we forget what the parents learn. (Irene/Early Board Member: 122-124)

Policymaking is an essential part of establishing school identity and vision and a sense of community. However, for most of the schools in this study, much of the policymaking activity has been in response to increases in legal and government accountability requirements.

All the legal checks, duty of care, these are big issues. So we have policies now that I think are legally sound. (Dan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 233-235; 1)

As schools become larger and they endeavour to be more professional, they also deal with greater complexity and increased expectations. As the emphasis is placed more on accountability than community and past history, the result may be two visions of school identity. The new one is established in response to the demands of outside pressures or
internal challenges within the school. The old vision of identity is held by those not wanting change, perhaps even a majority of the community, who then feel excluded. Changes in policies or new policy-making should be measured with consideration of the possible impact these may have on the school. This aspect of governance decision-making and its impact on identity is considered further in Chapter 8.

SENSE OF COMMUNITY

If ‘community’ is based on social interaction and communications, on people interacting in both institutional and non-institutional roles and having a sense of identification with others in the group (Merrill, 1969), then all the schools in the study can, as these examples show, be said to have some sense of community.

*We made great friends. We saw each other socially. I think for the children it was very supportive. Dianne/Early Board Member: 264*

*We don’t demand or expect it of parents. We just try and create a space where they can say I want to be part of this community. (Fran/Current Principal: 326-327; 1)*

One school saw it as very much part of their identity, at least in the beginning.

*I think because community was in our name that meant it attracted people who wanted that. (Yvonne/Early Board Member: 257)*

The government school in this study, GAS 1, has the motto *Education through Community* and participants talk about a working partnership, although community here is generally understood to be mainly the parents of children at the school. Like the independent schools, it is a school without catchment boundaries. Enrolments come from different geographic communities, weakening ties with the local community.

Participants from this school place a high value on the school contributing to the wider community through environmental work. Tania explains.
We have the Land Education committee that works on re-generation and gardening. (Tania/Current Board Member: 60)

The independent schools in the study also draw from a wide range of geographic communities, thus, with one exception they confine their sense of community to the stakeholders of the school. Only one participant from one independent school talked about the school being very much part of a wider community.

We were a school within a community that actually functions together. That is one very strong aspect of the school that was very much part of the school from the beginning. (Oliver/Recent Principal: 781-782)

Drawing children from the immediate local community, however, does not ensure a sense of community. Jeff, a key informant who has worked in independent and government schools, found a greater sense of community in independent schools and in the government alternative school than in the local government schools of which he has been principal.

It had that sense. It was a real community even though parents weren’t all from the area. They mainly came in from outside as we had no catchment boundaries. Whereas here we are in the community but there isn’t a sense of community because we don’t have that parent input into the school. (Jeff/Key Informant: 311-315)

However, if the concept of community is like Bellah’s (1985) definition, that a community has a history, constituted from its past and fused together as a ‘community of memory’, then this kind of community is going to be harder to find. Only a few participants talked about the need to keep collective memory alive to ensure the past is not forgotten and to record the deeds of heroes and even villains.

I’m interested in the stories that hang around schools. It’s a bit like histories and sometimes even myths about a school that help kids find their place within a school … Even simple things like stories that happen to kids twenty years ago. You can get the people they happened to come or pass them on to the kids. I couldn’t resist telling the stories. (Oliver/Recent Principal: 794-806)
This research, in order to investigate a ‘sense of community’ more comprehensively, uses the work of Eisenstadt (1992) and Sergiovanni (1992), who define communities by their centres. Communities in this sense are more than people coming together because of institutional purposes or as the consequence of rationally conceived structures and processes. They are also more than skilfully contrived cultures of collaboration and positive environments. It is their values, sentiments, beliefs and histories that unite members at the centre. This is what characterised the members of early school communities in this study. Participants from a school’s early period often talked about their relationship to the ‘centre’ of community as greater than their other connections.

Dianne presents a good example of this.

*It was such a total commitment on our part. It provided a lot more than just a school. We were there for our kids but it was pretty well an entire sort of life. For a lot of parents I think they felt they belonged there.* (Dianne/Early Board Member: 185-190)

The values and beliefs they had in common were forged around what they wanted for their children. As well, they had a shared struggle and history around the establishment of a school to provide this. This sense of community is not so evident today. When asked what the school values most today, nearly all participants mentioned providing for the children first. Only four participants mentioned community as of significance today. For many, it is no longer as central as it once was, as Gail illustrates.

*I think community is something everyone would like to see but you start to think how many times do you try and promote it. So although I think it is strong on everyone’s wish list, it’s hard to hold. Whereas holding the children’s well being and giving them a really exciting, vibrant education is something everyone can grab hold of. My personal view is the community is fine but you can actually fall into the trap of being sucked into that at the expense of what we are really here for.* (Gail/Current Chairperson: 208-215)
Although school community members may still have shared beliefs and values in common, the shared history is hard to maintain. The connection and the understanding of the centre of a community are missing for some, as these two examples demonstrate.

*It’s been part of growing with that community. I guess once they move somewhere else the school doesn’t have that history that goes with them.* (Megan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 49; 2)

*You had more space and more luxuries so you pulled in extra people but you lost that initial sense of community.* (Mike/Early Board Member: 317-318)

As schools got bigger and more professional, several participants were concerned about the loss of community. When bureaucratic formalities and procedures are substituted for previous unity, there is no longer enough ‘glue’ to keep people connected, as Dianne and Max explain.

*Because it got bigger, it wasn’t such a cohesive group any more. People tended to have smaller groups associated around their own child rather than across the school as a whole.* (Dianne/Early Board Member: 269-270)

*The social functions have fallen by the wayside. We’ve been focusing on getting all the policies in place and the manual and handbook, and then worrying about a site. I guess we haven’t had time to focus on the nice things only the chores.* (Max/Current Chairperson: 169-171)

Whether community is said to be strong or weak, ‘authentic’ or constructed, there are a network of social practices and mores that register as culture. Culture is not easily defined or measured but is a form of lived experience. For Enomoto (1997), the whole idea of a collective culture in schools is problematic. According to Enomoto, any view of school communities as unified and cohesive fails to conceptualise their multifaceted and complex nature. It is suggested that although members align around particular issues and there are some collectively shared views that endure over time, in reality there are multiple, nested and overlapping communities. The data from this study are indicative of this, as several participants talked about the difficulties they had in satisfying different groups within the school community. Even though these were
schools purposefully chosen by families and not just a group of people formed into a community by geography, some of the differences were extreme.

There are conflicts and differences in what people want. So we could have a meeting and one group would be lobbying for more homework on a regular basis and another group will be saying I brought my kids here so they wouldn’t have to do homework. (Nina/Current Principal: 13-15; 2)

There was a lot of intensity in being involved in the school. The sort of people who look for something different often have very high ideals and those ideals can all be very different. So quite often you get conflict in trying to interpret what the school is providing in practice. (Dianne/Early Board Member:208-212)

CONCLUSION

While these differences exist and these multiple and nested communities may be present, for the purposes of this research it is the discernible, cohesive patterns of school communities and cultures that have been considered. These schools with such strong past traditions of community and parent participation find themselves struggling to maintain their sense of community. Parents have less time and they want schools that are stable and already offering a high standard of facilities and programmes. Schools are expected to present much more professional images and structures today and the demands upon them to be accountable in all sorts of legal and financial areas is also much greater. While schools need the flexibility to change over time to meet these changing demands, these changes create shifts in the dynamics of governance.

As noted in Chapter 6, one school has already moved to a wholly nominated board structure, two schools are planning to restructure with predominantly nominated boards, and three others have formalised the make-up of their councils to be only partly representative. Only one school has not changed its structure or processes of governance at all. To highlight this further, following the analysis of the interview responses
discussed above, the schools are placed within the community empowerment framework according to their present operating processes as shown in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3: Community Empowerment Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOMAIN OF PARTICIPATION</th>
<th>LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|                         | ASSISTING: 
Support and assistance | ADVISE: 
Consulted in advisory capacity | DECIDING: 
Involved in making decisions |
| Classroom and Pedagogical Domain | All schools allow some participation. | Parents formally consulted: GAS 1, MS 3, MS 4, OIS 7 Issues addressed as needed: MS 1, MS 2, OIS 1, OIS 2, OIS 3, OIS 4, OIS 5, OIS 6, WS 1 Parents not consulted: MS 5 | The domain of the principal and teachers. |
| Administration Domain | All schools would like some assistance. | Wider parent community consulted regularly: GAS 1, MS 1, MS 3, OIS 2, OIS 7, WS 1 Consulted over some issues: MS 2, MS 4, MS 5, OIS 1, OIS 3, OIS 4, OIS 5, OIS 6. | Principal, parent, teacher, & student representatives: OIS 4 & OIS 6 Principal, parent & teacher representatives: MS 1, MS 3, MS 4, OIS 2, OIS 3, OIS 5, OIS 7 Principal, parent representatives: GAS 1, MS 2, OIS 1, WS 1 Principal but no stakeholder participation in decision-making: MS 5 |
| Policy Domain | All schools expect the stakeholders to support policy decisions. | Wider parent community consulted regularly: GAS 1, MS 1, MS 3, OIS 2, OIS 7, WS 1 Consulted over some issues: MS 2, MS 4, MS 5, OIS 1, OIS 3, OIS 4, OIS 5, OIS 6. | Principal, parent, teacher, & student representatives: OIS 4 & OIS 6 Principal, parent & teacher representatives: MS 1, MS 3, MS 4, OIS 2, OIS 3, OIS 5, OIS 7 Principal, parent representatives: MS 2, OIS 1, WS 1 Principal but no stakeholder participation in policy making: GAS 1, MS 5 |

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32 Both are high schools and one has since ceased operations.
The merits of community empowerment are acknowledged by most of the interviewees in the study, even though the data reveal that the schools have been moving further from these origins. In all schools but one, stakeholders have some participation in decision-making in the administration and policy domains through their representatives. For all schools the level of participation at the level of assistance and consultation is significant. School governance has never been about empowering the community in the classroom or pedagogical domain, except that it was parents who sought and established these schools with particular pedagogies in mind in the first place. School councils, while accepting they were and are responsible overall, have left decision-making in the educational domain almost entirely to the principal and staff. This power at the local level remains, although, in the future all those involved in governance may find they have to adapt to the imposed state and national curricula and accountability imperatives.

As community participation declines and is less of a focus than it has been in the past, the more the community is presided over by representatives and its affairs directed by those on the outside, it seems as Eisenstadt (1992) predicted, the poorer a community it becomes and the less community life exists. For most schools today the commitment to community empowerment is gradually being replaced in the name of efficiency, and governance is more about ensuring financial health and a professional image. This appears to be the trend with most of the schools in the study.
CHAPTER 8

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AS THE MANAGEMENT OF DILEMMAS

Boundaries evoke the sense of the divisions, which make for the polarities. And in that evocation comes the idea of what happens in the space between the borders. (Kerry/Key Informant: 67-70)

INTRODUCTION

The notion of dilemmas arises from the sociological conception of ‘contradiction.’ Dilemmas are found in conflict-filled situations that require choices between competing, highly prized values (Cuban, 1992). They look and feel like problems but unlike problems dilemmas are not solved through the application of satisfactory technical solutions. The educational and social problems faced by those involved in school administration and leadership are increasingly untidy and ambiguous and, thus it is argued, can be confronted as a range of dilemmas (Connors & Sharpe, 1996; Dimmock, 1999a; Glatter, 1996; Lam, 1996; Moeller, 1996).

Dilemmas are inevitable when moves toward devolution, diversity and choice, and the drive for autonomous schools, are at the same time accompanied by demands for more regulation, accountability and standardisation (Connors & Sharpe, 1996; Dimmock,
1999b). The resulting conflict between competing value systems and priorities creates dilemmas in many domains. This study demonstrates that, for those involved in governance in the research sites, there is a need to confront the tensions between differing demands and the dilemmas they produce. If not, school councils may find they end up placating the most voluble groups or making largely superficial changes rather than achieving substantial goals. In order to manage dilemmas we need to reframe them in terms that distinguish them from simplified technical problems and thus allow for some resolution or at least management of the conflicting choices.

The dilemmas framework (Figure 8.1) was developed to help frame the dilemmas of school governance found within particular schools, as well as to provide a means to consider the messy, untidy and ambiguous educational and social problems faced by school governance more generally. This framework provides three dimensions of dilemmas within which to interpret the responses of participants. As a result of the themes arising from the literature review and the analysis of data from the interviews, the dilemmas of school governance are conceptualised as dilemmas of boundaries and power, dilemmas of form and process, and dilemmas of identity. The relevant data for the discussion of dilemmas are coded at the category of Tensions in School Governance (see Appendix IV).
Figure 8.1: Dilemmas of School Governance

DILEMMAS OF BOUNDARIES OR POWER

Dilemmas of boundaries and power are a result of differing interpretations of what governance and leadership mean in schools today. This study showed that tensions develop around: role definitions; decision-making divisions; the balancing of power, autonomy, expertise, and expectations; and the interconnections between conflict and trust.
**Boundaries or Roles**

I did not use the word "boundaries" in any of the interview questions. However, this theme emerged from the responses, particularly those of principals. Many participants identified the difficulties around boundaries and roles as the most destabilising factors they had to deal with.

> No, it's the lack of clarity of boundaries. **Boundaries can be in place but they need to be clear and maintained.** (Kate/Inaugural Principal: 376-377)

These difficulties with boundaries were particularly related to drawing divisions between the roles of the board and the principal.

> It seems clear at the moment because the council has a trust in what I do. It hasn't always been clear before with council trying to oversee the educational programme as well. This could happen again but at the moment we have it more or less working well. (Ben/Current Principal: 47-50)

In theory, for most schools in the study, the responsibilities for governance were divided between the board and the principal, with the principal being responsible for educational and day-to-day decisions and the board for the financial, administrative and policy decision-making. It seems, however, as Rachel indicates, that blurred boundaries or misunderstandings occurring around role division are continuing issues that cause confusion, conflict, disappointment and frustration.

> The people who wrote the guidelines and had looked at the constitution in the past had always thought it was very clear. But like any document, people can interpret it to suit themselves and that's what happened. In the past we had thought it was very clear what the boundaries were. It's not the safeguard I thought it was. (Rachel/Recent Principal: 33-35)

In the initial foundation period of the schools, when trust in the principal was almost unquestioned, boundaries were less likely to be an issue.

> In my day it was a case of the only one who knew all about it was me. I mean the school council didn't interfere with anything really. The only thing they were there for was administration. (Donald/Inaugural Principal: 93-94)
When [the principal] came he would let us know where the boundaries were. We acknowledged that because he was doing such a good job in the rest of it. Perhaps it was a trust thing. (Irene/Early Board Member: 340-341)

Most of the early board members describe the boundaries as generally clearly drawn.

To manage the school and its finances [the role of council]. The educational leadership you really need to leave to the principal. (Mike/Early Board Member: 249-250)

Although they acknowledged it wasn’t always so clear for others.

There seemed to be a lack of clarity in some parts as to what was council and what was the college, and within a school structure educational issues really touch on everything. (Eve/Early & Current Board Member: 236-238)

The early board members from the school with the appointed non-stakeholder board claim the board is a necessary strategy. Their perception was that having a board without parents represented removed many of these dilemmas.

Like if there was any conflict in the school they could come in as the calming body. …They were able to, if people were disruptive which often happens in those types of schools, they could then ask them to go without the teachers being annihilated in the process. (Rita/Early Board Member: 104-112)

Several other early board members saw that it depended on strong leaders protecting themselves as Mike explains.

I still feel strongly that somewhere there in that leadership you’ve got to have an educationalist with a good grip of the philosophy because they have got to be able to fend off the people who come in with these great ideas. (Mike/Early Board Member: 371-373)

Keeping the educational boundary defended, and the borders clearly marked, was mentioned as a past, present or possible problem by all the current principal participants, except for the principal of the direct democracy school, OIS 2. In this school, although in theory parents could have an influence, in practice it was left to the students and staff.
It doesn’t happen very often [where a parent might try and change what a teacher and student have organised] and then when it does we try and sidetrack the parent because we explain to them that we are here for the benefit of the kids and we don’t think what you are doing is for their benefit. However, ‘if you are really, really keen on something, we’d like to make arrangements for you to come in and do it and your enthusiasm might rub off on other kids.’ (Olivia/ Inaugural & Current Principal:22-25)

The direct democracy school has been established for some time under just the one principal and, as she pointed out, nothing changes if she doesn’t want it to because of the need for consensus.

Not really [could any of this way of operating change] because the staff is on the governing body and the governance has to be by consensus. (Olivia/Inaugural &Current Principal: 26)

The difficulties with boundaries, although particularly related to division between the roles of the board and the principal, are also with staff, particularly around which areas are educational and thus in the province of the faculty. Several respondents discussed these difficulties as the two examples below elucidate.

They [staff] felt that the way the budget was allocated was an educational issue rather than an administrative issue. They then felt it should be the staff driving the education budget rather than the council stating what the budget was going to be. That was a problem. (Kate/Inaugural Principal:310-313)

I think some of the teachers feel that the expectation to work so closely with the parents is volatile and has the potential for them getting burnt. You can relax into this family style schooling but with the boundaries so blurred some people have found it difficult to establish what the role clearly is when it is not defined as ‘us’ and ‘them’. (Sue/Current Principal: 185-189)

Most principals recognised that ensuring clarity of role definition and defining the boundaries between responsibilities was difficult to accomplish and relied on unstated, ambiguous expectations of the way things work.

I don’t think you can ever make it black and white. There is always a possibility of different interpretations but the council supports and trusts me. (George/Current Principal: 30)
Although your question has made me think how have we documented it [the division between educational and management roles] or haven’t we? Maybe we haven’t. (Dan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 102-103:1)

If the principals aren’t so sure, all current board members interviewed claim the boundaries are now clearly demarcated. Generally the demarcation is between educational areas and administrative and policy areas, with principals and staff on one side and council on the other. Although as mentioned earlier in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, MS 4, MS 5 and WS 1 have given more administrative decision-making to principals and their support staff and others are moving in that direction. However, several board members acknowledged that particular groups constantly challenge these boundaries.

Yes, people want to push into educational areas. It’s like you have people who move into rural areas because it’s so beautiful and then they want to bitumise the roads and chop trees down. There can be a bit of that. They start to think things would be better if only they changed this or that. (Gail/Current Chairperson: 152-155)

One participant gave an interesting metaphor for how boundaries are challenged.

But if you have people playing over the boundary, it doesn’t stay a game any more and you need an umpire. When a team is playing a game, when they are playing they are so intent on playing that the ball can go out. Not intentionally. People say, "hey the ball's gone out" and argue about that without saying, "hey the ball's gone out of the court and we're going to play over there." It happens unless someone calls them back to order and sets them to play again. (Kate/Inaugural Principal: 388-394)

At two of the schools, maintenance of boundaries was specifically mentioned as problematic.

I don’t think you can define boundaries too much as long as there is a process for changing them as well. They do need to be kept up to date and they do need to be tested from time to time. The people change, the desires change. As long as it is not bowing to vested interests, which are likely to splinter, then it’s healthy. (Vic/Early Board Member: 436-439)

But it can also be destructive when people go beyond what their responsibilities are. And because of the structure of the school, there was really no one clearly responsible for maintaining these boundaries. … I don’t think it matters how formal you make the structures, unless it is very clear who is maintaining the boundaries, when they are being pushed very
One principal participant felt the problem was common in ‘parent-run’ schools where councils often can’t see the boundaries to their powers and don’t know how to cope with this level of responsibility.

Whereas here that craziness that happens, that snowballing negatively, it’s almost like children without any boundaries. They just keep going and they get more panicked and more desperate because there is nobody to stop them. Try as you like you can only do so much and then they start questioning. “Who are you to say that! This is a parent-run school.” They have different ideas of what a parent-run school means too. (Nina/Current Principal:167-171; 2)

The dilemmas of boundaries for those involved in governance today are about how and where to draw these lines. How to have the lines drawn, not so deeply that they can’t be changed but not so shallowly that they are blown away in the first winds of dissent. Perhaps governance is, after all, an art form as described below, not simply a matter of rational processes and techniques.

Then these lines that are probably not lines in the sand. Like when you’ve got parent input or problems or suggestions, where to draw them. The art of knowing that ‘wiggly’ line because I don’t think in our schools you can draw the line in the sand and never move it. You’d be courting disaster but not to have a line or not attempting the line here or there, they are the hardest things in this job. Getting more sure at that. Drawing it deeper, kicking it over and rubbing it out but not being totally driven. (Dan/Inaugural & Current Principal:118-124; 2)

Balancing Power: Autonomy or Expectations

Power is a generic term that underpins the concepts of authority and influence (Hoyle, 1986a). Power networks, technologies and discourses operate within and across the many boundaries and relationships found within school governance, meaning that those involved do not interact as equals. This study found, as Hoyle (1986b) asserts,
professionals call upon their superior knowledge, objectivity and expertise to legitimate their power, authority and decision-making. Most principals considered parents should not, and generally did not wish to, question teacher expertise as these quotations illustrate.

*It’s the lack of expertise and it is extremely difficult for parents to be able to be one-step removed. To be objective and I think it’s the one-step removed thing that is the critical element of it.* (Roger/Current Principal: 67-70)

*Parents feel reassured that teachers are professionals and that they are making choices that they can’t make because they are not so informed.* (Nina/Current Principal: 60-61; 2)

And, indeed as these two examples reveal, board members of the school councils in this study do, as Ball (1990) predicted, generally regulate themselves to accept this power and influence.

*The responsibility for education is in the hands of professional educators, that is the teachers, that all pedagogical matters are the teacher’s province.* (Eve/Early & Current Board Member: 192-193)

*The worst thing is to have an ill-informed management group that is trying to tell the experts what to do.* (Mike/Early Board Member: 261)

However when relationships break down between council and principal, then usually it is the principal who must go. This has been the case in many of the schools. Here two examples of this are described.

*The council dismissed the headmaster without warning or reason apart from citing “loss of confidence.” … In retrospect it’s clear there must have been irreconcilable differences between the principal and the council, though the council kept this hidden from everyone including the principal.* (Kerry/Key Informant: 156, 193-195)

*He was a classic example. He had a vision, he established it in a particular way, then parents came in. It was then community-based and all of a sudden his vision was being re-directed somewhere else. You know the story, many years later he’s working as a labourer on the roads.* (Roger/Current Principal: 109-112)
The study found that certain types of cultural, economic and social capital are required to participate in the governance of even these originally community, and democratically-orientated, schools.

There are our academics and our very articulate people. Our academics are people who are very knowledgeable or have ideals of education, but are also very heart-centred. (Sue/Current Principal: 146-147)

The constitution encourages having board members who have some expertise. Something to offer and it’s the mixture of those experts that provide the leadership that is needed. (Max/Current Chairperson: 54-56)

The result is that councils are generally dominated by relatively small groups of parents who are recruited rather than elected and, even in these community schools, will have only informal relationships to the general body of the community. One school is very clear about the sorts of people it wants to recruit.

I think getting the right people for the board is an issue. We are trying, for example, to seek a young element for the board or get CPAs who need community service, etc. (Roger/Current Principal: 317-319)

Those with agency govern the pace of power sharing and it is often the case that board members and principals utilise their own networks to find replacements for those resigning. Thus democracy is served more in word than spirit and elections are not usually required. In the following quotations Nina describes the board recruitment process common to most of the schools and Jeff relates how a particular power block eventuated.

Ever since I’ve been here it’s been one of those situations, which seem very common in small organisations, where it’s a case of persuading or bullying people to be on council. (Nina/Current Principal: 47-49; 1)

There was the old community and then ten families moved in and that was quite a [power] block. It was interesting actually because that group sort of took over the control of the community during that four year period. Most of these parents were lecturers or educationalists and they knew exactly the sort of education they wanted for their kids and all about meeting procedure and lobbying. (Jeff/Key Informant: 373-378)
The following three quotations describe how the processes of decision-making that result in these kinds of governance structures may sometimes be questionable.

*There was not much discussion and it appeared to me that some decisions had already been made by the main players. … This was my first experience of a ‘rule-by-ginger group’ within the school context.* (Adam/Early Principal: 97)

*You tended to be a small group making the decisions and then trying to present them and achieve consensus without having participation.* (Jack/Early & Current Board Member: 162-163)

*We just got to the stage where we felt powerless. It was just like there were too many bad eggs. These people were actually quite nice in their own right— they were just control freaks.* (Lynne/Early Board Member: 50-53)

Several participants felt it was emotions and lack of objectivity that clouded judgements and interfered with good decision-making. Lynne explains the problems this way:

*Look, the trouble with a parent-run school is you are dealing with most people’s most passionate possession, if you can call a child a possession. You actually lose a lot of logic at times. Emotions mean people make decisions, not with their heads, especially when you are dealing with your own kids.* (Lynne/Early Board Member: 114-118)

Every school has accepted procedures, rules, goals and actions, but what these look like in practice is often what is contested. As one participant put it, it is the differences in interpretation of the language that can cause the problems.

*I think this difference of language. When you say something and you think people are on the same wavelength and then you discover they are not … It was the fine details that caused the two o’clock meetings.* (Irene/Early Board Member: 281-282; 314).

Also the kinds of people needed to drive a school and the expectations of their roles change over time. In the beginning schools require people with enormous commitment and energy in order for the school to survive but these are often not the people with the skills to meet the new demands for professionalism and effective decision-making.

*One person in particular who had done a huge amount of work was this pioneering character who liked to work in a certain way. He just did things*
and the rest of us waited for what would happen. It was a relief when he took on a fairly pioneering role in another state where I think his qualities are needed. (Eve/Early & Current Board Member:413-419)

The expectations of what the school should be providing is another aspect that increases over time as those early times of struggle fade into the past. Several participants commented on this aspect of change.

The expectations are that you’ve got to have all these things. They want computers in the school, they want specialists, all that. Before, when you’ve just got a core of people who just want to see it happen, they accept there’s not the resources. (Vic/Early Board Member:364-366)

I guess that people coming in now are entitled to expect more. They have a right I think to expect there will be a higher level of training and more qualified teachers. (Eve/Early & Current Board Member: 641-642)

The other balancing of expectations that several participants found difficult to deal with was what educational philosophies and principles look like in practice and the widely varying interpretations of these.

Unfortunately Montessori or Steiner or those sorts of schools actually attract people who have broad ideas about education, the extremists at either end. Like kids should be allowed to do nothing or kids shouldn’t be able to move. (Lynne/Early Board Member: 55-59)

The needs of the students and their parents can also be at the extremes. Nina and Megan describe the differing expectations arising out of students' varying educational abilities and parental demands.

So some people want their kids to be happy and safe and cared for and others have a very pushy agenda about them being gifted. … They are right at the extremes. The school attracts people at the extremes because if you are happy with the average then you’ll stay at a state school or a conservative independent school. When we do our state testing we get a straight line instead of a bell curve, it’s probably not quite a straight line but you don’t get the proper bell curve. So conflicting parent interests are at the root of it all. … They are people who have had terrible experiences in their own schooling and are terrified for their children and so almost perpetuate the problem like a self-fulfilling prophecy. If they just left their child alone, but they are always worried and looking out for problems even if they are not there. (Nina/Current Principal: 11-22; 41-45 ; 2)
Our school doesn’t have a normal curve of students. Actually just looking at the statistics, we have two curves. We have a high number of gifted and talented children and a high number of children with special needs and very few that fall in between. Many of our gifted and talented children have co-existing disabilities. (Megan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 137-140; 2)

Student power was not a significant issue for the schools in the study. The government alternative school, in its foundation period, had a student council that gave a report to the school council, but this no longer exists. The two high schools (one no longer in existence) and the direct democracy school have student voices on the councils but this power is limited and described as necessarily and legitimately mediated by the adults. Simon describes his experiences of student power in two different high schools.

We have school meetings that are run by students with them having the power to ask for things that are then taken to council. They appoint one or two representatives to go to council meetings … but in the early stages it proved to be a fairly messy process because with students who are dis-empowered in themselves all you get are people who have an agenda on a particular day and it’s hard to know what it means and how useful it is. (Simon/Current Principal: 213-217)

At this other school it was a time of the original students who were empowered. The day we arrived, we were told not to come out on the back verandah because that was where all the 'bongs' were. … The students thought that teachers were a pushover and that because we were alternative we would be flexible, but we were three very empowered men who knew what the world was about and we knew there was a difference between freedom and license. (Simon/Current Principal: 62-73)

The dilemmas of power and expectations are about how to balance the needs of professional autonomy with the tradition of community empowerment, and the differing, often conflicting expectations that are held by different groups within the school. Two participants describe the difficulties as follows.

That’s why I’m going back to the Education Department. There is the bureaucracy and everything but after six years of the opposite where I have to look over my shoulder twenty-five times before I make a decision. Just being able to make a decision and not deal with that kind of intervention all the time, or the fear of it. (Nina/Current Principal: 115-119; 2)
Boundaries evoke the sense of the divisions, which make for the polarities. And in that evocation comes the idea of what happens in the space between the borders. Once one end has been identified and acknowledged it has to be balanced by the identification and support of the other end and the people run from one side of the ship to the other, until it sinks. (Kerry/Key Informant: 67-70)

As a Western Australian writer puts it, in his book about the history and demise of a very similar school to those in the study, the school could have worked if those involved had had “more miraculous powers to handle the tripartite realities of teaching with zealous enthusiasm, coping with administration and the multitudinous (and changing) expectations of students and parents” (Burke, 1990, p. 189).

Trust or Conflict

Trust is a form of social capital and as such is a resource whose supply increases rather than decreases with use. Conversely trust is easier to destroy than to create. There has been little study of the dynamics of trust in schools, but it emerged here as an important theme (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1997). Fourteen out of the 18 principals interviewed identified trust as an essential element in their being able to do their job and the continued stability of the school. George’s quotation is indicative of the others' views.

In the past some parents have wanted more of a say but now they trust me and understand that the staff and I manage and plan the educational programme. The board backs me on this. (George/Current Principal: 22-23)

This trust can be very transitory, Nina in her first interview reported that:

They just let me get on with it because they trust me. (Nina/Current Principal: 122;1)

However, in Nina’s second interview less than a year later, she talks in length about how things have changed.

Last time I talked to you I had a really supportive council but things have changed. … It’s going to take me years to know what it was all about. It was so sudden and so complex and so snowballing. … It was so reactionary that it was never even possible to have a debate. We tried to set up forums. They got undermined and sabotaged. (Nina/Current Principal: 67-82;2)
Other principals also understood the precariousness of their situation as Dan demonstrates.

*I think my looking at other schools' models, without knowing all the ins and outs—I love keeping track of the stories of small independent schools because “there but for the grace of God go I.” So I don’t feel any superiority to these stories.* (Dan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 98-99; 1)

Board members also talked about the importance of trust and the difficulties in retaining it. If there is distrust between those involved in governance, differences will be difficult to resolve and there will be an inability to unite behind a clear vision for the school.

*Trust is so important and some people had it and some people didn’t. Particularly in the short term, it is hard to trust. I think that was probably one of the reasons why parents left. They didn’t feel they could trust or they lost trust.* (Irene/Early Board Member: 316-318)

*That’s probably the important thing with groups. You have to be careful, if you dismiss people, they will rally and get other support and then you’ll be in trouble. If you are open and as transparent as you can be, then that helps trust. The problem is, of course, you have got to keep confidentiality and sometimes you can’t win because the other person can say whatever they like and you can’t put your point of view.* (Mike/Early Board Member: 195-201)

Without this culture of trust, board members intervene in management and seek to control areas in which professionals perceive they have limited knowledge or expertise.

*And they just didn’t listen to that at all. And there were a few very strong personalities on the board who just thought what I was talking about was rubbish and that’s why [I resigned].* (Mary/Inaugural Principal: 54-55)

Conflicts often result. In the cases of community and parent-run schools, where personal relations and the building of a total community have consciously been made part of a school’s purpose, there is increased intensity in relationships and conflicts are more likely to create schisms. This caused some study schools to self-destruct or be taken over by others as these two participants describe.
And what they were doing, I thought, was actually ruining a really good thing. It was a power play, one camp off against another. So I got myself onto the school council. Unfortunately two other women did as well. They ended up being quite extreme, although at the time I couldn’t see it. … In the end the school was disbanded. (Lynne/Early Board Member: 30-43)

Then we didn’t have the sort of conflict you saw in [that other school]. It imploded and we watched that. I lived through the first lot because I had personal friends up there who had been involved in the building of that school with a few others. They actually brought their kids down to our school and then of course after I left, it really imploded as well. That was so sad. (Mike/Early Board Member: 100-105)

Conflict was also one of the reasons for change given by participants from those schools that have decreased parent representation substantially or altogether. Sam explains below.

Everywhere I went in America, the United Kingdom and Australia, where Montessori schools were parent-directed, they had all self-destructed or fragmented or gone off and formed other schools. None of them was really then big enough to be successful and self-supporting. So what we were looking for was a system to prevent that. (Sam/Early Board Member: 8-13)

As Rita and Len describe in the following quotations, there is an assumption of consonance and cohesion regarding beliefs and values in community schools. Any disruption to these assumptions is, therefore, much more disturbing because of these affective aspects.

Because you do think it’s going to be lovey-dovey in this little community, then suddenly people’s opinions change. I think that is why they tend to fall apart so much because of the emotional involvement. (Rita/Early Board Member: 174-176)

Also the power of parents has been increased but without the accompanying legitimacy and influence in the view of teachers and some other parents, resulting in an increased likelihood of power struggles occurring between parents and professionals and also between groups of parents with different expectations.

There were the academics and also the real alternative life-stylers. It’s always been a stretch between the two. (Sue/Current Principal: 138)
One school I know of I see at that stage of tension between how powerful are the parents and how powerful are the teachers. (Eve/Early & Current Board Member: 647-648)

The issue can be about whose authority or expertise counts.

What you ended up with were different groups of people just having different ideas about what the school should be doing. There was no way we were going to be able to satisfy them all and, of course by trying to, you actually end up making it worse and people start to leave. (Vic/Early Board Member: 27-30)

It’s very interesting what happens with power and who has it and who thinks somebody else is mature enough to take on things. (Eve/Early Board Member: 213-214)

Those in governance, board members and principals, talked often of ‘the car park mafia.’ Those disaffected groups of parents who, it was said, stirred up trouble by discussing their concerns widely amongst other parents rather than going to the principal or the council with them. Two examples are quoted below.

We’ve had for some time a very clear structure which has been communicated repeatedly but there has been a culture to go around people and lobby. … There is the silent majority and the vocal minority, the car park mafia. (Gail/Current Chairperson: 169-181)

For some people resolving problems is not what ‘car park gossip’ is all about. It’s actually about their own issues. … If you have a hundred parents, you are going to have one or two that are really interested in conflict for themselves. (Oliver/Recent Principal: 664-672)

Conflicts divide those who wish to maintain the status quo from those who wish to change it and consolidate power and influence within particular groups. Two board members describe the effects.

It went into two camps. It started from one of the parents who was definitely not thinking objectively and certainly wasn't looking at how to help the school. It almost became a vendetta. The person wasn't on council but got to a couple of council members. It just became a muscle man thing. (Vic/Early Board Member:301-305)

I was teaching at another school last year and they were going through a parental crisis and the school was crumbling around their ears and I
thought, yes this was the very reason we changed to a board, to avoid this situation. (Rita/Early Board Member: 208-211)

Most of the tensions are between the principal and the governing body as Sam and Rachel explain.

I think that when you have the professional educator it leaves them in an invidious situation when you can have parents white-anting them. When you see that and you see people with that sort of expertise really lost to us because of factional infighting, I go to schools and I weep. (Sam/Early Board Member: 87-93)

They thought the council had much more responsibility in the educational area and were interfering with staffing issues. They didn’t have the same trust in the principal. If you were forewarned, you might be able to prevent it but my feeling now is that it is probably always going to happen that way from time to time in those sort of structures. (Rachel/Recent Principal: 60-62)

Some of the tensions are caused by differences amongst staff as Mike describes.

There are different views on Montessori. I think that is what ultimately happened when it fell apart. There was a faction that had a staff member on side and that staff member wanted a particular direction and the school just split along those lines. (Mike/Early Board Member: 377-380)

Widespread conflict cannot be contained and if differences are not resolved, then groups leave and the school must regroup. Two participants describe this process.

Yes. We had a huge split on the council last year. Fractionalisation and huge repercussions all through the school with people taking sides and all of that. In the end we virtually had to start again. We had to scrap most of the council and that took a lot to do. (Nina/Current Principal: 70-72; 2)

I shouldn’t have resigned when I did. I think I resigned in reaction to someone coming in [to council]. But that next person who came in, and I don’t think anyone would disagree with me, was just a complete disaster. It was a natural chaotic time. Perhaps you need that kind of chaos for something to come out of it. (Nancy/Early Board Member: 56-61)

Though purging dissenters can leave the schools more unified, exhaustion, loss of trust and the loss of community members and contributors can outweigh the benefits for those remaining.
You know these little independent schools— if that group of families has a fight, then suddenly it all falls to pieces. When I was in the department, we had at least one and maybe two cases where there had been a bit of falling out at a family-type school and half the parents up and left overnight and the school wasn’t viable. So overnight the thing collapsed. (Len/Key Informant: 296-300)

Another participant describes the aftermath of such conflicts from her view as a parent.

We have been unable to change anything because of both the inertia in the face of the council’s silence about their actions. This is a powerful and dishonest tactic of the councils which has worked for them, and because of the fear within the school that dissent will cause a further split in the school community and this would be more damaging. There is a whole climate of threat and intimidation about, “what might happen if we do anything?” (Kerry/Key Informant: 181-186)

The preservation of morale and rebuilding of trust may depend on finding, or inventing, groups or individuals to blame, as Irene explains.

Yes and sometimes you were quite pleased when people left. The thing that did though was bland down the whole thing to a certain extent for a while. Then things would move again. When a cluster of people who all believed the same thing moved on, you’d almost breathe a sigh of relief because you would think at least the meetings will be easier. (Irene/Early Board Member: 288-291)

If the school survives, then for a time at least it will be stronger and more cohesive.

This year has been a recovery year with everyone licking their wounds and regrouping. There’s a nice feeling again now of a lot more support. … Now it's the people who didn't leave as a result of that, that were already more committed. Then they felt the need to rally. It's almost like having a war to rally the people. It brings people together in support of each other. (Nina/Current Principal: 89-94; 2)

Working in such schools is very demanding and survival is tenuous. Working conditions are often stressful as parents and teachers try to adjust to varying expectations. Conflict and discomfort usually are restricted or have no channels through which they can be expressed. The underflow of such elements erodes structures and undermines trust. There are dilemmas then with regard to the building of trust and the management of conflict. How do you build up trust in the present times when shared
history and experiences, and other sources of social capital from the past, have been depleted? How can a school open up avenues for debates that keep a school growing and developing and changing but keep such debates from deteriorating into destructive conflicts and schisms when many of these issues will have emotive and philosophical foundations?

DILEMMAS OF FORM OR PROCESS

Dilemmas also come about from the uncertainty and transformation that has been occurring in structures and processes of school governance and leadership. Dilemmas of form and process arise from the choices made about how decisions are to be balanced and implemented, how governance is structured and how the forms taken impact on other areas of governance. Changes such as these are reflected in the interview data from this research.

_I’ve just spent some time in Queensland with twenty-six Montessori Principals from around Australia and they have all got the same stuff going on with board structures. The same governance issues of who makes decisions. It doesn’t appear they have worked a lot of it out very well but in the interest of stability they’d better do it soon._ (Roger/Current Principal: 88-92)

Structures or Processes

In Chapter 5, I described the schools' board structures and processes. In this section I investigate the tensions and dilemmas, the contradictions and inconsistencies, resulting from these structures and processes and experienced by those in governance. As reported in the earlier chapter, all of the schools have undergone some changes to structure and processes and some are quite radical changes. One participant postulates that it was a failure to formalise the structure early enough that resulted in one school’s demise.
It didn’t have a governing structure that had gone through a crisis and out of it. I’m sure it was largely my fault in not knowing what to do. But we didn’t get that [formal structure or clarity of roles] established and sorted out fairly quickly before it self-destructed. Nobody had done the hard work in defining exactly what the school was about, policies and what each party’s role was. (Vic/Early Board Member: 57-62)

Another sees the changes as a necessary part of a school’s evolution.

Once that initial energy passes as the first wave, you then start to find a structure that holds this thing up. You find what’s been built is an odd and amazingly flimsy structure that then needs something rather permanent to hold it and support it for the people who are coming in who don’t have that same intensity that the first group did. (Gail/Current Chairperson: 92-96)

All the case study schools have developed committee structures, although initially they operated without formal committees. And all schools in the study, except for the direct democracy school OIS 2, have formalised their governance by means of numbers and types of delegates. The forms of governance have also changed. There is now only one direct democracy school and four of the other schools have restructured or are about to restructure their boards as predominantly appointed or nominated.

We wanted to set up a board of governors that was run by outside people. We were looking for high profile people to run the board as an independent body and just have the parents involved in like a Parents and Friends Association. Because they were forever influencing the teachers you know, and causing heartache, distress and conflict. (Rita/Early Board Member: 36-40)

Restructuring in this way is a move away from the democratic and empowerment impulses of these schools' beginnings. As Roger makes evident, it is now believed that educational professionals should be making the decisions, not the stakeholders.

The important part is that [restructuring away from being parent run] provides a governance structure that allows the important decisions to be made by the people, who after all, have been put in the position to do that. …We often joke that if you could run a school for orphans you’d be a lot better off. (Roger/Current Principal: 75-77; 393)
This school has also changed the language in written documents to reflect this restructuring. Roger recognises that changing the discourse is an important aspect of changing the culture.

*We’ve taken all references out of the materials we have and we’ll do it in the constitution as well, any reference to terminology such as parent-owned or parent-run. It’s supposed to be a partnership between various stakeholders in the community and if you want to get rid of the culture of the them and us, then you need to look very carefully at the terminology.*  
*(Roger/Current Principal: 395-399)*

For some other participants, as these two examples illustrate, restructuring was an important step in clarifying the lines of authority, improving efficiency and resolving the paradox of parents as both employers and clients.

*You need that, to replace volunteers, because you are always going to have trouble with volunteers. I guess you need a structure where you can keep that energy coming in from volunteers but it has to be focused, it has to be managed and guided and made worthwhile, otherwise people get fed up. They get confronted with the difficulty of getting any decisions made, which is a perennial problem with these schools.*  
*(Jack/Early & Current Board Member: 275-282)*

*So it was to get more expertise and to take one step away so that staff weren’t trying to deal with parents as customers and as management.*  
*(Megan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 222-223; 2)*

According to Wilson (1993), when individuals are appointed, this implies the careful dispensing of power— that power then resides with the giver as well as the recipient. Those with the power to appoint choose whom to appoint and in the choosing spread their influence even further. The need to appoint expertise has generally driven this move away from the original community empowerment imperatives in response to the difficulties many schools have suffered from mismanagement, poor decision-making and the financial repercussions. Participants from three different schools explain some of the issues.
Yes, there were definite criteria. We would never work with a parent-run school again because what we saw was that people, when their children go there, become too personally involved and they lose sight of the better good. And because they are too emotionally involved, sometimes they can’t make a really rational decision for the better good. (Rita/Early Board Member: 28-33)

The school came very close to closing, primarily because of self-interest. People, particularly parents, find it very difficult to make the transition to objective decision-making when difficult decisions have to be made. (Roger/Current Principal: 51-53)

The chairman we had was a bit suspect too. He hadn’t really rigorously looked at the school finances, which weren’t that great. He had taken on both the treasurer’s and chairman’s role. Thought he could do both but really wasn’t doing a very good job of either. (Vic/Early Board Member: 79-84)

Only the Foundation Council of WS1 was specifically designed to act as an objective, reflective body, as Eve explains below.

We realised that it was probably one of the few places in the whole set up that could be a truly reflective body. You were not there as an employee, you were not there as an ordinary councillor who had got on because of a burning issue or you were not an angry parent or anything like this. You could be objective. (Eve/Early & Current Board Member; 139-143)

Very few schools had formal mechanisms in place to deal with these situations. Council chairpersons or other board members could not officially be forced to resign without resorting to legal action. As Vic explains, however, pressure is brought to bear in other ways.

Anyway I’m not sure how he [the chairperson] actually ended up leaving—various bits of pressure came to bear. There’s no formal way to get rid of someone you don’t like. It just sort of happens. (Vic/Early Board Member: 89-91)

Despite recognition of the difficulties in effective board management, the study found at the time of interviewing, there was generally little emphasis on training or inducting new council members. Although as Fran suggests, some schools are now beginning to put some strategies in place.
We’ve also encouraged them to really understand [their responsibilities] and we’ve been through quite a good workshop to help them understand the responsibility of governance. (Fran/Inaugural & Current Principal: 57-58; 2).

Dilemmas of structures and processes result as schools move away from parent empowerment. These changes to forms and processes change other aspects of the school as well, often with other unintended outcomes. Whether, in the long term, the changes bring the intended results of improved efficiency and long-term survival is yet to be seen. As one participant claims, perhaps it will be the people involved rather than the structure that is the key.

I think the structure works well when the human relationships are working. We’ve jigged and twigged the structure a few times and where it always falls down is on the personalities. You can create a wonderful structure, but if you can’t get the right people it falls down. You create a wonderful structure with this key position but if no one is sitting in that chair, it tends to fall over. (Gail/Current Chairperson: 158- 162)

The most important 'chair' to be occupied in any school structure is that of principal. The dilemmas examined in this next section have to do with how that 'chair' is now constructed.

**Principal - Colleague, Communicator or Manager**

In Chapter 4 the ways the role of school principal has changed in the wider educational context over the last fifteen years was discussed in detail (see Angus & Olney, 2001; Caldwell, 1998b; Connors & Sharpe, 1996; Dimmock, 1999b; Lam, 1996; Ortiz & Ogawa, 2000; Whitty et al., 1998). As the metaphor of school as organisation has gained prominence, schools and principals have found themselves adjusting to greater demands for accountability and professionalism and to changing consumer expectations. The principals in the study schools report that these changes in the wider
educational context have also impacted significantly on them. Megan explains some of the impact this has had on their role and work.

A lot of them [principals of these schools] were exemplary teachers and I think it was that they really believed in what they did that made a difference. Once they got bogged down in the paperwork they lost the momentum that kept them going. It’s hard to keep up both roles. It means you frequently work to two o’clock in the morning. (Megan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 13-17;2)

In two of the case study schools, MS 4 and WS 1, there was no designated principal in the very early years. In the other three case study schools, the principal was either a full-time or part-time teacher. However, it was often the charisma and vision of the central teacher or principal around which the schools formed. These ‘heroic’ leaders became the foundation upon which the schools were built and thus these principals usually ‘enjoyed’ a long tenure.

I’m not saying it’s totally me, I think it’s the leadership of the school but I’m the figurehead and we’ve probably attracted people around that. Also I have a very loyal staff. I’ve been the only principal. … I think the fact that over all the changes and turmoils, I think the fact that I was there the whole time, creates a stability in itself. (Dan/Inaugural & Current Principal:370-37; 1, 98-99;2)

Table 8.1 shows that in recent years the turnover of principals in these schools has been much more frequent. The three schools that still have principals of over eight years service (one of whom has since resigned) are all inaugural principals. Dan gives one explanation for this trend.

And you get good grace if you’ve been in there and you’ve seen lots of successes, then the mistakes are not such a big deal. Whereas a new person in the job or someone unknown or un-trusted yet, doesn’t get that. (Dan/Inaugural & Current Principal:100-103;2)
Table 8.1: Tenure of Current Principals of Study Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal of more than eight years</th>
<th>Principals for five years or less</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MS 3 (Principal resigned during study)</td>
<td>MS 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS 5</td>
<td>MS 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 2</td>
<td>MS 4 (Principal resigned during study)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GAS 1</td>
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<td>OIS 1 (Principal resigned during study)</td>
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<td>OIS 6 (Principal resigned during study)</td>
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<td>OIS 7 (Principal resigned during study)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>WS 1 (Principal resigned during study)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

From this table it can be seen that once the inaugural principal leaves their position the frequency of turnover of principals increases. Of the ten current principals interviewed as part of the study, seven have since resigned from the position they held. The inaugural principals from the independent schools in the study had average tenures of over thirteen years (see Table 8.2). Those following them in the positions have an average of much less than five years tenure.

Table 8.2: Inaugural Principals Tenure (where known)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study School</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MS 1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS 2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS 3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS 4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS 5</td>
<td>13 ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 2</td>
<td>29 ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WS 1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was postulated, by several participants that it is the significant change in the principal’s fundamental role as educational leader and the demand for more
professionally-orientated people that has contributed to the rapid turnover of principals today. Two examples are given below.

You’ve got the passion for a school that a lot of them started and that’s a whole sense of community and vision in the life that they have. Now it’s a more professional appointment and they’ll keep on moving to a bigger school if it’s opportune for their career or they’ll go into consultancy or whatever. (Megan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 40-44; 2)

Just the recognition of how big the job is and it wasn’t getting any less. I didn’t get eleven years down the track to be working less. In the beginning I was naive. If someone asked me to start a school today, knowing what I know now, I wouldn’t do it. (Dan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 21-24; 2)

Several writers in this area have also suggested that it is the changes to the work of principals, and their repositioning as administrators and managers rather than teachers, that has led to the increasing turnover of people. In fact, there is a decrease in people wanting to take on such positions (Hewitt, 2002b; Whitaker, 2003; Whitty et al., 1998). Some of the management literature also suggests that there is much more rapid turnover of management personnel generally and a change in notions of loyalty and commitment (International, 2000; Wood, 1996). What is clear is that today principals are positioned in a more contradictory role than in the past. They are not only educational leaders at the head of a school and at the interface between parents and community but also line managers between council and staff (A. Carr, 1994). Two participants describe this problem.

Obviously I sit right in the middle [between council and staff], which is sometimes very, very tricky. … What I’ve got to do is appease both sides. So I get caught in that sort of trap— that I’ll do the best I can for them and on the other side be accountable to the council. (Simon/Current Principal: 248-253)

It’s this line management thing and you are basically there and you are kind of set against the staff. (Nina/Current Principal: 158; 2)
Whereas in the past principals did little management, today the work of principals has increased in complexity and degree. As Simon laments, not at all what he thought the job would be.

_It proved to be for me just a nightmare experience. I was trying to set up an educational programme but I ended up getting deflected into spending no time with the students at all and all my time doing really full on administrative things—bureaucratic, nonsensical matters. It’s been very tough and not really what I mapped out for myself._ (Simon/Current Principal; 177-181)

Several principals reported finding that they felt they must be, at the same time, colleague, councillor, evaluator, employer and employee. This is also impacting on the teachers as well. In the example below, Megan sympathises with them in the beginning but then makes it plain that they just have to adapt to this new ‘professionalism’ and get on with it.

_The teachers are now more worried about whether they have evidence for an outcome for something rather than planning and making new activities for the children. Their time goes into the tracking and recording. They all talk about the frustration of that. The frustration of are they really offering anything better because of that. … It’s part of the professionalism and it’s expected and it is compulsory and they need to get a handle on it now. The quicker they get a handle on it the easier it will become but that doesn’t mean it is an easy shift for them to make._ (Megan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 148-162; 2)

All of the principals interviewed indicated that they were involved to a varying extent in staff matters, primarily hiring and evaluating staff, and monitoring their conditions. Dan gives one important reason for this.

_If he has a lot of say in staff selection and recruitment, that can be really good because it’s probably a way of ensuring loyalty and it also gives you behind the scenes power._ (Dan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 108-110; 2)

Only MS 1 had a standing staffing committee responsible for monitoring staff conditions and recommending hiring to the board. The others convened committees as
needed but relied essentially on the principal’s expertise and knowledge. Most
principals considered this power essential as Roger makes evident.

*I think where things like staffing are solely in the hands of councils it can be
disastrous. That will be my job even if we have a board member on a
selection panel.* (Roger/Current Principal: 402)

The following example illustrates how the present climate of accountability and
effectiveness impacted on their relationships with staff.

*The whole atmosphere changed with enterprise bargaining. All of a sudden,
staff started counting all the extra things they did. And where they’d been
happy to give up their own time and so on, now they felt like “If I have to
justify a pay rise well why should I”. All the give and take went. It became
so much more a ‘them and us’ instead of all pull together to achieve what
we wanted for the children. It was a complete change.* (Rachel/Recent
Principal:42-44)

Despite the trend toward greater accountability and effectiveness, only a few schools
seemed to have formal evaluation procedures for staff in place. Staff evaluations have
not been a priority in the past but are gradually being accepted as something that needs
to be formalised. Where they are in place, they are definitely considered by all to be the
responsibility of the principal.

*I evaluate the teachers but before, it wasn’t very formal. Then we had a staff
member who was not satisfactory and this was very difficult.* (Nina/Current
Principal:141-142;1)

Not many of the study schools had instituted formal evaluations of the educational
programmes. Although these schools are now obliged to participate in the National
Benchmark Testing only a few commented on it. Most evaluation of curriculum matters
has been informal and incidental. Three of the schools in the study had permanent
Education Committees but in most cases, education was the portfolio of the principal.
Some principals undertake curriculum evaluations in conjunction with the teachers
and/or education committee, as Fran and Simon explain.
The primary curriculum is very sound and very clear so that’s not ever revised really except now with this literacy and numeracy. Otherwise it’s done through the faculties and their meetings. (Fran/Inaugural & Current Principal:189-191;1)

That is left to me and the other teachers. We have nobody on council who has any expertise or desire to be involved in that. (Simon/Current Principal: 293-294)

The essential community interface roles that principals have had and still have in schools was reported by most principals to be of continuing, if not increased importance, including now, not only communication, but even counselling, as Dan reveals.

I’ve done counselling courses and some principals wouldn’t see that as their role and maybe they are smarter than me but I was finding I was in the role anyway. (Dan/Inaugural & Current Principal:351-353;1)

As well as line managers between council and staff, principals’ roles also include day-to-day administration, committee and council meeting attendance, financial accountability, and implementation of policy.

As you know from your experience, everything stops and starts at the office of the school because there is no outside agency. You run the whole lot. You have to arrange the cleaning, the gardening, maintenance, everything that falls on the school. (Len/Key Informant; 123-126)

Most principals of these small independent schools strive to balance these demanding, and sometimes conflicting, aspects of their role. Increased autonomy in management areas means principals’ work has become more bureaucratised and technical in orientation. Those principals in the study, who had just left their positions or were about to, gave similar reasons for their decisions. These were essentially the increase in workload; the increased responsibility and administration demands; losing touch with the classroom; relationships with school councils being too difficult; and the hours too long. Nina and Dan explain their reasons for leaving.
Having got this new job where my pay rate is going to be higher than here, plus car, plus house and half the work, I thought why would anybody want to go for the other job. You would only do it for the love of it. It is just too much work. I was working on Saturday and Sunday for the school and that’s not uncommon, and last night till midnight. I have my job and then I have recovery for short periods of time in between. (Nina/Current Principal: 127-131;2)

One way of summarising it is that it was getting to the point where for the first time in ten or eleven years, I was thinking of it as a job. That was really the time to make the decision because as a job it’s not a really good one, as a passion, a love, a commitment, it is. (Dan/Inaugural & Current Principal; 128-131;2)

In the case of the government school, the role of principal has always been problematic but for different reasons. Although the initial parent group had some input into appointments of principals, they were limited by bureaucratic procedures and by who applied for the position. The school, GAS 1, had six principals appointed in the first five-year period and a total of eight principals over the seventeen years to 2000. No one has stayed in the position for much more than five years. It is postulated that what was missing for those early principals of GAS 1 was the opportunity to be embedded in the pioneering process and become part of the identity of the school, in the way that the inaugural principals in independent schools were and, therefore, benefited from.

I think we did have a parent representative (on the selection panel) but they were mostly education department people. The choice probably wasn’t the best choice as far as the school was concerned. There could be several reasons for that. The principal was certainly employed before the school began but at a fairly late stage, as far as the progression of the school went. So he had missed out on a lot of theory. (Irene/Early Board Member:56-59)

It was also a different environment to the one these principals were used to.

It was more time consuming. I couldn’t put things off because everyone wanted things done yesterday. I suppose the coordination of things was more stressful because it had to be done at the community’s pace not my pace. (Jeff/Key Informant:330-333)
This will probably continue to be a problem for a school that is seen as a promotional stepping-stone for some principals, although the change in role of principal has not been so dramatic as in the other case study schools. It is also interesting to note that the present appointment of principal has come from ‘within the ranks,’ that is a teacher who has taught at the school for a considerable period has been promoted. This has, in the past, been a successful strategy for independent schools and may lead to ‘better fit’ and more longevity of tenure for this alternative government school.

The dilemmas for principals are about how they choose to interpret their role and how others interpret their role, and how they manage any conflicts between these interpretations. For schools, the dilemmas are around how the structures continue to fit with their need to be professional and effective. Do they modify their democratic forms to meet these and how does this then impact on identity? Roger has high hopes of change for the better in his school but time will tell.

*I think that all the benefits of a [largely appointed] board outweigh the negative ones. It is stepped back from the micro politics and I think it will make a significant difference to the culture of the school.* (Roger/Current Principal: 71-73)

DILEMMAS OF IDENTITY OR COMMUNITY

Dilemmas of identity are those arising from tensions between school mission and market imperatives. These are manifested in conflicting expectations of a school’s function, focus and intended outcomes. It is also reflected in which is the prevailing view of the role of the principal, educational leader or chief executive officer. Like the physical framework or structure of an organisation, the identity of a school is not simply one-dimensional. Many aspects go into its construction. While structures may reflect or
even influence this identity, it is the overall foundation of the identity that counts. One participant describes this as the importance of ‘spirit’ rather than structure.

*I don't think it's the structure that is important. I think it's the spirit in whatever work you do in the school. The spirit in which it is done is more important than the structure. The spirit is what you have to keep alive. When the spirit dies, it doesn't matter what structure you have. The spirit requires hope, faith, trust knowledge and appreciating your work with people.*

(Kate/Inaugural Principal: 571-575)

And spirit was often what attracted people to the school in the first place.

*We knew it was what we wanted. It had such a lovely spirit about it.*

(Yvonne/Early Board Member: 4)

**Community Building or Business Principles**

While both the business and community metaphors can give us insights into how schools function, it makes a world of difference for those involved, which of the two provide the overarching frame (Sergiovanni, 1996). The classic *gemeinschaft*/*gesellschaft* theoretical framework from sociological theory (Tonnies, 1957) is used here to form some understanding of how schools view themselves. In the *gemeinschaft* framework, which is associated with traditional communities, relationships are based in kinship, friendship and shared beliefs. In contrast the *gesellschaft* framework is associated with the wider, secular society, with the world of commerce and its marketplace relationships. It is typified by contractual obligations of performance, impersonalisation and impermanence. In any institution, the values of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* will interact and overlap but the relative dominance of one type over the other will change and affect the quality of the experiences for the individuals within the system. Len describes how visitors perceive the cultures of schools differently.

*People who go into schools say you can pick up a different feel in some of them. One person said he had been to three different schools and one was
very clinical and orderly, one was disorganised and ours had a feeling of warmth and empathy and a sense of purpose. I think the principal is the key person in all of this. (Len/Key Informant: 210-214)

The movement of society and of schools toward the *gezellschaft* end of the continuum was discussed in the relevant literature research, by many writers (Ball, 1994; Beare, 1998; Caldwell, 1999; Dwyer, 1993; Fitz Clarence, Kenway, & Collier, 1998; Kenway et al., 1993; Marginson, 1999; Wahlberg & Bast, 2001; Whitty et al., 1998). This example demonstrates that the same movement is evident for most of the schools in this study.

*I think that parents seeking that type of education have got a lot more discriminating in what they are looking for. They’re looking for a school, on the one hand that is a well-run business and yet the educational programme in the classroom is also there. So you have got to have both. In our day everyone was just building and you were just building with the best you could with what you had and you didn’t have those ideals. Now they have been established for awhile you’ve got more sophisticated buyers and you’ve got to be more professional. (Mike/Early Board Member: 360-367)*

In *gemeinschaft* cultures, relationships are based in trust, intimacy, loyalty, kinship, and friendship, and shared beliefs. Schools in their foundation period reflected these characteristics.

*That was the beauty of it. I felt like I could walk in at any time and be welcome. (Yvonne/Early Board Member: 136)*

*Time and time again parents who have been part of the community, talk about the days when their kids were here, that special bond between their children and their teachers. Years later they still come back to visit. It’s life long. (Megan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 207-209; 2)*

Members can remain essentially united in spite of disabling dynamics.

*It hasn’t always been harmonious and there have been one or two scratchy individuals in there but that’s okay. You need that. (Eve/Early & Current Board Member: 467-468)*

*There was a wonderful community feeling when things were going well. It was just such a positive, powerful environment you really felt proud of being there. I guess when things went wrong they went horribly wrong but you still felt a sense of ownership. (Irene/Early Board Member: 149-152)*
However, the understandings that develop are not always resilient and able to survive the movement of members through the community over time. The struggle for survival means sometimes the original vision is lost as these examples illustrate.

*Parents coming in now don’t know the history of anything. You just assume this is a school and I choose this one over that one because of whatever. (Dan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 96-97)*

*I think that is the bit [the vision] that can easily get lost because we are all striving day-to-day and year-to-year, and because in small schools just a few little factors can tip the balance. In the early years we were faced with extinction so it was survival. (Dan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 155-159;1)*

One school was conscious of the need for identity to be sustained, protected and passed on to new members by the stories, symbols, rituals and customs that are celebrated.

*We had a dragon from a production decades ago, which hung from the ceiling and that became a symbol for the school. It became really, really important to the school. It’s in our logos in different forms and shapes. Kids create their own dialogue and myths around it. (Oliver/Recent Principal: 800-804)*

In contrast the gesellschaft culture is associated with the wider, secular society, with the world of commerce and its marketplace relationships and the need to establish a corporate identity.

*The critical thing for this school is to identify itself and clearly place itself in a position, which delineates and differentiates it from the normal and traditional schools and delineates itself within the alternative school sector, but also differentiates itself in terms of Montessori education. (Roger/Current Principal: 358-361)*

*To have a school of excellence and one that meets the needs of the gifted child, in today's world you need something to sell and I've tried to promote the school in this area. (Nina/Current Principal: 185-187; 1)*

Many schools find themselves moving in this direction, to a culture characterised by obligations of performance, impersonalisation and competition.

*So we have developed a very comprehensive performance management framework, which not only includes staff but includes the board itself. It includes parents. We have an accountability process for parents. (Roger/Current Principal: 166-168)*
If you look at the school as a product, you get the phase when it is growing, it is growing, it plateaus and then it begins a decline. In business if that is your product that you are selling and it starts to go into decline, you have to kick it off into something new or do something different to keep up. (Kate/Inaugural Principal; 679-682)

Often this tendency toward the gesellschaft culture is in conflict with the motivations and skills of the initial pioneers, as Vic explains.

You’ve got to run it much more like a business and that’s often inconsistent with the kinds of people who want to get this thing going. It’s very hard to get the two together. (Vic/Early Board Member:415-417)

Imposed accountability measures from State and Commonwealth government departments are often in opposition to the philosophy of some schools.

That kind of assessment [benchmark testing] is so philosophically different from anything that we do. It’s not diagnostic. It doesn’t give us particularly useful information. It puts us in danger of, if we do that, do we teach to the test, which of course is not what we want to do. It also, in a way, sees that we comply with something that we see as so opposed to the way we deliver the curriculum and that’s an issue because it impedes our freedom. (Fran/Inaugural & Current Principal: 81-87;2)

Principals and teachers are finding that contractual agreements are replacing those of informal understandings and values. Assessment, official policies and sanctions are used to ensure allegiance and compliance.

I don’t care if you have got thirty years in teaching, if the things you are practicing don’t match any of that [the established critical factors], you have to be accountable for that. (Roger/Current Principal: 370-371)

The roles of the coordinator [principal] are dictated through contract. There is something like forty odd quite clear responsibilities. (Oliver/Recent Principal: 448)

There are prescribed roles and acceptance of rules and formalities and there are increased expectations of professionalism. Roger and Max are two examples of this view.
Within the school system, the whole notion of the educational direction of the schools, and more importantly how they should be governed, and the professional nature that is required in terms of just simply the administration and management is very high. (Roger/Current Principal: 121-123)

It is becoming more and more complicated with all these laws and regulations being applied to schools. … There are the pressures for documentation which are cutting into teachers’ time, accountability, litigation and now the privacy thing. I think if the privacy laws come into being it will make our job untenable. If we can’t discuss certain things, then we can’t fulfil our obligations as trustees. (Max/Current Chairperson: 145-153)

The study reveals that the connections between people and schools have become more distant and individuals are reporting a loss of mission.

We’re getting encumbered and that’s awkward. We used to be so simple that we could do anything we wanted with a week’s notice. But when I’m talking about encumberment, the needs of the children might be met better, the children en masse might be, but we have so much stuff now we have lost some of our connections. (Olivia/Inaugural & Current Principal: 39-40)

In the beginning you work very hard. There’s warmth and camaraderie among everybody and then when the situation changes and things go on further and a more professional way of working needs to come into place, some people who worked with the old system feel the lack of it and then the complaints come. “Oh it’s cold now.” “It used to be better.” “Where’s the warmth gone?” (Eve/Early & Current Board Member: 279-284)

In the past schools were seen as the bridge from one kind of community to the other, from the gemeinschaft of the family and local community to the gesellschaft of the wider world. This connection has been eroded as schools have become more bureaucratic and many decisions and policies are dictated by outside influences. Schools are perceived as increasingly governed by the rational gesellschaft rather than the values of the gemeinschaft, as Vic and Fran report.

[When we decided to increase the numbers], the feeling changed. There was no room in the car park and everything felt a little bit more crowded but financially we were better off. Suddenly we were able to get a little more administration help and all those other things. (Vic/Early Board Member: 247-249)
It’s taken management where it needs to be, which is to a more professional realm so that we have effective decision-making. So the decisions are made efficiently and quickly and effectively. And the tough stuff is really dealt with. The tendency before was that you could always keep discussing it and never quite come to the crunch point. (Fran/Inaugural & Current Principal: 280-284; 1)

There is a danger for schools that ‘image’ becomes more important than reality. A key informant describes what happened in a school she knows.

The school council, all commercial people, seems to have no idea of the delicacy and fragility of the parameters, which enable such a richness of educational possibilities. They want bums on seats, increased enrolments. Their attitude seems to be that the balance will take care of itself, though the evidence is plain that this has never happened in the past. Have you heard of the phrase “to confuse the symbol with the symbolised?” Well that describes what appears to have happened in the council. They thought the caring and sharing could be reduced to words and put in a marketing campaign and that was it. (Kerry/Key Informant: 149-155)

Kate warns schools may lose their identity as a link to the larger society and instead becoming indistinguishable from it.

I think realistically there's a management aspect in the schools. The fact is that it's an organisation that requires management. I understand it when people say that schools shouldn't be run as businesses. Meaning that you're looking at the dollars and cents and then making the children come out measured only by how academically bright or capable they are. (Kate/Inaugural Principal: 742-749)

Another participant talked about the extremes of identity that are placed upon her school.

Now we have one group where as long as the social needs of their children are met they are happy here, and their needs as parents are met by a sense of community. This seems to be the priority. Often they are looking for somewhere that will cushion the bumps in life … We’ve also got a large group who have come from overseas who have children that must fit back into a competitive schooling environment. (Megan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 121-131; 2)
The dilemmas in this domain are how do school councils or boards maintain a sense of community while at the same time meeting increased imperatives to be more professional and educationally competitive. Rachel discusses the paradox.

_I think the optimum size [for a sense of community] is probably too small for it to be viable financially. If you want to maintain that feeling then it needs to be quite small which is not so optimum for the children and the educational programme. There are advantages in both. When the school is really small then the resources are much more limited both in the way of teaching and parents and money. Everybody is much more of a family. But from the educational point of view they are much more limited in what you can offer the children in the way of resources. So I don’t think you can do both. You have to decide what is more important._ (Rachel/Recent Principal: 55-57)

Representative councils have the acknowledged positive attributes of giving stakeholders empowerment and a sense of ownership and contributing social and human capital. Rachel and Dan describe the advantages thus.

_People feel an ownership for the school, which would hopefully lead on to more dedication and commitment by them, volunteering of their services and these sorts of things. I think perhaps filtering down to their children also feeling like the school belonged to the community and was something that was theirs._ (Rachel/Recent Principal: 53-54)

_I think having a structure like this models empowerment. So that this talk about, "you can make a difference," well in a school like ours you can. You can actually come in and have an influence in some area and I could give you heaps of examples of that, and I think that probably at a more sub-conscious level that the kids are even picking it up._ (Dan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 290-294;1)

For many, however, these positives no longer outweigh the negative features of mismanagement and ineffectiveness, and the lack of professionalism and objectivity. The following quotations illustrate this view.

_The weakness always with a volunteer board is that when people are busy in their own life and work or whatever, you find that timelines are not met and things don’t get done correctly. That creates a lot of frustration._ (Mike/Early Board Member: 280-282)

_That nexus between trying to make the professional decisions in terms of the directions of schools and the vision and solutions and so on, make it too_
complex. And that complexity can only be dealt with really at a relatively sophisticated, professional level. (Roger/Current Principal: 130-132)

Heroic Leader or CEO

When schools are considered primarily as communities, principals may be viewed as a head of a family, as a dedicated educator or even as Caldwell’s leader on a heroic quest (1998b). Their role in a community-orientated school is described as one of responsibilities and obligations aligned to society’s greater good through educating of students, not to production, efficiency and accountability. Sue gives her view of her role as follows.

For too many years the administrators’ job has been clearly that, run the show, keep it all going, keep them quiet. I think it’s because I’ve come straight out of the classroom but it’s also my belief that the person who is in this position has the privilege and has the responsibility of ensuring the best educational outcomes for the children. (Sue/Current Principal: 123-126)

In such schools, as Mike describes, principals call on their stock of social capital, particularly trust, to legitimise decision-making rather than on formal authority or sanctions.

As far as the educational knowledge, you know the pedagogy, the principal was very good on that and I could support her. So when there were small groups or individuals interested in taking it this way, you remember those times, or pressures on you to go that way, we were always able to say well let her look at it but we would never get a pendulum swing. The one thing we didn’t get back then was parents lobbying different teachers and it becoming a power play. (Mike/Early Board Member: 121-129)

However, leadership in a community has its own uncertainties and ambiguities. Community values and expectations, with the passage of time, come to be assumed when perhaps they have changed. Over time, with a changeover of board members, parents, and staff, the principal increasingly becomes the spokesperson for the school as
a whole and takes on the role and responsibility of carrying forward the mission and maintaining, or changing, the identity of the school. Two principals describe this role.

_I carry the whole picture all the time. It’s this constant thing of communication, helping them to see the bigger picture and then see how their decisions are influenced by their positions._ (Fran/Inaugural & Current Principal: 11-13; 2)

_Certainly while I was there, there was a definite shift to being, not an alternative school as such any more, but being a real choice amongst the independent schools. It took itself more seriously in terms of staffing and curriculum._ (Oliver/Recent Principal: 596-599)

Documents were also mentioned by some participants specifically as a means of holding identity and expectations, although Kate identified this means as limited.

_We had quite a comprehensive handbook to read. That's one thing about a handbook— how many people read it?_ (Kate/inaugural Principal: 443-444)

As the literature and this study suggest, sometimes the expectations and identity of a school are bound up in the person of the principal (Beavis, 1992; Chait, 1997). While confidence in them remains, they are a strong stabilising factor.

_Again maybe we were very lucky, she stayed because the principal is everything in a school like that._ (Vic/Early Board Member: 117)

_I mean she’s not going to be there forever and a day so maybe they need to be sorting out a deputy to work with her for two or three years and then take over so the essence of the school is maintained._ (Lynne/Early Board Member: 243-245)

One principal has no doubts that identity and philosophy should be in the hands of the professionals.

_It is this whole notion of providing an educational direction that is outlined in the identity of that particular school, without interference from people who have very limited knowledge about education, and more particularly the philosophy._ (Roger/Current Principal: 79-81)

Several participants commented on the impact on the identity of the school, when the principal does change. Two examples are given below.
There was some trouble when I first became Coordinator [principal] and wanted to change the school’s image, but they [those who disagreed] eventually left. (Tim/Current Principal: 56-57)

I was horrified [when the new principal didn’t go on the camps]. I thought you can’t do this and she thought I don’t need to be here. … With the previous principal the camp was the be-all and end-all. …But you’re right, it really does change with the principal and their ideas. (Vic/Early Board Member: 394-400)

Where principals are seen as chief executive officers running an enterprise these schools have in place management teams and strategic plans. It is in these business-orientated models of leadership, that the findings reveal a growing gap between the manager and the managed.

It changes the dynamic. I know you need to have formalised things and you want to get through them quickly and that sort of thing, but in doing so you lose some of the joy. …In the early days your staff are giving a lot of their time, extra time and there’s a real spirit of willingness to do so and yes that’s right but then becoming more professional took away from the spirit in the school. (Kate/Inaugural Principal: 107-109; 645-650)

There is often an exaggeration of bureaucratic top-down controls, especially when principals are struggling or over stressed and, commonly, there is a consolidation of vertical rather than horizontal structures (Whitty et al., 1998).

At the moment I run the risk of being what I am not, that is as some autocratic person who is holder of the Holy Grail because of a changing and non-experienced council body. (Simon/Current Principal: 341-343)

Principal workloads and ‘burnout’ were identified as problems in the wider context in the literature and nearly all principals and several board members raised these as serious issues in this study (Hewitt, 2002b; Manno et al., 1998; Milofsky & Morrison, 1996; Simola, 1998). Below are just two examples of the comments.

He had burnt himself out basically. It had come to a stage where he had to finish, had to go. He’d had enough and it was at this stage that the school started to go downhill. (Vic/Early Board Member: 69-70)
The school will only survive and survive with the vision that I and the other people originally had for it, if it is run and actively supported by people who share that vision and will take a managerial role in protecting it. I can’t do that because I’m already exhausted by the effort to try and hold onto it when I have five different roles. A community requires a cooperative group of people. It’s not me. … Everyone looks to me. It’s not what am I going to do about it, it’s what are we going to do. (Simon/Current Principal: 344-348; 356)

Simon has since resigned from the position and another principal resigned in anticipation of the problems to come.

I think I would have become burnt out but I think I caught it before I was. Other people may have a different view of that. What I mean is, looking back, if I judge myself harshly, the last year or two I wasn’t perhaps as fully into the job as I should have been. I’d seen a few stories where, and this is a few cases actually, where someone who has put their heart and soul into a job, similar to mine, and for probably more than one reason, it was not a good ending. I really didn’t want that. (Dan/inaugural & Current Principal: 8-15; 2)

There are dilemmas for all these schools about how they can have highly skilled principals to meet the increased expectations of the leadership role but with the passion and commitment that enable them to survive the pressures of working in these demanding conditions.

That’s the irony of it all quite frankly. The larger the school, the more you can dichotomise the roles. You can have your registrar and your bursar and so on and you can take on a more strategic role, which after all is what you should be doing. But within a small school you have to take on a number of roles. You have to have somebody who is all those things, all of the above. (Roger/Current Principal: 192-196)

When schools do up-skill their dedicated and committed principals to take on the administrative roles, as one participant observed, principals may not last long in the job.

That’s the sort of feedback I get. They have had a long, strong link and many of them started in the very early days of their schools and they were teaching principals and were very energised by that. Within twelve months to two years of becoming non-teaching principals, they leave. … Being in contact with the kids helps you to live. I don’t want to lose that. It brings a different energy. The paper work and admin is there but it is not that uplifting. … The school council encouraged the principal to come out of the classroom. He gave up his classroom role and took on the task of teaching
For those involved in governance there are choices to be made between whether the principal should focus on core activities of education and professional development or concentrate on the growing administrative and accountability workload.

**Maintaining Identity or Meeting New Expectations**

The school’s role as the connection from one kind of community to the other, from the *gemeinschaft* of the family and local community, a resource of social capital, to the *gesellschaft* of the wider world dependent upon human capital, has become much more challenging. Social capital is generated by the networks linking community members in multiple ways arising from community engagement and parent involvement and all the schools were endeavouring to maintain that aspect.

*The school started to look good but you do that with volunteer help because you can’t really get the capital to do it any other way. And in some ways it was good because it got people in. The ones who came, which was usually quite a large number in the early days, you’d get that sort of community spirit going.* (Vic/Early Board Member: 155-158)

In general, like Fran, most participants are positive about their abilities to maintain identity and survive.

*I feel now we've got a chance to really put our roots down very deeply and stand for this kind of education in the community. Because we've got quite a lot to offer in that way. And I think we've been so busy building our school we now have a chance to really reach out to the community.* (Fran/Inaugural & Current Principal: 320-323)

However, creating new social capital is much more difficult than simply redirecting existing social capital through structures such as school councils. Although governance processes in these self-managing schools clearly draw on social capital for formation and functioning, these sources may not be as rich or as stable as in the past and become more difficult to gain access to as the schools become more bureaucratic.
For the first ten years we had a hundred percent attendance at every function we had. It was fantastic. Then we got ‘traditional’ and we got more materialistic. A lot less vulnerable. It’s now seen as stable and people don’t feel so nervous about it and so we don’t get the same help. (Olivia/Inaugural & Current Principal: 22-23)

The other thing that tends to happen is that as soon as you establish some form of bureaucracy, then everyone goes, “Oh that’s their job now. It is not our job any more.” (Gail/Current Chairperson: 96-98)

All participants went on to identify many issues of concern and talk about the ways they endeavoured to maintain identity in light of these pressures. Maintaining size was one of the important factors identified by two participants.

I see the size factor, not us getting bigger but maybe other people starting up. Not just the site but also philosophically. And every time we put it out, it always comes back very resoundingly not to get bigger. (Dan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 387-390, 1)

We said we wanted a small school. We didn’t want to have a big school. We thought a hundred [students] was in some ways just a little too big and it did change the school. … When schools get to a certain size, they have more administration support, more time to spend on processes and lock in stuff that insulates them from the parents. That’s something that definitely doesn’t work well. (Vic/Early Board Member: 245-246; 345-347)

However for most schools, growth and prestige were identified as critical factors for long-term survival and Tania points out that small size has several negative aspects.

You know it’s a very small school and a lot of issues that you have in the wider world you have here but in a small community you really have to sort them out. It’s like being in a family, you just have to get along and deal with it. I think that [a small peer group] is a big reason for losing kids. (Tania/Current Chairperson: 169-174)

Many participants discussed the difficulties caused by demands for places from students who have trouble fitting elsewhere and the impact this has on identity and future stability. Controlling the kind of enrolments was, therefore, an important aspect. These examples demonstrate some of the issues.

Then of course there were the other issues of the ratio of ‘normal’ kids to the ones with problems. … Should we take this kid in but not wanting to
have too many problem kids. There were the financial issues too around that. Could we afford to say no? (Yvonne/Early Board Member: 103-104; 254-255)

Ideally what you want is a lot of very bright, empowered people who are self-motivated. We certainly started with that but what you tend to get as time goes on is a few of those but the majority of new students are ones who have fallen foul of the system for one reason or another and they want a different system, one that is much freer and less judgmental …I have no intention of us just being a place where all the people who are looking for a drop-in centre, come. (Simon/Current Principal: 258-263; 283-284)

Several participants talked about the point where the removal of students began a spiral of problems for the school. Rita and Jack describe two examples.

When the parents got disillusioned they started talking about the school negatively and word of mouth is how you get your enrolments and there was no one around who was going to say this is a great school any longer. If you lose thirty or forty percent of your enrolments, you go into financial crisis. (Jack/Early & Current Board Member: 297-302)

My son was attending the school and enjoying it a great deal. Then through some parent-engendered political conflict, the school started to disintegrate. Then it finally did disintegrate and we were left without a school. (Rita/Early Board Member: 3-5)

For another school this ultimately resulted in a dramatic change to its identity.

After we left I didn’t think it was going to survive another year and it would be gone, but it suddenly emerged as a Family School and then later became a Montessori School. Just a couple of parents had hung in there. (Vic/Early Board Member: 373-376)

Participants also talked about how the changing economic status of the parent body has had an effect on a school’s identity for some schools. Two examples are presented.

I think that the school has changed from its sister school. They both still have the same philosophy but different clientele. I think the way the school has evolved here is because of the socio-economic area we are in now. These children are all destined to go on to an independent high school, or at least eighty percent of them anyway. (Nina/Current Principal: 48-51; 2)

When the school started there were many hard working, lower class/middle class people who would be sending their children to the school because the fees were within their range. As we became known, as we became very good at what we were doing and got a good reputation, then upper/middle class, professional people would come along. (Donald/Inaugural Principal: 244-248)
Location of the school was another factor identified as contributing to school identity, as Oliver explains.

_"I think it’s physically where we are. Our identity was that we were an inner city school and to be obvious in being a function within that community. It comes back to the flavour of the school. It’s very much an inner city school and it was the determination of the parents then to stay. … What is good about where the school is, is that it governs the size of the school. That is something I come back to saying that being where it is, is important because a number of years ago if we had been on rolling lands and had a few more demountables we could well have been much bigger and then it wouldn’t be the school it is. (Olivier/Recent Principal: 774-775; 822-828; 878-882)"

Most participants acknowledged that keeping an established identity and philosophy was a constant struggle.

_"You get people who come in and don’t like it and want to change it and they do. They really try to peck away at it but if you’ve got that really strong process there and philosophy written down, plus a few strong personalities, you can hold them off. (Vic/Early Board Member: 131-134)"

What the findings revealed was that different schools had adopted different strategies to deal with this struggle. Some participants, such as Roger, described a very systems and process-driven view of maintaining identity.

_"I think you’ve simply got to be single-minded in doing that. You’ve got to put structures in place, which will be singularly transparent. If you don’t and you don’t have good mechanisms to get quality feedback, good mechanisms to ensure that you get a range of people looking at the information and the data and providing different perspectives on it, you simply remain continually in total darkness and there is no movement forward. (Roger/Current Principal: 278-283)"

For Mike the solution to maintaining identity is to control any radical elements and steer the school on a middle course.

_"You have to reduce radical views. To stop that pendulum going wildly swinging. Basically to keep it in the middle or in a controlled way so that you are moving in the direction that most people want and is educationally sound and realistic for the environment you are working in. (Mike/Early Board Member: 235-238)"
The school, WS1, utilises a separate group of ‘grey-haired’ elders as a means of remaining true to its philosophical roots as Fran explains.

_The reason we have that [the Foundation Council] is to protect the type of school we are. So they have to be people who work very strongly out of the philosophy. This is to protect that we don't get at any stage a group of people who just get elected on and might take it off in another direction. They are approached or can volunteer to be on it. The Foundation Council meet in almost a Godparent role._ (Fran/Inaugural & Current Principal: 65-69;1)

Some church schools could be said to have similar ‘mission’ groups such as this in their diocesan councils. Although misgivings about the Foundation Council’s ability to fulfil this role are expressed below, this school has weathered several crises and maintains a strong philosophical base.

_There was a nasty business and a sort of struggle for power, which the foundation councillors played absolutely no role in trying to heal. That was the litmus test really and there wasn’t any influence coming from that area at all._ (Jack/Early & Current Board Member: 304-308)

Boards with no, or little, parent representation and input, are, according to the participants, an important mechanism for protecting identity in the two schools with the least stakeholder empowerment. Rita and Eve explain.

_With ideals you don’t think [differences in beliefs] will happen. When you are working as pals you don’t think it will happen, then someone comes in with different ideas. Some parents come in with a vision of a different kind of school, other people want it bigger or better and that’s why we put the board in place so that people couldn’t come in with their own individual stands._ (Rita/Early Board Member: 2112-217)

_If you had a council that could be voted on and off every year, you could have a pressure group come and take over very easily. There are heaps of people who bring their children to this school who have no knowledge of what’s behind the philosophy. Sometimes they have very, very strong opinions about it but that doesn’t necessarily mean they actually have a clue at all._ (Eve/Early & Current Board Member: 170-176)
Some of the participants accepted that changes in identity were sometimes necessary and often unavoidable. The changing outside environment, changing community expectations and regulatory influences have impacted on the schools, whether they wish it or not. The following examples discuss some of these influences.

I also think continually seeking environmental information is important so that you can map your current identity over future needs. (Roger/Current Principal: 290-291)

It’s very challenging to try and match the philosophy and the way the school wants to teach with the way the government says you are supposed to teach and structure the school to be accountable. (Gail/Current chairperson: 54-56)

I’m not so sure the school is at the cutting edge any more. If the rules are set outside of the school and if they are dictated by someone from another place, it’s very hard to get that [innovation] happening. (Vic/Early Board Member: 324-327)

I felt that the school was becoming more like a private school. The background of the parents was becoming wealthier. It’s also much more conservative now. (Vic/Early Board Member: 359-361)

One principal proposed that even dropping their defining terms may be necessary.

I was looking at some of the rationale that was being put forward by some of the Montessori schools who have dropped Montessori from their names. Internationally there are a lot who have done that. The interesting piece of data that comes from it is that most of the schools that have dropped Montessori from their names, as opposed to their practice, and sold the school as opposed to trying to sell Montessori, have been outstandingly successful. I think in many ways it was restricting them. The image they had to sell or even un-sell, was sort of mythology. (Roger/Current Principal: 292-299)

Other principals question what their mission is today. Should they, and how can they, continue to carry the torch of innovation forward? Remembering that all the schools in the study had their foundations in the ground-breaking days of the School’s Commission, what responsibility do they still have to these beginnings or must they
now respond to stakeholders' desires for stability, prestige and consolidation?

*So it’s like "is that our endeavour? Is it to aim to stay one step ahead in the education game or is it more to support the good things that are now finally being embraced [by the wider educational community] and make that rich?" I guess I realise that spirit happens just one by one by one. Though I have every wish for this school to have a higher profile and be publicly recognised, I don’t have the energy to drive that and make that its mission. … We don’t want to grow the school. Until people are open to a message, it doesn’t get through. (Sue/Current Principal: 226-235)*

The dilemmas here for schools are about mission and market. Which one should be influencing school governance the most? Is the school able to maintain philosophical integrity and be a ‘lighthouse’ school for those who come after, to maintain the initial inspiration and dream? Can it do this and continue to be successful? If market is more important, which markets do they seek?

**CONCLUSION**

Dilemmas look and feel like problems, but unlike problems dilemmas are not easily solved through the adoption of well thought out structures and processes or by clearly defining roles and duties. The same issues still recur. This research frames the dilemmas identified in the data in terms of dilemmas of boundaries and power, dilemmas of form and processes, and dilemmas of identity. There are no easy formulae for where to draw the boundaries in balancing the needs of professional autonomy with the tradition of community empowerment and the differing, often conflicting expectations that are held by different groups within the school. The data reveal that tensions develop as a result of differing interpretations of what governance and leadership means in schools today. The dilemmas in this area, for those involved in governance today, are about how and where to draw these lines and, more importantly, how to maintain or change them as Kate explains.
If you need to change the boundaries [roles and responsibilities], then it needs to be a fair decision by people who made the boundaries. If you are going to shift the goalposts, then everyone has to agree. (Kate/Inaugural Principal: 382-384)

There are also dilemmas with regard to the building of trust and the management of conflict, how you build up sources of trust and at the same time keep open possibilities for contestation and questioning. Although a healthy dynamic in any organisation is desirable, schools in any sector with councils and boards dependent upon volunteers for social and human capital face particular difficulties in maintaining this dynamic. Kerry describes the problem.

Volunteering emanates from, among other things, generosity and in a culture of generosity, it is not acceptable to be direct and aggressive. Aggression and discomfort have no channels through which to be expressed and these elements erode the structure within. (Kerry/Key Informant:17-20))

Dilemmas also develop as schools move away from more representative forms of governance and initiate changes to form and processes in the name of efficiency and professionalism. The dilemmas for principals are about how they manage and balance the new, often conflicting, aspects of their roles as colleague, counsellor, manager, employer and employee. For school councils, the dilemmas are around how the structures they have continue to fit with their other needs and how the changes they initiate impact on expectations and power relationships within the school community. One participant articulates how a more professional and business-like approach may be viewed by at least a section of the community.

You go to a school like that to get away from bureaucracy and all that stuff you have in the other schools. (Vic/Early Board Member: 240)

The dilemmas of identity are also challenging. How do school councils or boards maintain a sense of community while at the same time meeting increased imperatives to
be more business-like and educationally competitive? Councils must now find principals, not only with the passion and commitment to enable them to survive the pressures of working in these demanding conditions, but also who are highly skilled in many areas in order to meet the increased expectations of the leadership role. A key informant, talking about yet another community high school that has ceased operating, explains.

That was one of the lessons for me that came out of my experience with that school. The people who founded it, for whom I have a great deal of admiration, saw the power in the school belonging principally to the students and the parents and the other members of the community. They saw the teachers basically as servants of the community, which is a good idea but the net effect of that was that in terms of the energy and commitment that’s needed from staff to make something like that work, they just didn’t feel sufficiently empowered. In the end it just wore them out. (Neil/Key Informant:113-122)

These dilemmas are not unique to the independent or alternative education sector. The questions of what should be influencing school governance more, mission or market, and how to find a balance between the two, is impacting on government school principals and councils as well (Connors & Sharpe, 1996; Cuban, 1992; Dimmock, 1999a, 1999b; Flett & Wallace, 2001; Glatter, 1996; Moeller, 1996). For all those involved in governance, particularly principals, there are choices to be made between whether to focus on core activities of education and philosophy or to concentrate on the growing administrative and accountability workload. Certainly all the schools in this study are still coming to terms with these choices.
CHAPTER 9

A QUESTION OF DISCOURSE
PHASES, PARTICIPATION AND PARADOXES

People do seem to want a pill to fix things. A simple strategy or recipe that can be followed painlessly to maximum, miraculous effect. (Kerry/Key Informant:62-63)

INTRODUCTION

Two metaphors, schools as organizations and schools as communities and three quite different frameworks were used to help conceptualize the findings of this study and to assist with the investigation and analysis of the data created. The three frameworks, School Governance as Phases of Development, School Governance as Levels of Empowerment, and School Governance as the Management of Dilemmas, were the particular tools chosen for interpretation whilst conceding that any conceptions drawn within them are contextual, historical and discursive (Usher & Edwards, 1994). Every situation can be framed in many ways, the choice of a particular framework affects both what is projected and what is ignored and, therefore, the scope and content of the research. These particular frameworks offered a useful means to make discoveries, develop hypotheses and construct arguments within the two major metaphors.
While those involved in school governance today may be more comfortable working with one frame and its discourse rather than another, the contention of this thesis is that all the discourses found within these frames provide valuable ways of thinking about the issues of school governance. The inclusion of more than one offers balance, increases understanding and encompasses the multiple perspectives of the different participants and the tensions they are faced with.

PHASES AND FORMULAE

Many of the participants in their interview responses revealed a factual, logical, and rational way of thinking and talking about school governance in keeping with the phases of development discourse. This was particularly so for current principals and board members involved in governance today. From the School Governance as Phases of Development chapter, it can be seen that this thinking is focused on the organisation as a bounded entity, based on modernist assumptions and structuralist views as predicted by Alvesson and Deetz (1996) and Clegg (1990). School governance is represented in terms of ideal types, of stages, of structures and processes, of formulae, of rational decision-making, of inputs and outputs, and of efficient, knowable functioning. As Kerry expresses it:

People do seem to want a pill to fix things. A simple strategy or recipe that can be followed painlessly to maximum, miraculous effect. (Kerry/Key Informant:62-63)

This structuralist-functionalist approach to management emphasises consensus and coherence rather than conflict and complexity. It promises improvement through better understanding and improved skills of those involved, in the adoption of professional approaches and business-like conduct and through defining and achieving explicit
organisational goals (Clegg & Hardy, 1996). For the schools in this study, this approach means educators accepting the administrative roles of management and, for some, embracing the accompanying terms and rhetoric (Hoyle, 1986c). Within this governance approach, school success and development is to be brought about by better management and improving structures rather than changes in pedagogy (Whitty et al., 1998).

The Phases of Development framework encompasses many of these criteria. It allows governance to be placed on a cycle, or continuum of developmental stages, and to be understood in terms of how well it fits within a particular phase. Many of the participants in the study spoke of their schools using the language of evolution, developmental stages and cycles. From the data, it can be said that over time the operating structures of most of these schools, in the forms of board composition, stakeholder representation and committees, became more formalised, eventually exhibiting many of the characteristics of the corporate phase described by the modified framework from Wood’s (1992) model. Boards became focused on policies, delineating roles and establishing procedures, many committees were created, and decision-making became more time consuming. All of the schools in the study, except for one, could be said to have been through this evolutionary process and the super-managing phase. Many describe their schools as having, or developing, characteristics of the corporate phase with reliance on bureaucratic procedures and the oversight of the school by more expert board members. One school has characteristics of the ratifying stage. There is a focus on being more professional and competitive in the market-orientated context in which they now find themselves.
These changes in governance approaches reflect one of the very common ways that participants talked about the issues of school governance. However, an alternative explanation of the changes in these schools’ characteristics may be that they are the reflection of external trends in governance styles. After all, in the 1970s when most of these schools were founded, participative democracy and community development models were in vogue. It was these characteristics of the pioneering phase of the framework that people were seeking. These models tapped into the counter-culture ideologies of the times and, with Commonwealth government funding behind them, many new schools were established that attracted parents and students disillusioned with conventional schools and seeking more student-centred and community-governed educational alternatives (Cleverley, 1978). The Karmel Report (1973) provided both the impetus and support for what has been called the ‘social democratic’ restructuring of education in Australia aimed at challenging bureaucratic centralisation and supporting closer relationships between schools and their communities (Lindgard et al., 2002).

There was a massive increase in federal funding for education and an underlying belief that any improvement in the quality of schooling would be best achieved by assisting the efforts and commitment of people at the school level (Chapman et al., 1995; Townsend, 1994).

Now, although some of the rhetoric of government reform of education talks of community involvement, the discourse is mostly about corporate governance styles, marketing and competition and accountability (Strain, 1995). Community needs are to be met by choice and consumer power. The social and democratic agenda has given way to an economic and political one. More often schools are now responding to imperatives to become market-driven rather than mission-driven and to be focused on
organisational attributes rather than on community empowerment or their educational identity (Williamson & Galton, 1998). Much of the literature on governance and school councils is similarly focused. Either promoting the necessity to adopt and manage these changes (Block, 1998; Carver, 1997; Chait, 1997; Duca, 1996; Houle, 1997; Wood, 1996), or critiquing them (Blackmore & Sachs, 2000; Fitzclarence et al., 1998; Kenway et al., 1993; Meyer, 2002; Reid, 2000; Wahlberg & Bast, 2001).

It is necessary, therefore, to question whether many of the changes attributed to a change in the developmental stage of an individual school can in fact be explained by these wider, pervasive changes at a more societal and cultural level. The findings from this study are not straightforward. Certainly, on one hand, many respondents talked of external, irresistible pressures to adopt more professional and corporate governance styles and many schools are already doing so. On the other hand, the respondents from the two most recently formed schools in the study indicate their schools have some of the pioneering characteristics from the phases of development framework and the direct democracy school, founded nearly thirty years ago, has resisted most aspects of the super-managing and corporate style.

Wood (1992) in her study found that organisations usually moved to a new phase in response to a crisis and that “a founding period is likely to persist until the ‘owner’ executive leaves or until they can be successfully challenged” (p. 153). As the inaugural principal of the direct democracy school has been in her position for 29 years, there has clearly not been a successful challenge to her position in this school as yet. Table 9.1 summarises the reported governance features for the three schools that have significantly different characteristics to the other study schools.
Table 9.1: Governance Features of Three Selected Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>OIS 2</th>
<th>MS 5</th>
<th>OIS 6</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Founded</strong>:</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>1991 from the collapse of another school</td>
<td>2000 from the collapse of another school</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Pioneer Characteristics**: | Group has agency  
Principal is de facto executive  
Principal and staff have mission  
Decision-making is as needed  
No committees  
Issues and crises are about finances | (only at foundation)  
De facto executive  
High personal investment  
Decisions as needed  
Principal is spokesperson and has mission  
Decision-making streamlined  
Issues and crises were financial | High personal investment  
Staff not properly remunerated  
Principal is de facto executive  
Principal and staff have mission  
Decision-making is as needed  
No committees  
Issues and crises are about finances & burnout of teachers and volunteers |
| **Corporate/Ratification Characteristics**: | Harder to get parent involvement                                   | (at present)  
Only one committee  
Bureaucratic structures and processes  
No stakeholder representation  
Business and professional image  
Principal is CEO and enjoys freedom and power  
Board ratifies policies  
Issues and crises are about stakeholder input | Staff get involved at council level  
Policies and procedures put in place  
Decisions take time  
Hard to get volunteers  
Recruiting of experts  
Issues and crises are about role definitions |

These three schools are interesting as they present a possible challenge to the theory that changes in governance can be wholly ascribed to external development. OIS 2 has resisted, despite recognising the changing expectations and insistent pressures to become more business-like, any changes in its governance structures or ways of operating. It has modified the programme and resources but not its decision-making process. MS 5, although established during the very times these external pressures were beginning to influence government reform agendas, appears to have begun with another pioneering phase. This return to a collective and sustaining period after a crisis, as Wood (1992) predicted, has not lasted very long and, indeed, the school, and its governance structure, seems to have moved rapidly to a ratifying stage. Interestingly the board members of this school use much of the language of business and accountability.
when talking about success. The inaugural principal, however, talks more about improving pedagogy. So far she has successfully resisted any role change because of the distancing of this wholly nominated board. Established only four years ago and despite having emerged from the collapse of a school already in a super-managing phase, OIS 6 appears to have many of the characteristics of a pioneering phase, It is, however, already developing some of the super-managing characteristics.

Without further research specifically on the question of whether changes in governance can be wholly ascribed to external development or are a result of the changing expectations of the wider cultural context, no definitive conclusions can be drawn. Instead, this thesis takes the postmodern view that there are multiple perspectives to this argument. Schools do develop their governance structures in response to changing needs at both the micro and macro levels. The present corporatisation of education in the wider educational context no doubt has impelled schools to move into this phase but they may have assumed some of these features anyway in response to individual crises. The features of community, common to all the study schools' foundations, are also affected by these developments and are analysed under a different discourse in this next section.

PARTICIPATION AND POWER

The discourses of participation and power contribute a social, cultural, and emotional way of thinking and talking about school governance. They are illustrated by the positive emphases on community and the social that still remains in the rhetoric of some participants and the school documents. Most participants, not surprisingly since they chose to be involved in these kinds of schools, identified that social capital in the form
of community engagement is linked to improved educational and social outcomes for
the students. However, many writers claim this link is not supported by strong research
(Adler, 1993; Fiske & Ladd, 2000; Lindgard et al., 2002; McBeth, 1993; Whitty et al.,
1998). Other participants, even many of those still committed to the metaphor of the
school as a community rather than an organisation, admitted they were struggling to
maintain this sense of community today. Their responses indicated that *gemeinschaft*
values, associated with traditional communities, with relationships based in kinship,
friendship and shared beliefs, are being replaced by those of the *gesellschaft*. School
policies and identities are increasingly associated with the world of commerce and its
marketplace relationships typified by contractual obligations of performance,
impersonalisation and impermanence. Thus there is an inherent conflict between the
“narrowly conceived instrumental values currently being represented at the national and
state levels of schooling” and those espoused, at least in the documents, by many of the
study schools (Walsh & Carter, 1995, p 115). It is of interest to note that while many
participants spoke of parental involvement and input as a critical issue in a sense of
community, parental empowerment in terms of decision-making, was no longer viewed
as so important by many.

Governance processes in these self-managing or autonomous schools clearly drew on
social capital for formation and functioning in earlier times. What this research
confirms, however, is that these sources are not as rich or as stable as in the past. School
councils or boards are now generally made up of relative strangers and though they
continue to address common needs and deal with common issues, this study found that
strengthening communities, building links with parents and creating and maintaining
social capital is now much more difficult. These schools with such strong past traditions
of community and parent involvement find parents now have less time and, instead, want schools that are already stable and offering a high standard of facilities and programmes. Schools are also expected to present much more professional images and structures today and the demands upon them to be accountable in all sorts of legal and financial areas is also much greater. It is not merely a matter of establishing processes and structures and expecting social capital to hold relationships and goals together.

Other respondents lamented the changes, finding internal and external pressures were creating shifts in the dynamics of governance that, for most, meant that the commitment to community empowerment was gradually being replaced by the demands for effective decision-making and the need to appear more business-like and professional. They foresaw little possibility of being able to avoid this transformation. Further the school’s role as the bridge from one kind of community to the other is becoming more challenging as there are movements from the *gemeinschaft* of the family and local community that has been a resource of social capital towards the *gesellschaft* of the wider world more dependent upon human capital. There was an understanding that schools need the flexibility to change over time to meet a variety of changing demands. There was, however, comprehension by at least a few participants that you do still need an appreciation of the social and that changing the structure of a school does not by itself bring about the desired changes. Feelings, ideas and culture also have to be considered. A shared set of expectations and a baseline of trust and trusting behaviour are still essential in managing the networks and relationships within and across community and organisational boundaries (Creed & Miles, 1996).

A level of community involvement does exist across all domains for all schools. All schools allow and even encourage involvement at the level of assistance. At the level of
advising, although only three schools regularly consult the wider community, all schools except one consider that parent concerns or opinions on administration and policy matters should be listened to and acted upon if appropriate. In all schools but one, stakeholders have some participation in decision-making in the administration and policy domains through their representatives, although the data reveals that generally this representation is limited in form and process, and may not be well understood by many stakeholders.

While the discourses of power and participation are still evident in the documents and some of the rhetoric, a large majority of those involved with the governance of these schools, board members and principals, report that this kind of thinking is a liability to good governance. Emotions and lack of objectivity are said to cloud judgements and interfere with good decision-making and parents, when considering things that might affect their own children, are unable to be as logical or as ‘hard-headed’ as is sometimes needed. They get confused or find it hard to take off their parent 'hat' and think with their governance one.

Now there is a board to go to [parents are no longer involved in governance], they [parents] don't get confused with which hat they've got on. (Megan/Inaugural & Current Principal: 248,2)

Many participants were of the view that schools are likely to have more conflict and experience more crises when they are parent-run. This disruptive aspect of parents being involved in governance was a clear theme in the findings.

The views of many of the participants are also supportive of Thody’s (1999) and Limerick’s (1995) view, that governors do not generally have the micro-political skills or confidence needed to manage in an environment in which educationalists feel more
comfortable and expert than they do. They are thus reluctant to become involved in teaching and learning decisions. The study has confirmed that the representative decision-making councils are not generally operating as horizontal interaction models in which all participants have an equal voice, where power is shared between principals and community members, and where trust, support and impartiality characterise decision-making. Rather, this study found, as have other researchers, that these councils suffer from power struggles, conflict, time management problems, deficiencies in expertise, low participation rates, and lack of objectivity (Burke, 1990; Connors & Sharpe, 1996; Firestone, 1975; Johnson & Scollay, 2001; Wolfendale, 1992). Most of the councils operate more as vertical teams, where principals have the most influence and parents have the least.

Council decisions tend to be made by groups connected through friendship or other networks, and although nominally elected, in most cases those already in office select members. And more often, once the decisions are made they are presented as unanimous, clear-cut, and rational, ignoring the dilemmas involved. As Palmer (2001) warns, the making of decisions by majority or minority rule is a form of violence. If positions are taken and resolved without acknowledging the contradictions and ambiguities that might exist, it leaves other members feeling alienated, powerless, confused about their roles, and uncertain about processes to resist.

The disruption to personal relations in times of conflict is also very disturbing in these community-orientated schools because of the expectations of the discourse and their affective qualities. People have expected others to be operating within this same discourse of participation, particularly as this kind of thinking was important to the
school’s identity and purpose at foundation. The changing value-base of these schools, however, means a sense of conflict is experienced as the positivist thinking and management rhetoric gains increasing prominence. As the instrumental values of the corporate, competitive and market ideologies increasingly impact upon them, and as market discourses replace those of mutuality, social rights and common cause, participants report dissonance and confusion (Brown et al., 2000).

Although the heritage of community empowerment is acknowledged by most of the interviewees in the study, the findings reveal that the schools have been moving further from these origins. Where in the past the principal’s role has been primarily in the educational domain, the pressures to be professional and competitive are in effect shifting most aspects of management to the realm of the principal as well. Schools are adopting the corporate model of a chief executive who holds most of the power, overseen by a board of directors who set policy but interfere little in the day-to-day decision-making. Discourses of community empowerment, while still present, have definitely declined and are less of a focus than they have been in the past.

PARADOXES AND PREDICAMENTS

Although the participants did not specifically use the discourses of dilemmas and paradoxes, many of them recognised the contradictions, tensions and ambiguities inherent in school governance today. In the wider educational context they are exacerbated by moves toward devolution, diversity and choice that are at the same time accompanied by demands for more regulation, accountability and standardisation (Connors & Sharpe, 1996; Dimmock, 1999a, 1999b; Glatter, 1996; Lam, 1996; Moeller, 1996). This study confirmed that for those involved in governance in the research sites,
there is a pressing need to confront the tensions that result from these contextual
teachers. The differing and changing demands of their stakeholders and the
predicaments they produce. This research supports the view that if dilemmas are not
acknowledged, school councils may end up appeasing the most articulate members or
making largely superficial changes rather than achieving substantial goals. It is a
conclusion of this study that acknowledging issues as dilemmas and working with the
discourses of ambiguity, contradiction, paradox and tension, are important steps in
learning to contend with and recognise the reality of the choices faced.

There has been, and is, a tendency for organisations to seek simplistic solutions. To treat
issues as if they are problems with satisfactory resolutions rather than dilemmas
composed of difficult, often unsatisfactory, choices (Clegg, 1990; Weick, 2001). When
ambiguous conditions are present, simplification and justification are often considered
necessary stratagems. They are a means of providing purpose for members and rationale
for outsiders. Indeed organisations are often perceived as being “more effective when
they develop an elaborate or persuasive set of justifications for their particular goals
even when they are not really clear” (Weick, 2001, p. 14). People deploy these
positivist and rationalist strategies, creating self-fulfilling prophecies and acting as if the
world is put together the way they want it to be. These seductive structuralist-
functionalist approaches remain dominant in the schools in this study even though they
simplify complex conditions, have led to many crises and have not provided complete
solutions.

The values, ideas, beliefs and language identified with a school supply the ideological
basis for action. Alongside the strategies discussed above, people also use the verbal
tools of metaphors, labels and platitudes to invest such goals and experiences with meaning (Weick, 2001). Metaphors have been discussed in detail elsewhere but in this context and in this study include the use of images, such as families and communities or teams and corporations to orient the working environment. It is interesting to note the current movement from the root metaphors of community to those of organisation. Labels tell us what things are—they classify. In the study schools the terms, such as parent-run, child-centred, strategic leadership, CEO, performance management, and outcomes and accountability, bring attached meanings that are rarely questioned at the time. Platitudes, such as expertise, efficiency and objectivity, standardise and establish the current culture for action, glossing over the tensions and ambiguities that are present.

Collectively the use of such tools links the present with the past, imposes past definitions on present paradoxes, and provides images to share. When new board members join a council they are exposed to “a whole new vocabulary and grammar of symbols, jargon, ideology, attitudes, stories, private jokes and restricted words which shape views and their capacity to see the world differently” (Weick, 2001, p. 20). As those in school governance in these schools have come to accept that a shared value-base and sense of community can no longer be taken for granted, the necessity for more board induction and training is also being recognised and prioritised. It has become important to immerse newcomers in the thinking of the newer discourses of business and markets.

The study also found that a principal’s positive capabilities were those ascribed as important by participants. Positive is used here as a positivist and modernist term. This
view is similarly utilised in much of the phases and power discourses and literature on leadership. This was true whether the literature was of managerial or professional orientation (Carver, 1997; Chait, 1997; Hoyle, 1986b; Sergiovanni, 1996). The dominant image from these sources is that a leader is someone who knows what to do and can do it well. His/her qualities are evident through their activity, work and success, and they display the skills, competencies, knowledge and technologies of leadership. However, this research also suggests that leadership capable of managing the modern school, and its many inherent paradoxes and dilemmas, needs negative or postmodern capabilities as well.

Negative capabilities are what leaders require to remain content with half knowledge and uncertainty, to choose between unsatisfactory alternatives and to be able to adapt to unforseen outcomes. They are the capabilities to live with and tolerate ambiguity and paradox (French et al., 2001), and to be vulnerable to half-formed thoughts (Palmer, 2001). They include qualities such as patience, passivity, observation, imagination, intuition, flexibility, humility, and temperance (French et al., 2001, p. 1). This study proposes that negative capabilities will be vital in dealing with the dimensions of leadership related to ‘not knowing,’ with the accompanying dilemmas and in coping with the complexities and the uncertainties of our postmodern world. They will be crucial in managing the tensions that develop around boundaries, expectations and power. They will also be critical in coping with the differing interpretations of what governance and leadership means in schools today.

The data from this research show that the dilemmas for principals are about how they manage and balance the new, often conflicting aspects of their roles as colleague,
counsellor, manager, employer and employee. They simply cannot choose one and ignore the others. They must hold the tension of these diverse roles whilst reframing them, creating openings for additional possibilities rather than constraining or forcing things further apart. For school councils, the dilemmas are around how the structures they have continue to fit with the current expectations they face and how they find principals, not only with the passion and commitment to enable them to survive the pressures of working in these demanding conditions but also, highly skilled in many other areas as well.

All choices and decisions impact upon identity and the dilemmas of identity are, therefore, also challenging. Can school councils or boards maintain a sense of community while at the same time meet increased imperatives to be more business-like and educationally competitive? Will moves to fit the current image of a ‘good’ or ‘professional’ school, in the end, change the school irrevocably as this participant warns?

*If you make it too much like the other schools then what’s the point.*
*(Vic/Early Board Member: 244)*

There are no easy formulae for balancing the needs of professional autonomy with the tradition of community empowerment, and the inconsistent, often conflicting expectations that are held by different groups within the school. How do councils ensure they have principals, and governing members, with the negative and positive capabilities necessary to meet the increased expectations of the governance role and to deal with these dilemmas in a discerning way? Principals and school governors need to recognise, and to use, the discourse of dilemmas to creatively challenge and disrupt the very positivist worldviews gaining dominance and to have problems examined in new, flexible ways (Cuban, 1992; Dimmock, 1999b).
For all those involved in governance then, there are choices to be made. Resources of personnel, energy and time are restrained by needs for efficiency and competition. Decisions must be made about where to focus these resources, on core activities of education and philosophy or on the growing administrative and accountability workload. Also what are the meaningful discourses and which models of governance should they follow? All the schools in this study are still coming to terms with these choices, tensions and dilemmas. However, the contention here is that the preference is not one discourse over another, but rather to ensure all aspects of thinking about these issues are engaged.

PREFERENCES AND PROPOSITIONS

Anyone who has worked on school councils or governing boards knows that, like any other organisation, they are never static. They change continually, influenced by human volition and social structures (Wood, 1996) or because, as Capra (1983) claims, it is the natural tendency of all things. In that they have survived so far, all the schools in the study have managed change and have been, to varying degrees, stable and successful. However, they have also had periods of great crisis and failure. In fact four of the schools grew out of the remains of other schools with their identities and expectations greatly changed. Surviving has been their first priority and only now are some of them having to assess the adjustments they have made and focus on the ramifications for identity and the future.

More than a few researchers have spoken of independent school governance as an area worthy of study (Aitken, 1992; Angus & Olney, 1998; Chubb & Moe, 1990; Coleman et
This study adds to the very limited research that has been undertaken in this area at an individual school level. Although up to this point few of the study schools have spent time considering if congruence with their original founding aims has or should be maintained, by studying the dynamics of governance over time this research aims to offer insight into and understanding of the processes and forces of change. These originally community-empowered schools in Western Australia present multiple readings into how the roles and structures of governing bodies have evolved over time, and the types of dilemmas and tensions that may lie ahead for other school councils. Exploring the governance of such schools, from various perspectives, although these experiences may be fragmented and arising out of different narratives and different sites, creates a virtual reality of a recognised world known in common (Smith, 1999).

**Implications**

The implications of this research are presented in three sections: implications for autonomous school boards and councils, implications for state school councils, and implications for school principals and leadership.

*Autonomous School Boards and Councils*

School councils are not the dispassionate unified bodies able to address substantive issues by applying the recipes of good management that are promoted in much of the literature. Instead we must accept they are political bodies constrained by structural tensions and contextual paradoxes and dilemmas. This research shows, as does the research of Wood (1992), Stone (1996) and Milofsky and Morrison (1996) working with other non-profit boards, that as these originally community-based organisations become more bureaucratic and business-like over time, tensions result and are expressed
in relationships among stakeholders and, more particularly, between the governing board and the leader. Milosfsky and Morrison (1996) found one answer was the removal of clients or stakeholders from the board and making boards more advisory. One school in this study has already taken this step and others are moving or considering moves in this direction. Any such changes, however, can result in changes to the founding ideology of the school and transform the character of an organisation, perhaps in ways not intended, and need to be considered carefully.

This research shows that there are pressures, internally and externally, to make changes to board structures but boards, before they adapt in response to these pressures, should consider them in light of the current dilemmas and investigate a wider range of choices. Hoy (2003) defines structures as being on a continuum from enabling to hindering. He urges schools to accept that while some organisational structure and hierarchy is inevitable, we can choose to move them toward the enabling end of the continuum. Enabling structures and behaviours are: flexible, sympathetic, supportive, view problems as opportunities, foster trust, value differences, learn from mistakes, anticipate the unexpected, facilitate problem solving, enable cooperation, and encourage innovation. Hoy warns, however, that “enabling structures are not panaceas, they do not guarantee positive outcomes” (2003, p. 94). If organisations have questionable goals, then any structure can be dysfunctional. Individuals and organisations are easily tempted by routine ways of doing things, of following rules and routines that have worked before. A dependence upon habit and an emphasis on outcomes at the expense of processes, elicits ‘mindless’ and hindering responses. So as well as having enabling structures we need ‘mindfulness’ (2003, p. 95). A term Hoy uses when describing successful governance practices.
If school councils are to consider pursuing enabling structures and mindful behaviours, there are implications for future governance training and induction programmes. Most of the schools offered very little in the way of training or induction, although as mentioned before, recognition of the need for this was emerging. Any induction programmes might consider Weick and Sutcliffe’s (2001) proposition that there are five processes that promote mindfulness in organisations. Mindful organisations are preoccupied with failure, that is they avoid preoccupation with success and pay attention to mistakes, particularly small ones, and treat them as learning opportunities. Secondly, they are reluctant to accept simplifications and easy interpretations. Thirdly, there is sensitivity to core operations and people. Fourthly, mindful organisations are committed to resilience by being strong and flexible when dealing with negative outcomes. Finally, they avoid rigid administrative structures and match expertise with experience, regardless of hierarchical rank. However, mindfulness is hard work. It requires creative thinking, flexibility, vigilance, openness and the ability to ‘think outside the square’. It redirects attention from the expected to the unexpected, from the confirming to the unconfirming, from the explicit to the implicit, from the probable to the improbable, from the simple to the complex, from problems to opportunities and, I would say, from problematic successes to real dilemmas (Hoy, 2003, p 96).

State School Councils

There are similar implications for school councils in the other sectors, arising out of this research and the literature. Victoria has already established school councils under the Schools of the Future policy where schools are to adopt corporate structures and processes and enter into a contract with the government. Although ownership does not pass to the school council, they are empowered to be responsible for the general education policy of the school, selection of principals and deputy principals, budget
planning, maintenance and improvements, and finances generally. These powers are similar to those enjoyed by the government alternative school in Western Australia while several other researchers indicate that school councils in Victoria experience similar issues to those found in this study (Caldwell, 1998a; Chadbourne & Ingvarson, 1998; Gamage et al., 1996; Townsend, 1994). From their research in New Zealand, Macpherson and McKillop (2002) stress the need for effective and targeted board training. The findings of this research suggest that any such training would need to be focused more on understanding the paradoxes and predicaments than simply on processes and good business principles.

In Western Australia all government schools are to have decision-making groups constituted as School Councils. Council members will be drawn from the parent body, staff and the community. Although with less powers than councils in Victoria, these councils are to have a voice in viewing school policy, planning and financial arrangements as well as evaluating the school’s performance (Education Department of Western Australia, 2000). An evaluation study (Department of Education, 2001) found that while the pilot schools were establishing processes to ensure community input into decision-making, many issues still need to be resolved. These were: the need for greater definition of roles, responsibilities and expectations of the different parties, a perceived lack of resources to support the changes, uncertainty about the role and composition of school councils, and the difficulties in some cases in gaining significant community input. This study, while primarily concerned with independent school councils, includes a government school that has been operating with a school council for nearly twenty years. The data demonstrated that most of the issues, dilemmas and tensions were the same for the government alternative school and the independent schools. Those familiar
with the government alternative school were disappointed that it did not receive more recognition and acknowledgment as an already successful model for the new school councils, as Jeff explains.

> When I talk to the people and planners in central office, they don’t even know [the government alternative school] exists and the things they have been trying to implement have been happening in a department school for twenty years. (Jeff/Key Informant: 443-448)

State school councils could indeed be better informed about the issues and difficulties ahead by understanding this school’s experience, its successes and failures. Another issue raised by this study and in the literature and of relevance here is the degree of power these state school councils are to have and how the boundaries of roles are drawn and managed. Several of the participants in the study commented on the new Education Act and its implications for governance in state schools. Adam, a past principal of state schools that includes the government alternative school, is concerned about how meaningful any participation in decision-making is likely to be.

> I predict that the current legislated involvement will prove to be a sterile and purposeless process. It appears to provide a public acknowledgment of those rights from our legislators, the involvement rhetoric is there, but are matters like school uniforms, discipline and gardens substantial enough to sustain the interest and commitment of decision-making groups? The lack of substance will, I feel, probably remain until school-decision-making groups become a potent force politically. (Adam/Early Principal: 167)

Neill, who was on the council of one of these newer councils set up under the new Act, found that their powers are indeed more limited than expected.

> It seemed the people on council, including the Education Department people, actually didn’t know what powers were available under the Act. So it finally went for advice to the Crown Council and the advice came back that in the end the Act placed principals clearly in line management positions, accountable for the management of the school, and school councils, under the act, have very limited powers. They certainly can’t in any way operate like an independent school council. (Neil/Key Informant: 25-31)
The major implications for state school councils are for the meaningfulness and effectiveness of school councils. If such bodies are promoting community but only paying lip service to ideals like participation and empowerment, if only surface agreement is obtained to what are really imposed goals and values, then community members may face the same feelings of disempowerment and distance that stakeholders in some of the schools in the study are also experiencing. State schools may find it difficult to involve parents at this level and, like the schools in this study are also experiencing. It further raises the question of who gets to be part of the decision-making process anyway? Jeff, a current government school principal who has also been a principal of the government alternative school and an independent school, raises this question in terms of equity in representation and exclusion of those with less social capital in state school governance.

*It [the new form of school council] makes it very hard for parents to be on the council if they are not well educated and aware of meeting procedures. It is very, very formal. I've had all sorts of problems with this community being such a disadvantaged community with thirty odd different nationalities, problems getting a true representation of people … In some communities you will never be able to set up a school council because you won’t have that expertise available or the parents who want to do it. A lot of parents are scared to have input, they’ve basically had bad times themselves at school.* (Jeff/Key Informant: 234-250)

While Roger, who has also worked in both sectors and plans to move his independent school away from the community empowerment model, claims that autonomous schools are not always accountable enough and parents are not always the best people to be making educational choices.

*In Australia I think the irony is that we have some very good government schools, which could be closed because of things like numbers, where we continue to pay for independent schools that are quite frankly poor and the outcomes are poor. Not all parents are good at choosing good schools. They tend to select on reputation or by glossy brochure. And innovation can go out the window because they look for traditional teaching methods and so on.* (Roger/Current Principal: 227-234)
As many of the autonomous school councils in the study, including the government alternative school, are reducing the degree of parent involvement and participation, these differences in community empowerment between the sectors, as far as stakeholders are concerned, may not be so great in the future. In any case, it is likely that the dilemmas arising from boundaries and power, form and processes, and identity are likely to be similar. State school councils, like independent school councils, may also need to take into consideration how enabling and mindful their structures and behaviours are and the concurrent implications for finding and keeping good school leaders.

School Principals and Leadership

Some of the implications for principals and school leadership are clear. Much of the literature suggests, and this research confirms, that the role of principal in independent and state schools, is becoming overwhelming (Blackmore & Sachs, 2000; A. Carr, 1994; Connors & Sharpe, 1996; Doherty, 2002). Unless the role and workload of principals is re-examined and restructured, schools are going to have to accept replacing principals every few years as they ‘burnout’ and move on. The findings from this study indicate that this is already occurring. As the inaugural principals leave, often because they are challenged by the external environment bringing market forces to bear on their schools, the turnover time becomes substantially shorter. Without the same sense of mission and coherence of ideology, the job becomes too difficult. Evidence is also mounting that it is becoming more and more difficult in all sectors to find people willing to take on the role (Dunn, 2002; Hewitt, 2002b; Myton, 2002; Whitaker, 2003).

In this and other studies, the reasons principals resign were: the percentage of time spent on management and administrative duties; the considerable increase in workload;
insufficient time to carry out their responsibilities; greater accountability requirements; greater uncertainty in their role; inadequate training for their changed and increased responsibilities; relationships with school councils are too difficult; the hours are too long; there is too much emphasis on fund-raising and entrepreneurship; and they are experiencing much greater stress levels (Boyd & Crowson, 2002; Whitaker, 2003).

School councils and governments must find the people able to cope in these environments. Rather than seeking principal applicants and board members with degrees in business and management, this study indicates they should be searching for ways to identify candidates with negative capabilities. What are needed are leaders able to cope with dilemmas and manage uncertainty, and the characteristics necessary for building a mindful organisation with enabling structures.

Small schools in New Zealand have also been facing many similar tensions and problems. In response to issues of principal isolation and stress, contradictory expectations of principal and governors’ roles, falling enrolments and increasing accountability mechanisms, new strategies of co-governance and co-principalship are being explored there (Collins & Court, 2003). Co-governance is when two or more autonomous schools amalgamate their school boards and are then governed by just one board. Co-principalship is when a school appoints two principals who work as equals.

The claimed benefits of these different governance models are:

- Reduction of duplication of governance time and effort
- Increased time available for principals for teaching and professional development
- Ameliorating high work loads and stress
- Wider skills base and more creative and innovative ideas
- Flexibility to meet local contextual needs (p. 10)
These may well be strategies that small schools elsewhere could investigate. In the meantime formal and informal mentoring programmes and networking could be instigated, not left to overloaded principals but actively supported and put into place by the governing bodies. Other ways to ease the burden, such as more assistance, more release time, regular sabbaticals, and professional development aimed at identifying the dilemmas and tensions that exist, should also be considered in light of the findings of this study.

**Limitations of the Study**

Like all research, this study is limited by the researcher’s own perceptions, past experiences and political and ideological perspectives. What is presented here as meaningful or true is dependent upon my assumptions about what is important and of relevance. This thesis presents one form of representation and interpretation. It constructs its own version of reality by both the strategies chosen to undertake the research and the resulting analysis of the data (Guba, 1990; Usher & Edwards, 1994).

A significant limitation of this particular study, however, was the restriction of the participants interviewed to principals and board members. Given the volume of data collected from those interviewed, there was a need to focus the research. There was an attempt to supplement these views by the addition of other key informants (see Chapter 5, Table 5.3) but only one of these was a parent not involved in governance. Another study could widen the scope and include the voices of other members of the school community.

Efforts to establish reliability and believability were made with regard to noting the repetition of ideas or concepts rather than demonstrating that the study could be
replicated or included all possible views (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Minichello et al., 1995). Validity was supported by using a multi-stage approach and internal consistency judged by whether the data were plausible given what was known from these different sources (Neuman, 1997). In addition, cross-matching data was obtained by collecting and analysing documents from the research sites. Credibility is based on the breadth of research sites, as they included a substantial percentage of the schools in Western Australia fitting the characteristics relevant to this study. Depth and density of data were achieved through the use of five case study schools. It was beyond the scope of this research to make any direct comparisons with state school councils or investigate issues at particular government school sites, besides the one alternative government school.

**Future Research**

The findings of this study provide insights into important governance issues and indicate that an area worthy of future research is how present board structures and the interactions of individuals can be related to Hoy’s (2003) enabling/hindering continuum and what sort of governance induction programmes would be useful to develop and support mindful organisations. It would also be beneficial to investigate the positive and negative qualities identified with principals who are successful in their positions. It might also be useful to investigate the effects of regularly implementing professional development and board induction programmes.

Other studies could extend the findings of this research. One could include the voices of the wider parent body and students. Another could include more government school sites and more closely examine the issues of governance important to state school councils and investigate the tensions around boundaries, roles and missions that they
experience. These studies could contribute to further understandings of the dynamics of governance.

Of particular interest, however, would be a research project to investigate how co-principalship is constructed in a government or independent school. Comparisons of this model to the more traditional model would be of great value in investigating the claimed benefits of refocusing on core educational roles, reducing time constraints, workloads and stress levels, in harnessing a wider skills base and supporting creative and innovative ideas, as well as providing the flexibility to meet local contextual needs. It would thus provide important information about a possible strategy small schools may wish to undertake in the future as they endeavour to cope with increasingly complex and difficult governance issues and the need to find and keep school leaders.

CONCLUSION

A major finding of this study is that schools cannot rely simply on technical, economic and managerial solutions to the issues and problems they face today. Instead, while identifying the main environmental factors impacting on them, those involved in governance must be aware of and consider the other discourses in which they are embedded. For the schools in this study these are primarily the discourses of power and participation, upon which they were founded. Without utilising intuitive and creative strategies and acknowledging the dilemmas that arise between the competing value systems of community and organisation, decisions made by those in governance may have unintended and unforseen results. Choices have to be made and ultimately these are choices between values. However, the argument here is that such choices need to be made with a clear understanding of the dilemmas faced and by engaging a range of
positive and negative capabilities. In response to the research questions the study finds as follows.

Set One: What do the schools perceive as the important governance issues? What processes involve the maintenance of expectations about schools, and establish and negotiate the boundaries and roles within these expectations? How do these change over time and impact on school identity?

This study concludes that issues identified as important by the study schools were related to those of expectations, boundaries, and identity. The governance of these schools changed substantially over time. At foundation the main issues came from the power struggles over what philosophy looked like in practice and how these power struggles resulted in a diminution of trust. This led to conflict, financial crises, personnel 'burnout' and threats to identity as the result of factions forming and groups leaving. Today the main issues come from the changing expectations of the stakeholders as schools are asked to be more professional and business-like. Power struggles occur over role divisions and the boundaries between board members and principals. The identities of these schools is changing as they move away from community empowerment models and redirect their vision and focus from missions to markets.

Set Two: What balances are achieved between key tensions found in schools today? Particularly, how are the balances managed at different school sites between democratic imperatives and professionalism, between adherence to original school mission and competition and markets, and between business propensity and sustaining community?

The study found most of the study schools are still struggling to achieve a balance between democratic imperatives, competition, professionalism, sense of community and school improvement. Only the direct democracy school has not changed its original mission or responded in any major way to the increased demands for professionalism, accountability and the competitive market place. This school has fully maintained its community and democratic structure. The other schools, however, have been moving
further from their community empowerment origins. One school has already moved to a wholly nominated board, two schools are planning to restructure with predominantly nominated boards and three other schools have formalised the structure of their councils to be only partly representative. All the schools, including the direct democracy school, acknowledged it was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain a sense of community in a context where schools were expected to adopt much of the language and values of the market.

For most, the commitment to parent power and participation is gradually being replaced in the name of efficiency. While their school councils were never primarily about empowering the community in the pedagogical domains, governance today is becoming more about professional image, efficiency and market placement than community. So far, however, accountability has been focused on management areas and there is very little evaluation carried out in these schools of curricula or programmes. The decisions about pedagogy remain with principals and staff. In a more competitive environment, this is likely to change in the future.

Set Three: What dilemmas emerge from conflicting value systems for those involved in school governance and what strategies do they develop in response to these?

Through this research, I conceptualised the dilemmas and tensions as dilemmas of boundaries and power, dilemmas of form and process, and dilemmas of identity. They arose out of the changing expectations and demands on schools in the educational context of today and the way schools responded to them. In the study schools there were differing interpretations of what governance and leadership meant as the strategies schools put in place moved them away from their more representative, community
focused forms and instead, initiated changes to form and process in the name of efficiency and professionalism.

Strategies so far have been driven by management discourses, dependent upon convention and emphasising outcomes rather than process. Such seductive structural-functionalist approaches remain dominant in the schools in this study even though they tend to simplify complex conditions, lead to many crises and do not provide complete solutions. Although the resolutions and choices schools and their leaders make arise out of the different discourses of the times, understanding the dilemmas they face and unravelling the possible consequences for taking different paths is an important strategy for the future. The schools in this study are only just beginning to understand this and acknowledge the tensions that have developed and the changes to identity that have resulted from their choices so far.

Schools, whether independent or government, are adapting to a world of heightened modernity where markets are of growing importance and consumers have more power than producers. Blake, Smeyers, Smith and Standish (1998) describe this environment as one where “confession supplants profession, method replaces thoughtfulness, and presentation skills and image management come before scholarly authority” (p. 3). Schools are more than ever required to 'speak truth' by means of standardised tests and league tables. However, the 'modern' answers are no longer dealing with our current dilemmas. The distinction between what is real and what is false, what is necessary and what stakeholders been led to believe is indispensable, is harder to make. In such a context schools must make decisions and choose between competing value systems. It is not easy to see a way forward. Simplistic and formulaic solutions at least offer that. As
this study shows, however, they are not the complete answer either. The lessons of the postmodernists show that there are no complete answers. We must, instead, live with ambiguity, tolerate paradox, and work at the edges of ignorance (French et al., 2001).

The conclusions and findings presented here should be read with the caution in mind, that there is no stable objective reality. Hassard (1993) warns us to be critical and suspicious of our intellectual assumptions and conclusions and be aware that everyone will interpret the text and meanings in their own way. I would argue, however, that these postmodern positions still leave space for some theory building about any underlying continuities, intelligibilities and narrative patterns. This study claims to have produced one person’s account and interpretations of governance that can be located and evaluated within a narrative structure of context, supported by reference to a literature of the accumulated experiences and interpretations of others (Reed, 1996). It does not claim to offer the only truth or knowledge but rather a place to begin further inquiry.
APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND PROMPTS
Interview Questions and Prompts

How did you become involved with this independent school?

- Before you became involved, did you have an interest in education or schools? Where did this come from?
- At what stage did you become involved with the governance of the school? What level of involvement is it and how long have you been involved?
- How long do you think you will continue to be involved at this level?
- Will you continue to be involved at some other level?

How is the governance/management of the school structured and constituted?

- Number of delegates? Selection process?
- Faculty representation?
- Portfolios? Committees?
- Induction or training of board members?
- Do you see any problems with having parents on council? (Non-professionals overseeing professionals? Confidentiality or parents being able to maintain their objectivity?)
- How much time do you spend in a meeting on policy development, strategic planning etc? What is the largest percentage of time spent on?

What are the core roles of the governing body? What is the principal's role?

- What do you see as the principal’s role on the governing body?
- Is there a clear division between the role of the council and that of the principal? Has this changed?
- Does the Chairperson have a particular role to play?
- In regard to the decision-making, how do you divide the decisions up?
- Who makes decisions regarding budgeting, finance?
- Who makes decisions regarding Staffing and conditions?
- Who evaluates the educational programme and who arranges for the evaluation of the programme?
- Do you have open or closed meetings? If you allow visitors, do they observe only or are they allowed to participate?
In what ways are parents involved in the running of the school? (apart from being on council?)

- Is there a policy for parent involvement?
- In what ways are you involved as a parent in addition to council work?
- What say do parents have in educational matters?
- Are there any criteria for involvement?
- Do you foresee or are there any difficulties in this area?

What do you think are the pros and cons of the governing structure of your particular school? Would you like to try alternative structures?

- Where does the structure work the best?
- Where is your structure least successful?
- What difficulties or problems do you encounter? Have there been problems in the past?
- How would you describe the dynamics of the governing body?
- What effect do personalities have on the governing structure?

For you what are the main issues when it comes to governing the school?

- Are there some that never seem to be solved or keep coming back?
- Do you feel pulled in different directions?

What is your vision for the school?

- How is this vision communicated?
- Can you see a problem with conflicting visions?
- Is there a long-term plan?
- Do you see there has been a change in mission, a change of vision for the school from its beginnings?

What is it that your school values most?

- How do you see that being evaluated?
- Do you have a view of the school as a community and how is that developed and maintained?

Do you think schools have a definite individual identity?

- How has this developed?
- Do you see a problem with maintaining that identity in light of other pressures?
APPENDIX II

CONSENT FORM
CONSENT FORM

I_______________________________ have read the information attached. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

On behalf of the________________________ School, I agree that individuals can be approached to take part in this activity; however, we understand that we may change the decision and stop at any time.

We understand that all information provided is treated as confidential and will not be released by the investigator unless required to do so by law.

We agree that research data gathered for this study may be published provided that real names or other information, which might identify individuals, is not used and that the school will not be named.

Signed by the Principal/School Chairperson: Date

Investigator: Date
APPENDIX III

SAMPLE INTERVIEW: SHOWING NUD.IST CODING AND LINE NUMBERS
Sample Interview:  Showing NUD.IST Coding and Line Numbers.

Q.S.R. NUD.IST Power version, revision 4.0.

++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++
+++ ON-LINE DOCUMENT: Interview Rita
+++ Document Header:
*INTERVIEW : Rita

(1 2 1 2) /History/History with S.I.S./Origins of Commitment/Child
 ++ Units:2-5
(1 4 1) /History/History of School/Who
 ++ Units:5-15
(1 4 4) /History/History of School/How
 ++ Units:5-9
(2 2 1) /Structure/Meeting Formalisation/Constitution, Guidelines
 ++ Units:46-57
(4 1 1 1) /Tensions/Community/Empowerment/Parents
 ++ Units:40-45 168-176
(4 1 1 3) /Tensions/Community/Empowerment/Staff
 ++ Units:100-109
(4 1 2 1) /Tensions/Community/Social Capital/Parent Involvement
 ++ Units:164-171 175-183 221-232
(4 1 3 1) /Tensions/Community/Identity/Vision
 ++ Units:139-148 184-193
(4 1 3 2) /Tensions/Community/Identity/Maintenance
 ++ Units:212-218
(4 1 3 3) /Tensions/Community/Identity/Values
 ++ Units:204-212
(4 1 3 4) /Tensions/Community/Identity/Philosophy
 ++ Units:212-218
(4 1 5) /Tensions/Community/Loss of Community
 ++ Units:153-164 219-225
(4 2 1) /Tensions/Professionalism/Expectations
 ++ Units:33-37 145-152 172-179 193-203
(4 4 4) /Tensions/Boundaries/Drawing of Boundaries
 ++ Units:113-121 133-141
(4 4 5) /Tensions/Boundaries/Conflicts
 ++ Units:5-9 38-45
(4 5 1) /Tensions/Decision Making/Who
 ++ Units:40-45 123-128 221-232
(4 5 2) /Tensions/Decision Making/What
 ++ Units:123-128
(5 1 1 2) /Cyclical Phase theory/Pioneer/Foundation/Fervour
 ++ Units:159-169
(5 1 2 2) /Cyclical Phase theory/Pioneer/Collective/High Per. Invest.
 ++ Units:60-72 159-169
(5 1 2 2 1) /Cyclical Phase theory/Pioneer/Collective/High Per. Invest./Time
 ++ Units:159-169
(5 1 2 2 2) /Cyclical Phase theory/Pioneer/Collective/High Per. Invest./Money

324
*How did you become involved in the school?

My son was attending G. school and enjoying it great deal and then through some parent political conflict the school started to disintegrate basically. Then it finally did disintegrate and we were left without a school. I think it was quite a bit later in the year, about January, I just decided we really should do something about getting somewhere else for him to go. So I phone a few of the parents and they were interested and we started R school.

*You did some research in USA?

Yes S. went to America and looked at schools and I went over with him. We looked at a few different schools. We loved the Montessori concept anyway because I'd come from a teaching background but he actually went to a lot more Montessori schools than I did.

*You set the school up with an interim committee before you got to the Board?

Yes. There was a group of parents and myself and basically what
we did was we found the premises, the possibility of the premises and then we phoned the staff and asked them if they'd come. This was all not long before school started. The staff were great and then the parents, we phoned parents who'd been at the old school and asked them if they wanted to come and S. bought some second-hand furniture, he took liability for the loans to the school until the board was established.

*Did you have in mind right from the beginning that you wanted this board to be so different?

Yes there were definite criteria. We would never work with a parent run school again. Because what we saw was that the people when their children go they become too personally involved and they lose sight of the better good. An because they are too emotionally involved sometimes they can't make a really rational decision for the better good. So that was the one proviso and that was all S. and I wanted to do. That was as far as we wanted to go. We wanted to set up a board of governors that was run by an outside board, we were looking for high profile people to run the board as an independent body and have the parents involved like a traditional school P & C. Because they were forever influencing the teachers you know, it was always causing heartache and distress and conflict. It just seemed to interfere too much. (And the other parents then were in agreement?) Yes or we wouldn't have gone ahead and the agreement was too that the parents wouldn't sit on the board. They would be represented. I can't remember just how we did it. They could be called to the board to present issues to the board but they wouldn't actually be board members.

*How long did the interim committee last? Was it a formal committee?

We did minutes and had a chair. That operated for, until we had the board I think it was nearly a year before we had the constitution drawn up. We collected them, we had a lawyer coming in on a constant basis and he ended up becoming one of the board members. So he helped form the whole constitution and L. the principal knew quite a lot of people who had established schools and we called them in and we called a lot of people in from education departments in to talk to us about which way would be the best way to go. We always knew to begin with that it would be a board of governors that would run the school.

*That first group that set up the school did you have particular jobs?

Yes. We established a uniform committee, different people would help run the library and help set up resources. A lot of it was ratified after but we actually did quite a lot of work. (What sorts of things did you do?) Always I went to all the P & C meetings. I
spent a lot of time talking to people about their concerns. I spent a
long time working on the constitution with D. & C. and a lot of
hours just setting up the school because we had no resources,
nothing. (After the year was up did you go back to being just a
normal parent?) We were there for probably another year after
that and then we ended up having to go down south. So we just got
involved with the P & C basically after that but that was all we
wanted to do.

*So what can you remember of the way the Board was set up?*

Well we actually selected. I think we wrote a list of where we
wanted them to come from. Somebody who was a lawyer,
somebody who was an accountant. So we actually wanted to have
on the board people who would be beneficial to the school. So we
didn't have to run out all the time and get legal advice and so on. I
think there was someone originally who was from the A.
education department so she had an education perspective, there
was an accountant and F. was on the board. (What about ex-
parents? did you see them as having a role afterwards? That has
tended to happen.) I guess we just didn't focus on that at this point.
We were so busy getting started we didn't think really of an end
product but hoped that parents could, and because they wouldn't
have children at the school any more they would have been
eligible to sit on the board. (And Staff, the Principal?) I think the
principal was a board member at the time. They worked incredibly
hard, that staff. They were amazing. Especially L. she was looking
into grants, looking into things. Because she was such a source of
information, I guess because her own children went to H. C. she
was very familiar with the set up and the grants and what to look
for. And S, did a lot of the grant work. We made quite a few
mistakes and lost quite a few thousand dollars because we didn't
tie up things, agreements and things

*And what did you see the role of this governing body being?*

To set the standard of the school, where they thought the school
wanted to be, to be a steering team, to allow the teachers to teach
in the Montessori method. We didn't want them coming in and
changing the method of teaching but we wanted them to set the
standards for uniforms, we wanted them to look at the whole grant
side, to make sure the school was running effectively, that they
were the final stop for any conflict. Like if there was any conflict
in the school that they could come in as a calming body so it took
a lot of pressure of the teachers because previously they were
always under the gun from parents to change this or do that. So it
freed them in away just to teach so they would be able to say to
parents that's a board decision take it to the board. They were able
to, if people were disruptive which often in those types of schools
people are, they could then ask them to go without the teachers being annihilated in the process.

*What about the role of the principal? How did you see that? Was there a clear division in roles? Yes, but she was also part of that. More a hand in glove situation.

She was there with a pulse on the school. I don't know how things would go sometimes because L. she does so much. I think they would probably have to change a lot of things if they changed the principal. Because she actually has a hand in a lot of things but then so do a lot of principals and they need to. (So the job would change with the person?) Yes I think it would a little bit depending on their capabilities but still the board making those big decisions. They are responsible at the end of the day for the financial decisions, making sure the school is financially viable. (And employing the staff?) That was done together too with the Principal and the board. I think originally L. did a lot of the interviewing because we had a lot of the staff anyway before the board started.

*The board meetings were closed? Yes but the parents could send a representative. They would be invited to come along and present what they needed to present but they wouldn't be privy to everything.

*What did you see as the advantages of the board model over the parent run model? I think I would say the long term stability. I mean when I look at the effort that goes into a school, into setting it up, that you want to eliminate destructive forces. Even though parents have a great contribution as I said they really can be very destructive when they lose sight of the better good. So I think long term, I also think you create much more professional profile by having a board of governors and that's what we wanted in the long term. We wanted a really big well known alternative school. (That was your vision?) Our vision was that it would be big, that it would be not necessarily huge but just the respectability of it and the stability of it and the vision, that the board actually carries a vision. I don't know if R. is still on it but they are the kind of invaluable contributions that you just wouldn't get if it was a parent run school. You can draw from the wider community, ( You can choose the balance of expertise?) You look at what you need in your board and what if anything is missing. I guess the idea is to get a really good well rounded group that can really put in a lot of professional input. I think it's the long term stability and the professionalism of the school.

*And are there any disadvantages to that structure?
Parents aren't quite as involved so they do tend to step back from it. Like when parents are involved at that level they really put their heart and soul into it. They work very tirelessly but they also burn out a lot to and then they get disheartened when things don't go their way, because they've put so much in, I think they get devastated. They think they've given their heart and soul and become so involved and they don't get any financial remuneration. I know for us it cost us thousands of dollars just to be part of that group setting up the school. I hate to think of the hours, and hours, and hours, and hours, and money we spent just to set up the school. And people do, do that. It is much less now and I guess that's sad in a way. And their involvement with the children becomes a little bit more remote than before. But I think the school still offers them that opportunity to be really involved if they want to but not in the management side and I think that is much healthier. Then if they're not happy they'll find somewhere else where they can be more involved but to me the risk of destruction isn't worth it because the children get distraught. Everything falls apart and the parents rip them out of school. The expectation is that it will be a happy community and it's devastating when it's not.

That's true because you do think it's going to be lovey dovey in this little community, then suddenly peoples opinions change. I think that's why they tend to fall apart so much because of the emotional involvement. I think it just takes people back to what are we here for, we're here for the children and their education. I mean I love parent involvement people come and sweep and there are parents days, picnics and barbies it was quite nice to have all of that side of things but that's only nice when it's working well. When wasn't working well unfortunately the cost of that is too much.

*Looking back to that first year what was your vision for the school?*

That it was stable, that it was very professionally run, my vision was that it would be akin to looking at P.C. down the track. That was a lot of what we based our model on was those private big schools that over time have become very successful. Always in that we saw maintaining the Montessori method. (Do you think that vision is still there?) I don't know because I haven't been for so long. (You said that you saw the board keeping an eye on standards, how did you see them doing that?) A lot through policy making but I think because they liase with L. a lot and they would have a look at the results that were coming out. Like if they weren't getting any results like good success on maths tests and things like that, that they would have to get onto that. In the constitution that was too that the standard of teaching was up. I can't remember how we actually put that. A lot of that is up to the principal but there has to be check on the principal that they are
performing. (So they evaluate the performance of the principal and keep an eye on the overall school results?) Yes. That they still looked at the academic side of the school and the children.

*Did you see that the school needed a particular identity?

The Montessori method was the main difference and just differentiating it from other Montessori schools in that it was a board run school so that people could be assured of the stability of it. It was funny because I was teaching at another school last year and they were going through a parental crisis and the school was crumbling around their ears and I just thought yes this was the very of thing that we did all this for, to avoid this situation. Because with ideals you don't think it will happen. When you are working so palishly you don't think it will happen, then someone comes in with some different ideas. Some parents come in with a vision of a different kind, other people want it bigger and better and that's why we put the board in place so that people wouldn't come in with their own individual stands. (So the board was the protection?) Yes and the constitution.

*Did you see the school having a sense of community or was that not so important?

Probably not as much as maintaining the stability of the school. With the P & C now I don't know how much parent involvement there is. Even after the board was in established we still did parent workshops and things like that, and came after school but we hoped that down the track that the school would financially run itself so that parents didn't have to do that because they were busy and not much time. I guess we knew that that would change. The only way of maintaining it would be through a strong parent input. We didn't discourage parental involvement, they still wanted that to happen but not in decision making. The other little break-off from G. that vanished because it was still a parent run school and the same thing happened.
APPENDIX IV

CODING TREES
Coding Trees

Figure 5.4: Initial Coding Tree

Figure 5.4a: Background Information
Figure 5.5: Second Version of the Main Coding Tree

Issues of School Governance

One

(1) History of Participants and Schools

(2) Structure of Governance

(3) Context of Governance

(4) Tensions in Governance
Figure 5.5a: History Category with Sub-Categories and Branches
Figure 5.5b: Structure Category with Sub-Categories and Branches
Figure 5.5c: Context Category with Sub-Categories and Branches
Figure 5.5d: Tensions Category with Sub-Categories
Figure 5.6: Final Main Coding Tree.

Figure 5.7: Cycles or Phases in Governance Sub-Categories
Figure 5.7a: Pioneer Phase Sub-Category with Branches
Figure 5.7b: Super-Managing Phase of Governance with Sub-Categories and Branches
Figure 5.7c: Corporate Phase of Governance with Sub-Categories and Branches

Figure 5.7d: Ratification Phase of Governance with Sub-Categories and Branches
REFERENCES


New Schools Education Act, Parliament of Western Australia(1999).


