# CHAPTER V

# CONDITIONS REQUIRED FOR IMPLEMENTING THE INTERACTIVE MODEL

> Studies of alternative schools indicate "the extent to which the implementation of successful programs depends on intricate patterns of social functioning and process that are not readily apparent".
>
> (Center for New Schools, 1975, p. 50)

## Introduction

Having completed the theoretical component of the study in the previous chapters, the practical matter of implementation will now be considered. The purpose of this chapter is to indicate the general conditions required for implementing the interactive model in the secondary school. Chapters VI and VII will have a narrower focus, that of examining the feasibility of implementation in a specific context, that of the N.S.W. educational system and the teaching of literature. It is anticipated that the focus on implementation will enhance the practical significance of the study.

In seeking to identify these general conditions a source of information was found to be the literature on those contemporary, state supported alternative schools which have, while operating in a public system, made a deliberate attempt to involve students in decision making about the curriculum. Such schools operate in the context of school-based curriculum development and experiment with organizational forms which

exclude hierarchical, bureaucratic authority structures. As Swidler (1979) notes, they "represent attempts to create new organizational forms and to develop and realize an ideology that could sustain new patterns of organizational life" (p. 183). The values espoused by the founders of alternative schools and reflected in their goals (to be discussed in this chapter) may be linked with the value base of the interactive model as described in Chapter III. The literature on alternative schools does, therefore, provide information on both enabling and inhibiting conditions, that is, conditions to be cultivated or nurtured and conditions to be avoided or averted in relation to furthering student participation. There are, therefore, practical reasons for probing studies on alternative schools: to derive the lessons they provide on student participation and to derive a general framework with which to examine the N.S.W. educational system.

## A framework for analysing the literature

To analyse this literature a conceptual framework developed by Langeveld (1979) and Lundgren (1977), will be used. Langeveld classifies the educational system into three levels, the "macro", the "meso" and the "micro" levels. The macro level includes factors pertaining to the educational system as a whole; the meso relates to factors at the school level; and the micro to those at the classroom level. In this chapter the macro level will be assumed to include the wider socio-cultural context in which the educational system is located; the meso will include the community; and the micro will include teachers' and students' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes. The literature will be examined in order to identify the enabling and inhibiting conditions at each level. While the chapter has been structured to focus on the three levels separately it is not assumed that decisions at each level are, in reality, distinct and independent. It is expected, on the

contrary, that effective implementation of interactive decision making at the classroom level will be dependent on factors at the school and system levels.

Lundgren (1977) developed the concept of "frame", after Dahllof (1971) and Bernstein (1973), to characterize the factors which constrain decision making at various levels. Curriculum implementation is seen to occur within frames, some within the sphere of influence of teachers but many beyond their control and that of schools. Failure to take these frames into consideration may lead to failure in the implementation of desirable curriculum innovations. This concept will be used in a slightly different sense in this chapter to include not only those frames which constrain, control, regulate or limit interactive decision making but also those which support, facilitate or enable the process. That is, the chapter will discuss factors which "frame" a situation in both negative and positive ways. Figure 5.1 summarizes the two perspectives from which the literature will be analysed, that is, the three levels and the positive and negative frames at each level.

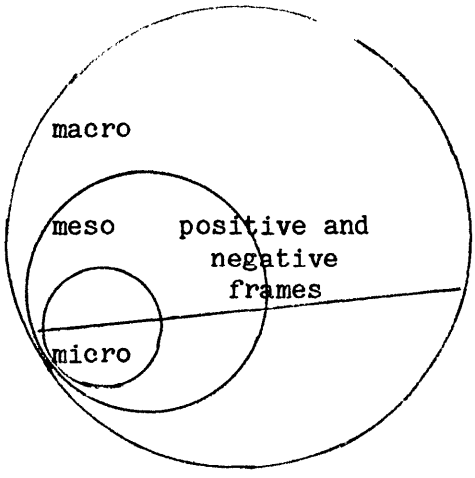


Figure 5.1 Conceptual framework for analysing the literature

By focusing on both positive and negative frames at each of the three levels the chapter attempts to deduce information about the conditions which are either favourable or unfavourable for the implementation of student participation in curriculum decision making.

## Types of schools to be considered

Before examining the "lessons" provided by studies of alternative schools it needs to be indicated what type of alternatives will be discussed. In Chapter I, "alternative" was defined according to Fenstermacher (1975) as schools which deviate from existing conventions or patterns of schooling in their goals, values, orientations, curriculum content, organization, teaching-learning methods and time frames. This general definition includes a wide range of schools; for example, schools which cater to particular ethnic or cultural groups, schools which use the resources of a whole city for teaching and learning, schools which are non-graded and where students progress at their own rates; schools divided into several sub-schools or mini-schools and schools modelled on the well known "Summerhill" school. The focus of discussion in this chapter will be on a sub-class of alternative schools, that is, on studies of only those alternative schools which have attempted to accommodate student participation in curriculum decision making, namely, in decisions related to what is to be learned, why, how, where and when learning is to take place. These correspond to the dimensions used by Deal (1975) to distinguish alternative schools from conventional ones. Table 5.1 lists these dimensions in the left-hand column, the characteristics of conventional schools in the middle and the characteristics of alternatives on the right.

In Deal's view, alternative schools are those which differ from conventional schools in all six dimensions. Lesser degrees of alternativeness are attained if a school is

alternative in fewer than six dimensions. Deal's typology is used to select for discussion studies of alternative schools.

Table 5.1 Differences between conventional and alternative secondary schools (adapted from Deal, 1975, p. 485)

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

| DIMENSION | CONVENTIONAL | ALTERNATIVE |
|---|---|---|
| Who is involved in the learning process. | Certificated teachers counselors, administrators and students. All roles have well-defined expectations. | Teachers, administrators, parents, community members, students. Anyone who has something to teach. Certification requirements relaxed. Role distinctions blurred. |
| What is learned. | State- or district-prescribed curriculum. Knowledge is broken into subject areas, with special programs for non-college bound or other "special" students. | Wide variation in educational substance dictated largely by interest of students. It may encompass areas usually taught in school, but it can also extend into many other areas. |
| Why it is learned. | Extrinsic motivation. Learning is intended to fulfill requirements and pass tests. Authority is vested in teacher: "Do what you are told" is the teacher's directive. | Intrinsic motivation. Learning results from interest or need to know, to learn a skill, or to develop knowledge. Authority is vested in students; the student chooses. |
| How it is learned. | Emphasis on reading, writing, listening. Group presentation by teacher is common, with some audiovisual aids and some discussion. | Methods vary as widely as the curriculum. Reading, writing, and listening are not excluded, but emphasis is on doing and experiencing. All senses are involved. |
| Where learning takes place. | On campus and in the classroom. There are some field trips but they are exceptional. | Wide variation in location of learning; private homes, beach, forest, libraries, businesses. Instruction in formal classroom is the exception rather than the rule. |
| When learning takes place. | Instruction typically occurs between hours of 8 and 4, day segmented into periods or modules. | Learning takes place anytime depending on the nature of the learning task, with infrequent scheduling and no time segmentation. |

## Conditions at the Macro Level

Since the introduction of compulsory education in western countries there have always been alternatives to conventional schools in the form of experimental, private and religious schools. For example, John Dewey's laboratory school, established in Chicago in 1896, was an alternative to contemporary schools in the social emphasis of its curriculum, in its view of the school as a co-operative community and in its emphasis on active forms of learning (Tanner and Tanner, 1975). The word "laboratory" suggested its experimental character, to test Dewey's ideas on education. Experimentation on a large scale was conducted by the Progressive Education Association in the 1930's. Thirty schools (both public and private) participated in a project of developing and offering curricula which were alternative to those offered by conventional schools. This project became known as the "Eight Year Study" (Aikin, 1942). The curricula offered were documented and the subsequent progress, in further education, of a large number of pupils attending these schools was studied.

As indicated in Chapter I, the idea of providing alternatives within the public school system became a priority among educationists in the late 1960's and the early 1970's in the wake of criticism by many writers who focused attention on the irrelevance and cultural bias of curricula, the impersonality of school administration, on streaming and regimentation, on passive learning and student powerlessness in public schooling.

Many of the public alternatives established during this period were based on the assumption that "they were ultimately accountable not to a specific body of knowledge or to a set of bureaucratic rules and procedures, but to their clients - to the children and parents whom they served" (Riordan, 1972, p. 7). Janssen (1974) claimed that public alternatives were operating

or being developed in 1974 in more than a thousand American communities. The International Consortium on Options in Public Education at Indiana University estimated that there were as many as five thousand in operation in the U.S. in 1975 (Barr, 1975). There is evidence of their establishment in Canada (Kirsh, Simon and Levin, 1973), in Australia (Musgrave and Selleck, 1975) and in the United Kingdom (Richmond, 1973).

## Changes in values and attitudes

Their establishment was not due only to the criticism of well known writers. It was also an expression of the social and cultural climate prevailing in the late 1960's and early 1970's in western countries. This period was a time of cultural and political ferment. Among the youth it was a time of student protests in universities and even in secondary schools. At universities, protests focused on issues such as free speech, defence research, the draft, the Vietnam war and on gaining membership on decision-making bodies. At the University of Toronto, for example, in the mid-sixties, student/faculty parity in decision-making processes was the most salient issue (Quarter,1972). At the secondary school level, students protested about school life and regulations, academic issues, problems with individual teachers, attendance and scheduling policies, teacher dismissals, course content, grading and examination policies (Alexander and Farrell, 1975, p. 12).

Swidler (1979) argues that student protests and the various counter-cultural experiments of the 1960's and early 1970's were the expression of an emerging set of values which originated in a new, largely middle-class stratum in advanced capitalist societies - the "postindustrial élite" - comprising professional, technical and managerial workers. This new élite "rely on knowledge, flexibility and creativity in their work lives" and "prefer self-expression and participation in the

political sphere" (p. 167). Student radicals, and the members of the counter-cultural movement, frequently the children of well educated parents, often professionals, expressed the values of this postindustrialist élite: independence and self-direction in work, intellectual flexibility, continuing self-development and creativity, rejection of hierarchy, authority and tradition. Yankelovich (1972; 1974), who surveyed the values and attitudes of young Americans in the 1970's, also found a reaction against competition and credentialism, striving for intrinsic rewards, self-fulfilment, and meaningfulness in education and work. These changes were more pronounced among middle and upper middle-class people but were spreading to the entire youth generation.

The counter-cultural movement saw the establishment of communes, free clinics, legal aid collectives and schools by young, well educated people, social workers, lawyers, doctors, teachers and young academics. These alternative organizations were collectively run and politically radical, and the people who established them did so from "a growing commitment ... that their function is not to administer society but to change it drastically" (Bowles and Gintis, 1976, p. 214). This new set of cultural values diffused into the larger society a "vision of a new cultural, organizational and political world" (Swidler, 1979, p. 170) and combined with a larger political movement in the 1970's to form a group of people who longed for "a new kind of society - more democratic, more participatory and with greater scope for individual development and meaningful social life" (p. 170). Alternative schools were seen to be one of the means to this end.

The social and cultural values comprising contemporary discourse and held by the founders of alternative schools included freedom, flexibility, warmth, responsibility, individuality, authenticity, informality, co-operation and equality (Smith, McCollum and Barclay, 1979). The interrelated

values of freedom and responsibility were expressed in the aim of alternative schools to create an educational environment in which the learning process and the curriculum content were related to students' needs and concerns and not restrained by a formal, prescribed curriculum. They were also expressed in the process aims of learning and acting independently, assuming a major role in determining the process of learning, understanding one's emotions and those of others, and understanding and participating in social and political processes and in decision making. The values of freedom, flexibility, individuality were also manifested in the efforts of alternative schools to remove barriers to the acquisition of knowledge, barriers of a structural nature which may be implicit in a pre-defined subject-based curriculum, in the teaching methods and the time frames employed, or in restricting learning to a particular physical environment.

These aims and values led to the establishment of schools which may be characterized as counter-cultural (Nias, 1975; Deal, 1975; Swidler,1979) in that they attempted to live out and thus teach new patterns of organizational life and social relationships. This orientation is evident in schools which attempted to abolish traditional patterns of power and authority and to replace them with new patterns of collective social control. For example, at a Berkley alternative school, Ethnic High, the teachers aimed to develop in their students a pride in their own culture, the ability to relate to people of other cultures and "the confidence to criticize and change the society around them" (Swidler, 1979, p. 113). At another Berkeley school, Group High, autonomy, freedom and self-discovery were seen as the legitimate ends of education, and the teachers viewed education as a "significant personal transformation" (Swidler, 1979, p. 114). Both schools placed a high value on the participation of students in all aspects of the school's organization, on creating a strong sense of community and on equalizing the status of teachers and students.

These values were also often linked with a political mission which was espoused by some alternative schools and expressed in their aim to expose political and economic oppression in society and to engender a sense of ethnic, racial, or class pride in students from minority groups. For example, the Falcon Street alternative high school in N.S.W. has "a deliberate policy of developing awareness and resistance to sexism and other forms of oppression" (Parfitt, 1979, p. 9). In Berkeley too, between 1967 and 1971, schools were established to test the hypothesis that students from oppressed ethnic minorities could be motivated to achieve their educational potential in a responsive school setting (Institute for Scientific Analysis, 1976, pp. iii-iv).

The establishment of alternative schools was, therefore, enabled by a positive factor at the macro level - a socio-cultural climate favourable to such innovations and the values on which they were based. Further evidence of favour was the tangible support provided by federal and state governments, educational and other institutions.

## Governmental support

Alternative schools need the freedom to experiment and to develop their own curricula but they also need support from the system in which they are located. Details on the nature of this support are provided by Swidler (1979) and Reynolds et al. (1976). In 1970 the U.S. Office of Education established the Experimental School Program (E.S.P.) to fund educational experimentation on a large scale. This decision was prompted by a concern with the poor outcomes of prior educational change efforts in general, and federally sponsored interventions in particular. E.S.P. attempted to address the problem of the failure of top down models of change and was set up to support local initiatives and experimentation at the school level. In

1971 school systems throughout the nation were invited to submit proposals for change projects. The Berkeley school district and the South-East school district in Minneapolis were two of several school districts which received federal support. In 1971 Berkeley received almost seven million dollars in federal funds and as a result, thirteen alternative schools were opened (Swidler, 1979). Minneapolis received six and a half million which enabled the establishment of four schools (Reynolds et al., 1976). Without state or federal government support the schools would have had to rely on support from funding agencies as did many American alternative schools, but if these were not available they would have had to levy fees for income which would immediately exclude from attendance a large segment of the population not able to afford them.

A five-year term of funding was adopted by the federal government which, in theory, should have provided sufficient time for schools to clarify goals, develop, stabilize and evaluate programs without the pressure of battling for survival. A shorter funding period or the extension of funding being made contingent on approval of the school's program can be a source of anxiety for teachers, since the school's continuing existence and their own financial security then rest on a precarious footing.

This large injection of federal funds strengthened, magnified and accelerated the scale and pace of changes in both Berkeley and Minneapolis, but it is important to note that the school boards in both cities had supported experimental schools prior to federal funding and therefore funding was not the incentive for change. The desire for change was already present among the members of the community and among educators. Between 1967 and 1971 the Berkeley school district had established ten experimental schools in response to the demands of a large majority of well educated people associated with Berkeley University and of ethnic and racial minority groups (Swidler, 1979). With the receipt of federal funds there was a total of

23 alternative schools in Berkeley. In Minneapolis too, prior to funding there were also some private alternative schools in operation and within the public system, parents and teachers had begun to demand a greater voice in educational decision making (Reynolds et al., 1976). Federal support did not, therefore, cause the change; it only enabled more of the same to occur. The lack of such grass-roots impetus for change would be an obstacle to the establishment and maintenance of innovative schools and programs, an obstacle not overcome by top-down models of change.

While financial support by an outside agency can give a boost to innovation, there is a danger in outside funding in that schools may become dependent on the funding body and neglect to build or maintain local political strength from wide support within the community. Thus if funding is withdrawn when the grant period ends, the schools may then fold. This is what happened in Berkeley. Of the twenty-three schools established in 1971, only two survived after the end of the funding period (Institute for Scientific Analysis, 1976). In Minneapolis there was an awareness of this problem, and in 1975, towards the end of the funding period, the participants in the alternative schools project were working to obtain the support of the public school system for the continuation of the four schools (Reynolds et al., 1976).

Support from educational agencies

State departments of education, local school boards and educational institutions can contribute to the development of favourable conditions at the macro level by encouraging and allowing the establishment of alternative schools as did the Berkeley and Minneapolis School Boards in the U.S. Eastabrook (1978) found that support from various sources has"the potential for legitimating activities" (p. 172). He also found that the

interest and activity of the students and teachers were greatest when they knew they had such support. Participation and interest decreased, however, when they were "unable to carry out decisions which they had made" (p. 171).

Educational authorities can constrain curriculum development in alternative schools by imposing requirements for funding (e.g. contingent on students' performance in external exams) requirements for graduation and for the granting of certificates. Tertiary institutions can also impose constraints by having rigid entrance requirements. What is of interest is how alternative schools manage to remain alternative despite these constraints and how they manage to satisfy these agencies as well as their students.

One approach is to interpret state education requirements very loosely as was the case at Berkeley's Group High and Ethnic High (Swidler, 1979). The teachers in both schools wished to maximize student participation in curriculum decision making. They did so by redefining the official curriculum requirements, reducing their own academic input and maximising the content which was related to the students' backgrounds, values and interests. At Group High the major focus of the curriculum was upon "students exploration of their own experiences" (Swidler, 1979, p. 114). Courses ranged over traditional English and history, to meditation, women's studies, international cooking and human awareness. At Ethnic High, courses were offered in black history and culture, Chicano politics, African dance, geometry and algebra, but whenever possible the emphasis was on the inclusion of multicultural material. At both schools, the relationship of the curriculum to the official requirements was very tenuous.

Another approach is that adopted by the Canberra School Without Walls (S.W.O.W.) which receives its funds from a public purse, the Schools Authority of the Australian Capital

Territory, which has to approve the school's curriculum. The teachers are mindful of Authority requirements for funding and of the diversity in the expectations of students and parents. It has taken several years of experimentation to develop a comprehensive program which is compatible with the school's philosophy and attempts to satisfy expectations. Courses consist of units, each lasting twelve weeks. They are not based on traditional subject area designations, e.g. social or physical sciences, because the teaching staff feel that such designations are too academic and impersonal and subjects based upon them

> ... are often no longer relevant to the needs and interests of students or teachers ... and often straitjacket learning and teaching.
>
> (S.W.O.W., 1978, p. 6)

The six basic courses provide an umbrella under which units covering a wide variety of subject areas may be assembled providing a broad range of learning activities. The teachers believe that the curriculum should give "parity of esteem" to a wide variety of learning in content and method. They also feel that there should be a balance between the academic and the social and personal, between the general and the particular. The course entitled "Viewpoints" illustrates the variety of units offered: Australian history, current economic issues, contemporary politics, modern fiction, pre history, and drama. Thus, while the course is interdisciplinary, a unit may be subject or discipline-based. The units in a course are planned by a meeting of all the people involved, teachers and students. Weekly curriculum development meetings of staff and students are also held to discuss policies, strategies and particular problems relating to the curriculum. In addition to the units in the six courses, students may plan a special study around a particular interest which may be counted as one or as several units of study. The teachers regard the courses and the options

for independent study comprehensive enough to encompass a wide range of learning and flexible enough to avoid narrow restrictive specialization. Co-operative team teaching and teacher mobility across the six courses is encouraged. Students are enrolled in classes at specific year levels but they may also take courses offered at different year levels. The scheduling of classes is determined by the teacher and the group of students studying the course.

Accreditation of S.W.O.W.'s program by the funding agency and other institutions has involved a protracted time-consuming period of discussion and negotiation during which the school has had to repeatedly "prove" its legitimacy. While the Australian National University did eventually consent to consider applications for entry from S.W.O.W. students, they first have to be successful in passing the Australian Scholastic Aptitude Test. The University is not willing to determine student acceptability solely on the basis of the school's evaluation of performance. In 1978, after several years of negotiation, this decision was still under review and the school was involved in discussions with the University over the grading and ranking of students. Such extended negotiation can exhaust the energy and enthusiasm of even the most dedicated teachers.

Schools such as the Parkway Program in Philadelphia and Chicago's Metro High School, aim to provide curricula in tune with the students' interests by using the resources of the city. Both schools attempted to blur the distinction between formal schooling and out-of-school activities by allowing the students to secure academic credits for experiences acquired outside the school. This form of granting credit is theoretically feasible in all schools but is not common practice for a number of reasons. The school relinquishes some of its control on the curriculum which is not normally accepted in conventional schools. Also, as noted above, a great deal of effort is required to satisfy official educational requirements and students' interests by the appropriate placement of students outside the school.

The Parkway Program has attempted to do this for a number of years. The school, established in 1969 (Richmond, 1973), is not located in a school building and has no official campus apart from a headquarters in an old building near the City Hall which is used for administrative, social and recreational purposes. Students plan their programs to satisfy state requirements for graduation (which specify the minimum number of courses which must be taken in English, mathematics, social studies, and science) and their own interests. The required subjects are usually taught in tutorial groups by the school's full-time teachers. They are offered by the teaching staff anywhere in the city - in their homes, in libraries or in museums. Many courses are also offered by "co-operative institutions" in the city - scientific, businesses, cultural, journalistic - and taught by the professional people associated with them.

Chicago's Metro High School operates on a similar plan. It is a school without walls established in 1969 as an alternative public school under the jurisdiction of the Chicago Board of Education. It offers a wide variety of programs and sends students into the city to attend programs offered by various organizations. It also brings many resource people into the school. Its organization and operation were closely studied by a research team over a two-year period (Center for New Schools, 1971, 1972).

The school has a principal appointed by the Board who in turn selects the teachers who apply to teach in the school. In 1970 the student body consisted of three hundred and fifty students who had applied to attend the school and were chosen by lottery. It was a population diverse racially, ethnically, in social class and in terms of previous success in school. The teaching staff was young, well qualified, of mixed racial origins and strongly committed to the idea of student participation at all levels: in the administration of the school, in planning policy, and in curriculum development.

The school year is divided into four ten-week cycles. During each cycle, 100 to 150 learning units are offered covering a wide variety of subject areas from which the students may devise their own programs. This practice has its advocates and critics. On the one hand, one can argue that a large variety of course offerings enables the school to meet students' varying needs and interests more effectively and to make the total program more individualised and relevant. On the other hand, courses may be superficially conceptualised and may diffuse and fragment a student's total educational experience. A program consisting of a large variety of optional courses may also provide teachers with the opportunity of "doing their own thing" regardless of student interest. Pradl (1976), argues that a kind of marketing philosophy can be detected in many descriptions of optional programs: i.e. students as consumers shop around for the most attractively packaged products on the educational market, those that offer instant satisfaction with little effort. Teachers are also in the market for convenient, commercially prepared curriculum materials. There is a danger, therefore, that the paramount considerations in planning new courses may be convenience and cost, rather than student interests and abilities and students may remain in the position of passive receivers of educational materials rather than sharing responsibility for their own education.

Alternative schools may benefit from the support of other educational institutions in the community in a different sense. Tertiary institutions able to provide preparatory courses for teachers who wish to work in alternative schools - such as those offered by the University of Indiana - are required if the difficulties teachers encounter are to be avoided. (These will be discussed in more detail further in this chapter). Teachers also need experience of having a voice during their own education to acquire a sufficiently deep understanding of what is involved in interactive decision making.

Access to the resources of neighbouring high schools is another form of support which enables the alternative school to offer courses which require special facilities which it cannot afford to provide; e.g. science and language laboratories, art studios. This arrangement is feasible when an alternative school is either an annexe of a large conventional school or a mini-school within it. Otherwise, the sharing of facilities may entail complicated arrangements and co-operation between the two institutions. The drawback of co-operative arrangements is the possible erosion of the alternative school's unique identity. As Fletcher notes, "Separate buildings appear to help alternatives maintain their difference" (1975, p. 64).

Support in the form of flexible administrative procedures also allows students and parents to choose the alternatives they want and to easily transfer from one alternative to another or to return to a conventional school. Students should not be compelled to attend alternative schools. Compulsion is antithetical to the philosophy of education on which these schools are based. Neither should teachers be transferred to work in such schools if they do not so wish.

State support is provided for alternative schools in California through legislation which requires school districts to inform parents of their right to request the establishment of alternative schools and for school boards to consider such requests (Deal and Nolan, 1978, p. 34). Similar legislation was enacted in Florida in 1978 (National Association of School Security Directors, 1980). Such legislation and public statements of support by educational organizations for alternative schools condition the community to regard their establishment more favourably. From a commitment to making a diversity of schools available in the public system, the state can legitimate alternative schools and include them in the public system.

School size and location

School size is an important factor in the effective operation of alternative schools (Duke and Perry, 1978; Center for New Schools, 1978) and a small school, where the student population is not more than two hundred, facilitates student participation in decision making. The establishment and maintenance of small schools in a public system would require systemic support and changes in attitudes among administrators at the macro level since small schools run counter to trends towards the establishment of large secondary schools of over a thousand students.

Small schools require less complex organizational structures and allow room for more experimentation. More face-to-face interaction can occur allowing for consensual decision making instead of decision making by a majority vote. The all-school meeting, which is a frequently used organizational structure for decision making, becomes a more practical proposition in a small school. The need for rules and regulations is reduced because individuals are more visible. They are also less likely to be overlooked or made to feel insignificant and the sense of belonging to a community may be stronger. Small school size allows the teacher to deal increasingly with individuals rather than class groups which is an implicit goal in the interactive approach. It allows for greater flexibility in scheduling and smaller class sizes. Researchers have recently provided evidence through meta analysis of the literature of what teachers have long claimed, that small classes are better in terms of enabling students to attain higher cognitive achievement and to have a more positive attitude to schools (Glass and Smith, 1978; Smith and Glass, 1979).

A school attempting to implement the interactive approach may be more successful if it is physically separate from a conventional school rather than being a sub-school or a mini-

school within a larger one. A separate location can help the school develop its own unique identity and be free from comparisons with the "host" school. Those alternative schools in Berkeley which were separate or "off-site" schools also lent themselves more readily to forms of governance which involved students and parents, and also developed a stronger sense of community (Institute for Scientific Analysis, 1976, p. iii). The sub-school or mini-school structure, however, allows a small school greater access to specialist facilities which it would not be able to provide otherwise. Therefore the gains in participative decision making and community spirit have to be balanced by the losses in resources and possible program flexibility.

## Review of key points

A prerequisite enabling frame at the macro level for the implementation of the model is a socio-cultural climate resonant to the concept of student participation. Tangible evidence of this climate would be a widely based desire for changes in education among parent and community groups, apparent in their willingness to establish schools which implement the interactive model. The strength of this grass-roots movement could be gauged by the nature of the response at the state and federal government levels and the willingness of politicians to pass enabling legislation, if necessary, and to provide financial support for the establishment of schools. In a favourable socio-cultural climate, support could also be expected from state departments of education and local educational authorities in the form of provision for the establishment of small schools, flexibility in their administration, flexibility in the accreditation of programs, and the provision of the required human and material resources. Educational institutions could be expected to provide not only encouragement and the assistance of consultants but also appropriate courses for the training of teachers for working in schools which implement interactive curriculum development.

The frames to be avoided at the system level are dependence on outside funding and neglect of building a wide base of community support for the maintenance of schools implementing the interactive model. The strict regulation of the curriculum within state-prescribed guidelines by means of curriculum reviews or external examinations would seriously constrain interactive curriculum development. It would also threaten the survival of schools if funding and the award of state graduation certificates are made contingent upon the school meeting centrally formulated curriculum guidelines and the students successfully passing external examinations.

## Conditions at the Meso Level

### Parental and community support

Accounts of alternative schools indicate the vital role played by parents in their establishment and maintenance. Parents were often the key people involved in the preliminary negotiations and initiatives which are required to establish a school. This was the case with the establishment of the S.W.O.W. in Canberra and the School of Experimental Education (S.E.E.) in Toronto (S.W.O.W., 1978; Simon et al., 1973). Parental support is particularly important in situations where the state education department is ambivalent about the establishment of alternative schools. Evidence of strong local support should encourage the state agency to pay serious attention to requests if only for political reasons.

Parents were motivated by either a negative impulse stemming from dissatisfaction with conventional schools or by a desire to experiment with new organizational structures which promised a better educational environment for their children. Such parents were usually people who shared a set of values or beliefs about education and had the imagination to conceive of

different forms of schooling. They were also people willing to invest their time and energy in the endeavour of putting their beliefs into practice.

A group initiative is more effective than an individual one because the group provides its members with psychological support which is important for enabling individuals to persevere in their developmental tasks. Furthermore, a group also has a greater collective capacity than an individual to perform the various organizational and political tasks involved in establishing a new educational setting (Levin and Simon, 1974) and winning support for it to ensure its economic viability. The wider the base of support, the more certain the school's survival in the event of the departure of the founding group.

Many alternative schools rely on volunteer parental assistance to compensate for the lack of income which may be a consequence of small school size. Volunteer parents may provide clerical assistance, reproduce teaching materials, make apparatus, maintain buildings and other teaching facilities, accompany students on outings and even teach courses. Without parental assistance many schools could not maintain a small pupil/teacher ratio or offer a diversity of learning activities. In return for this assistance, the school can offer parents, particularly women who do not have a career, an opportunity for "meaningful non-domestic involvement" (Duke 1978/79, p. 74), affiliation and social support (Fletcher, 1975) and reassurance that their children are receiving the kind of education they would like them to have.

Parental support is also particularly important for those students who are changing from a conventional to an alternative school. The change involves an adjustment to the demands of the new situation, in terms of learning new skills and roles and parents can help their children cope with these demands and support the efforts of the school. Not many research studies

deal with the positive role of parents in helping students cope with these changes although there are cogent arguments and research studies pointing to the importance and impact of parental support on the achievement of children in conventional schools (Ainsworth and Batten, 1974; Coleman, 1972; Sharrock, 1970; Coppell and Henry, 1977).

The alternative school may have to undertake a program of parent education to obtain and keep parental support. This was the recommendation of Simon et al. (1973) in their evaluation of Toronto's S.E.E. The school did not do enough to help parents understand the school's philosophy, aims and methods, in order to support and to help their children adjust to the school. In contrast, Reynolds et al. (1976) document an instance of effective use of parental support in the establishment of the alternative schools in Minneapolis. Reynolds et al. maintain that parents constitute an important dimension of the organizational context for the effective development, implementation and stabilization of a school, and in Minneapolis they were involved at each stage.

In order to win parental support the teaching staff has to be aware of and sensitive to the parents' aspirations for their children and their expectations of the school. Teaching staff have to be willing and prepared to explain the school's philosophy, policy, organization, program and teaching methods to parents. Failure to communicate these clearly may lead to confusion and doubts about the value of the school's activities and to a lack of parental support.

The program the alternative school offers may also rely heavily on community resources as does the Parkway Program in Philadelphia (Janssen, 1974) and Canberra's S.W.O.W. The use of the community often has a two-fold purpose, as has the Swinburne Community School in Victoria which seeks to free students from a dependence on the school for learning and develop in the community a greater interest in education (Tickell, 1975, p. 140).

Many alternative schools rely on special members of the community for support. Staff of universities and colleges often provide not only encouragement and moral support but also assistance in program development, school organization and evaluation. Professional people, artists, and tradesmen, who are willing to give their time freely to provide supervision of work experience, workshops or short courses in their specialities and who make available facilities such as art galleries, theatres, zoos, botanical gardens and museums, are also used. Often available community resources are under used by conventional schools and their use permits the small alternative school to offer programs of greater diversity and to strengthen the links between the school and community.

The literature on alternative schools does not provide information on the response of teachers' unions to the presence of parents and community members in the school, however, the logistical and pedagogical issues raised by the extensive use of community resources are discussed. At Chicago's Metro school, the size of the school population, three hundred and fifty students, created logistical problems of trying to find appropriate city resources to match students' interests. Another problem was involved in trying to geographically locate these resources close to the school so that the students would not have to spend an inordinate amount of time travelling in unknown parts of the city. The use of city resources also created time-tabling problems since, unlike Parkway, the students at Metro also attended courses in basic subjects at a common location, a large building in downtown Chicago housing the school. Another problem was that of linking students' interest (and their subsequent activities at the selected resource) with that of a subject designated by the Chicago School Board as required for graduation. The matching of interests with city resources with required subjects was not an easy task.

A further problem was with the nature of some students' interest and the nature of the activities conducted in these outside courses. Many teachers felt that the outside courses did not always motivate students to improve their basic skills to the extent that the teachers would have wished. On their return to the school many students were unwilling to reflect upon and to analyse their experiences in the city through discussion, writing or through reading material related to the experience. Researchers in the school observed that the students favoured constant action and new experiences and reflection, analysis, discussion reading and writing were of low value (Center for New Schools, 1975). Given the nature of the students' attitudes, the teachers found it difficult to effectively move them from their interests to a sequence of interest-based educational activities which both teachers and pupils valued. The ability to do this seemed to require a skill which the teachers at Metro had not learned (Center for New Schools, 1975, Vol. II, p. 244).

Ambivalence about the value of students' activities outside the school and their relationships to academic work within the school, may be a source of conflict and tension. At Toronto's S.E.E. there were over sixty courses offered, many of which could take the students outside the school. The teachers encouraged students to undertake independent projects which led them out into the surrounding community and engaged them in the study of social issues and community problems. Such projects were not easily defined and bounded in terms of the subject areas which the Ontario Department of Education approved for graduation credit. They also involved considerable lengths of time away from the school and independent reading around the problems being studied. While the teachers valued such projects, they also wished that the students involved keep up with their academic work to satisfy graduation requirements and parental expectations. In other words, the significance and relationship of projects in the community to academic work were

not clearly thought out. The students were consequently encouraged but could also be penalized for undertaking such projects. Conflicts such as these are related to the problem of clarifying the school's goals and priorities.

When the students go out into the community the community becomes a part of the school with implications for the teacher, the students and the community resource persons. The teacher is no longer the sole referent in the educational process; the resource persons or the agency in the community are not, however, trained as teachers. Their priorities may not be educational ones; i.e., a lawyer's or a museum curator's professional commitments lie elsewhere. Students may, therefore, need support from the school when interacting with people whose primary role is not the promotion of the pupil's learning. While greater involvement of the community is potentially valuable and may lead to a future "educating society", the person in the community who volunteers to participate in education may also need orientation and guidance in his or her role, particularly in relation to what he or she can expect of the pupil in a learning situation. For example, he/she needs to be prepared for the event that the pupil will make mistakes which may incur some expense. Thus the alternative school, which uses the community in teaching, has to perform a co-ordinating and community education role to maximize the effect of moving into the community. This may entail funding of additional personnel in the form of school - community co-ordinators or liaison officers.

Alternative schools cannot, however, assume and rely on a wide base of community support and good-will. These have to be cultivated. Often they have to cope with mistaken preconceptions, suspicion and hostility. As Reisler and Friedman (1978) found, there are always people who are suspicious of any innovation and these people hope that alternative schools will prove to be failures and produce social

misfits. Community hostility and resistance to the establishment of a school may be experienced and such threats do not always lead to strengthening members' commitment to the school and its survival.

## Clarity of purpose

The importance of clarifying goals or purposes for the operation and survival of alternative schools is emphasized by researchers (Levin and Simon, 1974; Center for New Schools, 1975) for it is often the case that these are understood only by the school's initiators and are not communicated clearly to new teachers, students and parents.

Clarity of purpose may involve working out the school's outcome and process goals. Expected outcomes are often articulated in terms of the skills and abilities students should have when they leave school. The Center for New Schools in Chicago, an agency studying the organization and operation of alternative schools, lists the following abilities as typical of those teachers in alternative schools aspire to develop in their students:

1. Learn and act independently.
2. Effectively employ basic skills of reading, writing, maths and problem solving.
3. Understand their own emotions and the emotions of others; possess skills and attitudes for effective interpersonal communication and co-operative action.
4. Understand social processes and pressing social issues, and participate actively and effectively in the political process.

5. Feel a pride in their own cultural background, coupled with an ability to work productively with students from different cultural backgrounds.

6. Continue to develop strong individual interests and aptitudes.

(Center for New Schools, 1972, p. 335)

Goals relating to individual outcomes are closely linked with process goals concerned with establishing a learning environment which will foster desirable individual development. Process goals are expressed in the aspiration to create a learning "community" which is egalitarian, democratic and non-hierarchical. The characteristics of a desirable learning community are often described in the following terms (Center for New Schools, 1972):

1. A close relationship based on mutual trust and understanding exists between students and staff.

2. Community decision-making is shared through active participation by students, parents and staff.

3. The human and physical resources of the entire city become a major resource for learning.

4. The characteristics of the traditional curriculum and educational program are completely reconsidered. Irrelevant subject matter designations, grading procedures, and age divisions are either fundamentally changed or eliminated so that learning becomes a more natural and coherent activity related to individual needs and concerns.

5. Students assume a major role in determining the nature and direction of their own learning.

6. Students from diverse cultural backgrounds work together effectively and respect each other.

Outcome and process goals are seen to be interdependent in alternative schools. A democratic school structure is seen as a necessary basis for the individual growth of pupils and for growth in responsibility. This structure is valued not only as a pre condition for anticipated outcomes but also for itself since many advocates of alternative schools perceive the school as not just a preparation for later life but a "crucial life experience in its own right" (Center for New Schools, 1972, p. 334).

The emphasis on process goals often stems from dissatisfaction with existing forms of schooling and with the effects of the structure and process of schooling; in other words, the hidden curriculum, independent of curriculum content (Riordan, 1972, p. 10). Thus, while many alternative schools are founded on such a negative impulse, their ability to survive depends on how closely they can articulate their purposes and on their level of commitment to a supporting framework of values and beliefs.

Swidler (1979) found that in the two Berkeley schools she studied - Group High and Ethnic High - which were attempting to implement an egalitarian decision-making structure, clarity of goals and commitment to them were important criteria for successful operation. The degree to which the schools had clear goals "about teaching and learning or about what the school should be in part determined how hard they tried" (p. 6). Because the educational goals of Group High were clearly expressed and generally agreed upon by the teachers and students, the school was under more pressure to achieve them.

The public statement of the school's goals identifies, either implicitly or explicitly, a set of values or beliefs which is used to justify the school's practices and which functions as a set of "ideological resources" (Swidler, 1979) which unite and sustain the efforts of individuals and general commitment to the school. Group High was, therefore, more cohesive and more successful in its operation than Ethnic High, which did not possess a set of ideological resources to which teachers and students could be committed without ambivalence. Swidler maintains that a sense of purpose is very important for "fluid" organizations like alternative schools where tasks are changing in unpredictable ways. In such a context "Conscious attention to purpose becomes the source of co-ordination and control" (Swidler, 1979, p. 179), and replaces hierarchical authority structures. The sense of purpose develops and is sustained in a collective context focused by continual group discussion. The amount of time spent in alternative schools in meetings and group discussion indicates an awareness of the unifying function of these processes. The capacity to sustain purpose, therefore, contributes to the effectiveness of the school. Thus the formulation of goals and the clarification of values needs to be regarded as an ongoing process and an awareness of the importance of the process for the life of the school implies the need for some organizational provision to accommodate its regular occurrence. The schools which experienced problems were those in which not enough time was spent initially in clarifying beliefs, values and purposes in the light of experience.

It is not sufficient to formulate the school's goals once and for all. The experience of people in alternative schools suggests that it requires periodic review with the changes in staff and students. But even a clear statement of goals does not indicate a commitment to them by all in the school.

Agreement and commitment

Researchers evaluating Chicago's Metro High School found that one source of the school's difficulties was the gradual emergence of a lack of agreement among the teachers over the school's goals. After about two years of operation some teachers believed that they had a responsibility

> ... to concentrate on teaching basic skills and social competence to help the student to make it in the world as it is. Others believed that teachers should work to give these students a different set of skills and talents - radical consciousness and the ability to work to change the world rather than to fit in.
>
> (Center for New Schools, 1975, Vol. II, p. 388)

Teachers could not resolve which of these goals should have priority. Because the student population was heterogeneous, the teachers adopted a policy which tried to do both but its implementation in terms of the school's curriculum and decision-making structures led to difficulties which were hard to overcome.

At Toronto's S.E.E. the issue which began to divide the staff and students after the first year of operation arose from different conceptions of the relationships between the school's academic mission and its commitment to the personal and social development of students (Simon et al., 1973). The school was created to achieve goals related to both, but goals were not ranked in order of priority and the teachers and students were free to determine their own priorities. Freedom to do so was perceived to be an essential feature of an alternative school. In practice, however, this meant that as the priorities of individual teachers and students differed, so did their conception of the school's purpose. These differences led to conflicting expectations of the school, of the teachers by the students, and vice-versa. The researchers who evaluated the

school (Simon et al., 1973) noted that the diversity in the students' goals and motivations led to division among the teaching staff. Some teachers would have preferred to weed out the non-academic students; others were tolerant of them in the hope that they would change, and others felt it was precisely the non-academic student who could benefit most from the school. Such mixed attitudes about who the school was designed to serve led to different expectations of both the students' and teachers' roles. The lack of common understanding limited the coherence of the programs developed in the school, and limited the tenure of the teaching staff as a result of working in an environment of conflict and tension.

A strong commitment to a specific set of values and beliefs does not in itself mean that value conflicts can be avoided. There is an implicit tension between goals which on the one hand, emphasize freedom and individuality and on the other, responsibility and community spirit. This tension has implications for the specific practices a school employs to attain its goals. For example, does a commitment to personal freedom mean that students need not attend the school? What does the school do if attendance is a condition of the school's survival? What does the school do when individual freedom conflicts with the needs of others? A balance between the two is difficult to achieve. In emphasizing individual freedom the school still has to find compatible ways of helping students to develop as socially responsible persons. In emphasizing the school community the school has to find ways of satisfying the individual. It seems that ways have to be found for intensifying the students' attachment to the school so that the school's goals become their goals. In other words, a set of values related to the school community must be shared or the school would have no commonly held purpose and group life would be difficult to sustain.

An emphasis on process goals over outcome goals may lead to a neglect of the program the school offers. Outcome goals are often more important to parents than teachers and become increasingly important to students when they begin to think about what they will do after leaving school. Problems may occur if the social process goals are realized but outcome goals are not; or, if outcome goals (e.g. academic and technical skills) begin to be of concern and the processes implemented do not lead to the desired outcomes, e.g. the students do not learn any basic skills, are not academically motivated. People in alternative schools have had to decide on their priorities and on what they were willing to sacrifice in the pursuit of cherished values. If they remain ambivalent it becomes difficult to set and implement a policy.

Situational analysis

There is also a paradoxical aspect to commitment. A very strong commitment to a set of values and beliefs may block efforts to solve problems which arise. One may be blinded to available options for solving problems or reject any course of action, however temporary, which appears to compromise one's values.

Some alternative schools experienced problems because their goals were formulated on the basis of beliefs, values and aspirations without adequate consideration of their relevance to the emerging or existing situation. The staff did not assess what constraints were operating in the school to obstruct the achievement of stated goals, or what was possible given the existing constraints. In effect, they tried to achieve their goals without an adequate situational analysis of what was possible.

What seems to be required for the effective operation of alternative schools is a clear understanding of both outcome and process goals and a willingness to anticipate their implications for practice in conditions which are less than ideal. Such conditions, (e.g. the failure of democratic decision making), require a reordering of priorities and the development of strategies for dealing with the difficulties emerging from the practical situation. This does not mean abandoning ideals but developing strategies to fit a particular situation.

Situational analysis may be defined as a process of identifying and gathering information on all the factors which may have a significant bearing on the school's operation. As Deal's (1975) case studies of two alternative schools suggest, the schools which effectively resolve their internal problems are those which take stock and gather data about their current situation before they make decisions about future practice. One of these schools, designated as the Community School, was a suburban public high school with a student body of thirty and a teaching staff of three. The students were volunteers from the local conventional high school and were selected because they had rebelled against the school and there were no other programs available for them in the district. The head teacher was appointed by the local superintendent of schools and the other two teachers were selected by the students from among 120 applicants. In describing the school's program Deal writes:

> The entire community was considered the classroom, and all citizens were considered potential teachers. Learning activities ranged from ceramics to logic, cooking to communications, dome building to American history. Students determined what they wanted to study, with their own immediate interests being the most important criterion. They were also collectively responsible, with the teachers, for setting school-wide policy.
>
> (1975, p. 488)

The second school, the Urban School, was a privately funded residential school located in a large city. Twelve students and their teachers lived together in a large Victorian house. It was similar to the Community School in terms of the curriculum and student and teacher roles.

Deal studied both schools throughout their inaugural year and formulated a developmental model representing the sequence of stages which both schools passed through. This sequence is depicted in Figure 5.2 below.

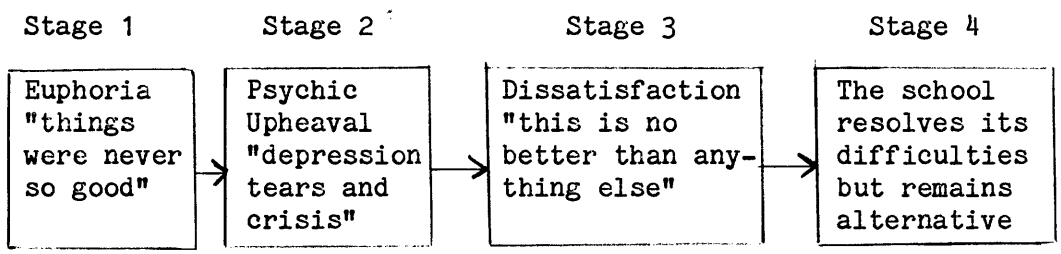


Figure 5.2 Model of alternative school development (adapted from Deal 1975, p. 489)

Deal suggests that while the two schools resolved their Stage 3 difficulties in similar ways and remained alternative, in other alternatives the Stage 4 resolution may take two other forms: (1) the school dissolves, or (2) the school becomes conventional.

Stage 1, Euphoria, is brought about by the joy and excitement that the participants feel in an environment which is different from that of conventional schools where many had been dissatisfied or unhappy or which they had rejected for ideological reasons. The freedom of the new environment enthuses both teachers and students. The possibilities of significant achievements at both the social and academic levels

seem unlimited and projects are begun with great energy. The researchers from the Center for New Schools call this the "honeymoon period" in the life of an alternative school and remark that:

> The positive experience of the honeymoon period sustains the belief that just about any problem ... can be solved in a free and open atmosphere with a strongly articulated commitment to interpersonal honesty.
>
> (1972, p. 336).

In Deal's schools this euphoric period lasted for about four weeks when it abruptly ended. The transition to Stage 2, Psychic Upheaval, was rapid, dramatic and widespread (Deal, 1975, p. 491). Deal suggests several reasons for the psychological crisis. Since the teachers and students began the school with highly idealized expectations, "individual disappointment and depression resulted when these were not met" (p. 494). In addition, since the school attracted students and teachers who had reacted negatively to conventional school structures:

> When that target was removed, the basis for identity was also removed. This caused students and teachers to search for a new way to define themselves and resulted in psychic distress.
>
> (p. 494)

Also, both students and teachers found themselves in a situation different from what they had known previously, however, "They did not have skills, abilities and attitudes to deal with the new situation" (p. 494). Over time, this situation could have lead to personal growth, but "Because in many cases the situation was so overwhelming, students and teachers regressed and reached back for childish, defensive responses" (p. 494), such as emotional outbursts.

Both schools emphasized individual freedom and their programs were highly individualistic and discontinuous but techniques for teaching and learning and for judging progress in this context "were underdeveloped or non existent" (p. 495). When teachers and students looked to others within the school for validation and assurance that their activities were educationally worthwhile, they did not find a clear consensus among themselves on what direction should be taken and on what criteria their work should be judged. Neither did they receive validation or support from people outside the school, e.g. in other schools or in the community, who were often hostile to and critical of both schools. This state of affairs compelled students and teachers to look inside themselves for the assurance and support they expected from others, and the intense introspection became for many a traumatic experience.

Stage 2 lasted from four to six weeks in the two schools and gave way to Stage 3, Dissatisfaction, a disgruntled and negative reaction to the situation. Students were frequently absent from the school, were vocal in their criticisms but could not describe the changes they wanted. Many began to spend time at the conventional high school, even attending classes there. Complaints from the parents increased as did threats of transferring students to other schools. Demands on the teachers' time intensified as students required counselling. As collective decision making was unroutinised, it was often overlooked, which increased dissatisfaction. As Deal observes, "Teachers were overworked but unable to make needed changes since their proposals were modified or aborted by the consensual decision-making process." (p. 496). The students who received little feedback from their overloaded teachers turned to their peers for assistance, but frequently their peers were also too absorbed in their personal problems to provide support. Parents and others outside the school provided only "exhortation to return to conventional patterns" (p. 496).

Stage 3 was thus the critical point for both schools. Deal notes that at this point, each school faced three possibilities

> ... refusing to alter their course and either literally falling or splitting apart or voluntarily disbanding ... becoming highly conventional in their governance and approach to learning, or ... stumbling intuitively into some form of compromise in their authority structure and educational program.
>
> (p. 489)

Both schools in fact took the third option. They "hammered out a course of action that resulted in a shared set of goals" (p. 492). Information about problems was gathered through questionnaires, interviews, small and large group meetings, and was discussed and analysed. Consequently, the teachers adopted a more active role in developing programs and in scheduling them, and introduced more courses in conventional subject areas. They also assumed more responsibility in making school policy and in defining boundaries. Students were, however, allowed to retain the right to make final decisions about their own learning activities. In other words, decision making and organization moved from a laissez-faire approach, where students did their "own thing", to one of shared, negotiated decision making, with teachers taking the initiative for suggesting courses of action.

At Chicago's Metro High School, the teachers were strongly committed to the idea of "organic growth" which led them to believe that if the students were given freedom and support a new learning community would evolve naturally. They also believed that whatever would evolve would be the best for them and that their particular school was so unique, that they could not learn from the experiences of others. These beliefs about organic growth and uniqueness contributed to the problems the school experienced and also frustrated attempts to analyse them (Center for New Schools, 1972, p. 336).

The teachers were convinced "that the lack of student involvement in shaping decisions that affected their lives was a major cause of alienation and disruption within conventional high schools" (Center for New Schools. 1972, p. 315). They also believed that

> ... once people are freed from the oppressive restrictions of the traditional school, a new learning community will evolve naturally as people deal with each other openly and honestly.
>
> (Center for New Schools, 1972, p. 336)

To this end the staff did not wish to prescribe what form student participation should take, hoping that the students themselves would soon naturally develop structures appropriate for their purposes. Thus an idea of a preferred decision-making structure was not communicated to the students, nor were their possible roles described. Initially, however, a weekly all-school meeting was established for decision making and the teachers expected that if the students were given the right and opportunity to participate they would do so enthusiastically. This, however, did not prove to be the case. The all-school meeting was effective in only a few crisis situations and attendance at meetings fell off by the middle of the first semester. The staff then encouraged the students to form a representative student government but it met only once and then collapsed. Decision making then fell upon the staff meeting and staff committees which, while open to students, attracted only a few.

Several factors worked against the desired types of decision-making structures. The school-without-walls situation dispersed students throughout the city and made whole school meetings difficult to arrange. The very attractiveness of the programs offered outside the school competed for the students' time. Ordinary communication channels, such as notice boards,

became so overloaded that they were eventually ignored and consequently, important meetings were missed or confusion and delays incurred. The communication problem "discouraged the participation of all but the most committed and undercut the legitimacy of decisions that were made without most people's knowledge" (Center for New Schools, 1972, p. 323).

At the whole-school meetings and later at open staff meetings, the excellence, creativity and responsiveness of the staff paradoxically militated against student contributions. As the researchers studying the school noted, "Tentative student ideas were often pale in comparison to well-worked out teachers' ideas that grew out of long experience and analysis" (Center for New Schools, 1971, p.16). Unequal access by the students to resources needed for preparing arguments, reports, policy and program suggestions (e.g. typewriters, tape recorders, stencils, meeting places) was also a deterrent to participation.

The school-without-walls situation constantly put students in contact with the outside world where their participation in decision making was limited. The delays and frustrations experienced there discouraged many students from participating in decision making within the school.

While the staff were willing to talk with students and listen to their complaints outside of meeting times, they were often over-worked and could not always deal satisfactorily with the problems advanced by the students informally. Neglect of these problems made the students doubt their sincerity.

Many students coming to Metro from conventional high schools had previous negative experience with representative government. In their old schools student organizations had limited power or were perceived to be manipulated by teachers and administrators to make or enforce restrictive rules, rather than to protect students' interests. Some students distrusted

any form of representative government in the belief that an individual is powerless to act against the larger forces in society. These students were convinced that no one could adequately speak for or represent another - often not even one's best friend. Since the student population was multiracial and multiclass a student representative was seen to be speaking for only a sub-group of the total population or for a nucleus of students formed around a specific issue.

With the failure of representative student government and the lack of student attendance at staff meetings, the staff became increasingly efficient at decision making through the work of teacher committees. There was also a shift in their concern from decision making to decision implementation, to remedy perceived problems. The increase in efficiency and the shift in concern undercut the chances of students becoming significantly involved at the policy making and administrative levels. As participation declined, decisions came to be seen by students as imposed rules.

Differences also arose among the teachers about the school's aims. Some were so strongly committed to the idea of student participation in decision making that they were willing to endure confusion and frustration in order to eventually achieve this process goal. For others, the effective use of the city's resources for learning was the most important goal. When efforts to achieve the former failed, conflict over the school's aims increased. The occasion did not lead to a reconsideration of the school's aims, or to analysis and some compromise. As the researchers comment, "such goal conflicts are perceived by the various sides as reflecting the bad faith, lack of commitment, or lust for power of the opposition" (Center for New Schools, 1972, p. 338). Consequently, morale is lowered and with this comes failure of people to meet their commitments.

Problems between teachers and students arose as the students were unable or unwilling to meet the teachers' high

expectations of responsible student participation. With the failure of participation and representative structures for decision making, the staff were faced with the problem of developing a new organizational structure and many were unwilling to critically reflect on the problem or relinquish their faith in natural development and develop a satisfactory compromise. As all these factors became confluent, a high level of organizational instability was produced, and morale was further lowered. Parents began to question the school's practices; many people became exhausted and, eventually, students and staff began to leave the school.

Situational analysis conducted early enough may help to avoid deterioration of this nature. It may lead to a reconsideration of goals and to a reordering of priorities. Student participation may, for example, become a long-term goal after an analysis of students' abilities to participate in some decision making. The ideal is not abandoned, but for the short-term, more realistic goals are set. Clarification of goals enables teachers to know where they are heading and not just what they are rejecting. It would eliminate ambivalence and confusion which made teachers, students and parents, in some alternative schools, uncertain about the school's function and the value of their own contributions.

## Structures for participative decision making

Alternative schools which adopt the principle of joint decision making but fail to establish any structures or mechanisms for its operation run the risk of internal instability, confusion and disorganization. People do not know what is expected of them or what they can count on from each other. When structures do not emerge naturally in spite of the teachers' good will and conditions of freedom, disorganization may emerge instead, the morale of the school may decline, and

the school then runs the risk of reverting to conventional structures or to hierarchical decision making to deal with its problems (Deal, 1975).

The Metro experience indicates that avoidance of structure, or a very loose structure, will not ensure joint decision making and "that even an extremely sensitive staff, cannot in the long run, take students' desires into account adequately without some organized voice for students in decision making" (Center for New Schools, 1971, p. 55). The absence of a visible structure enabling student participation reinforces a passive orientation toward participation which poorly prepares students for dealing with other forms of institutional life after high school. A very loose structure also invites those individuals, teachers and students, who have the skill and motivation required to step into the power vacuum and take decision making into their own hands. This situation may occur if a school experiences internal problems and its survival is seriously threatened.

Avoidance of structure may stem from a belief that any structure is antithetical to freedom. But structure per se does not have this quality. It is the nature of the structure and how it is developed which seem to be crucial. Structures may be enabling or liberating and lead to further growth and development, or they may be oppressive and confining, stifling growth and development. For example, a rigid structure imposed upon one by others may be oppressively confining yet the same structure, if self-imposed, may be liberating. Glatthorn (1977) makes an important point when he argues that educationists should be thinking in terms of a variety of structures to accommodate the needs of individuals during different phases of development rather than in terms of structure or no structure. He suggests that in order to grow we may, at times, need structures which impose standards and deadlines on us. At other times we may need structures which expect us to formulate our

own standards and goals. Both kinds of structures may lead to further growth. Therefore an education which provides experience of both types at appropriate times may indeed be more liberating than one which is designed exclusively around one structure.

Even in a situation where democratic structures and procedures are firmly established, all the members of a school may not be equally satisfied. This was the case at the Oslo Experimental Gymnasium in Norway, which accommodates one hundred and fifty-eight pupils between the ages of seventeen and nineteen in Years 10 to 12 (Hauge, 1973). It has eleven full-time and seven part-time teachers. The principle of the student's right to participate in decision making is both an aim and a means of the school's operation. Specific structures have been established to ensure that students have a voice in decision making.

The school's controlling body is the General Assembly of all students and teachers where each person has a right to speak and vote on the principle of one person, one vote. The General Assembly meets once a week and the meeting is managed by a group of five people, four students and one teacher, each elected for one semester. The function of the group is to draw up the agenda and to chair the meeting.

The school also has an executive body, called the Council, which is subordinate and responsible to the General Assembly. It consists of four students, three teachers, a parent representative (all elected by their corresponding groups for a period of six months) and the school leader. The Council's function is to make recommendations about matters to be discussed at the General Assembly, to initiate experiments in courses, to fill vacant teaching positions, and to make recommendations on the allocation of school funds. Information about matters to be taken up by the Council or to be discussed by the General Assembly is published in the school newspaper.

The school leader is elected from among the teachers by the General Assembly for a period of two years. Teachers are expected to take turns in running for this position. The leader's responsibility is to take care of the practical administration of the school. Guidelines for his/her activities are set by the General Assembly and the Council. His/her role also includes delegating tasks to other members of the school and activating students by establishing sub-groups or preparation groups for General Assembly meetings.

There is also an admissions committee composed of teachers and pupils whose role is to screen student applications for admission to the school. There are individual class councils which meet with teachers to plan learning activities and forms of instruction. Parents, too, have regular meetings which teachers and students can attend.

These combined structures ensure that students are in direct contact with those decisions that are of consequence to themselves and that "all who work at the school have equal rights and equally great responsibility for what the school is" (Hauge, 1973, p. 147). Through the General Assembly and the various democratically elected bodies both teachers and students can influence the school's operation. Nevertheless, all members of the school are not equally satisfied with these arrangements, as Hauge (1973) found when he studied the school in its fourth year of operation. Because the teachers and students had equal voice in the running of the school and the students outnumbered the teachers, the school, in Hauge's view, could not fully benefit from the knowledge, training and experience of the teachers. Hauge also found that "The pupil's views and the teacher's views too on the role of the teacher must be newly established for every new member who comes to the school" (1973, p. 115). This suggest that schools which intend to operate on democratic principles and with structures which differ from that of conventional schools, should provide orientation programs for both new students and teachers.

Hardy's (1979) account of decision making at Canberra's S.W.O.W. indicates how difficult it is for schools to put an alternative school philosophy into practice, to establish collective decision making, and to shed the influence of previous conditioning. While the school is organized so as to enable students to participate in decision-making, many do not take advantage of this opportunity and this has always been a concern among teachers. What was also particularly difficult to do for the teachers and students was to confront evidence of failure and contradiction in their practice. What seems to be required for significant change is an effort and willingness to "seek out and use the feedback of failure and contradictions to modify their operations" (p. 132). To assist in dealing with these problems and to encourage the development of a caring community, the school decided to hire a counsellor with funds provided by the Schools Commission whose job would be to help both teachers and students relate to each other within the established organizational structure. The counsellor performed the following functions:

a) Monitored events and situations in the school providing feedback to its members.

b) Clarified some of the school's goals and their underlying ideals and philosophies.

c) Supported people in coping with their uncertainties and disappointments.

d) Suggested other ways of doing things.

e) Taught skills for changing situations and relationships.

(Hardy, 1979, p. 126)

Collective decision making was also a process goal of Berkeley's Group High and Ethnic High, alternative schools established in 1969. Their organization and operation were

closely studied by Swidler (1979) who found that conventional patterns of organization were rejected as hierarchical and bureaucratic. The conventional role of the teacher as being "in authority" in the classroom was perceived as leading to a relationship of dominance and subordination and as a barrier to effective teaching and learning. Conventional teacher/pupil roles were thus also rejected, and there was instead an attempt to equalize roles and to substitute collective forms of decision making.

Both schools were administratively separate sub-schools of a large conventional Berkeley high school and were located in separate wings of this school. Each one offered programs for students in Years 10 to 12. Group High had about 200 students the majority of whom were from white middle or upper-class backgrounds, the children of well educated families, academically motivated and self-consciously committed to the ideal of being self-directed school community participants. At Ethnic High the student population consisted of about 100 students, ethnically and socially diverse, the majority of whom had poor academic skills, histories of school rebellion and failure and were the children of predominantly working class families.

Group High had seven full-time teachers; Ethnic High had three. Both schools employed a large number of student teachers and community volunteers to assist with teaching and to offer courses.

In both schools students were free to come and go as they wished. Scheduling of classes was very flexible and they could be held any time and in a variety of places. Time and place were decided by the individual group of students and the teacher offering a course. The classrooms were public gathering places, not the teachers' exclusive territory. Behaviour in classrooms was casual, with teachers and pupils on a first name basis and no formal arrangement of furniture or raising of hands for permission to speak.

In both schools the all-school meeting and smaller group meetings were the structural units for decision making. At Group High, the smaller groups were organized around certain areas of interest and designated as "collectives". There were five collectives consisting of different numbers of students and affiliated teachers. One collective, for example, consisted of seventy students whose interests were oriented towards ecology and politics. Another collective of thirty students was concerned with individual development and group processes. Each collective met daily in its own area or "home room" to plan its activities. Group High also had an intercollective council which consisted of a teacher and student from each collective and several students elected at large. The function of the council was to co-ordinate the school's activities, make recommendations, write reports on the school's activities for the School Board and carry out decisions made at the school-wide meetings. All important issues were discussed and decided at the school-wide meetings with each student and teacher having the right to speak and vote. Ethnic High did not have the "collective" structure but activities were planned in class groups and decisions made at regular school-wide meetings.

These structures were established to ensure democratic governance in the two schools but Swidler (1979) found that they were also a means of forging a group identity and an opportunity for exploring members' values, goals and commitments. However, neither of the schools was successful in obtaining the commitment of <u>all</u> the students to participate in the organizational life of the school. Group High was relatively more successful because the expectations and values of the students were more compatible with those of their teachers than at Ethic High. Group High students were more committed to collective forms of decision making rather than hierarchical and authoritarian forms. In Swidler's view, the success of collective forms of decision making depends on commitment to collective efforts and on "contagious enthusiasm to produce

volunteers to do the necessary work" (1979, p. 87). It is however, difficult to sustain the required high level of enthusiasm among volunteers to carry them through the completion of tasks. As enthusiasm declines, the volunteer support tends to waver and the remaining volunteers risk accepting responsibility for the possible failure of the activity. Teachers in both schools were reluctant to intensify the power of the school over the individual student by making it difficult for the students to leave the school, by imposing standards of work and behaviour or by being more selective in admitting new students. Such measures were not seen to be compatible with the alternative school ideology which values freedom of choice. However, the emphasis on personal freedom and choice was in tension with the value of collective responsibility and neither school could satisfactorily resolve the problem of unequal participation among the students in the life of the school.

Time and resources

The desire to provide students with choice, to involve them in decision making, to build freedom and relevance into the curriculum and to make learning a more natural and integrated experience, have led to wide variation in the curricula of alternative schools.

In some schools no planning is done by the teachers ahead of time. It takes place with the students. This is the case at Marbles Flats, an alternative public junior high school in Ithaca, New York, for students who are in the seventh and eighth grades. The researchers who studied this school describe the curriculum as "organic" in the sense that it is in a continual state of change; there is no attempt to fill a day's schedule for each student and almost no limit to the variety of topics deemed worthy of study (Reisler and Friedman, 1978, p. 75).

If curriculum planning is to be done with individual students and if it is to be done effectively, the school requires a small pupil/teacher ratio since one must consider what is to be done with the pupils who are waiting to plan with the teacher. If planning is done with a group, then one still has the problem of bringing together the resource materials required by the group without too much delay.

The tailoring of programs to individual students may entail diversity in content, teaching and learning activities and materials. It also requires diversity in the teachers and "the greater the diversity the more rapidly the demands outstrip the resources of the alternative" (Fletcher, 1975, p. 63). A way of resolving the problem is to be selective about the kinds of students admitted to the school and to limit the programs designed to the needs of the selected group. This approach, however, conflicts with the belief that an alternative public school must not be exclusive. The school may then try to deal with the problem of resources by co-ordinating the students' work and limiting the amount of choice available. This decision may also be in conflict with the degree of freedom valued for each student. The use of the city for human and material resources is a partial solution to these problems but this solution raises other problems as already discussed.

The teacher in an alternative school may also find many more demands on her time than the teacher in a conventional school to participate in committee work and in administrative and counselling tasks. Teachers at Canberra's S.W.O.W. value the freedom to develop the kind of courses they enjoy teaching, but since the school's establishment, curriculum development has been a demanding, continuous process. Staff turnover is high; out of a staff of ten, only one teacher has been continuously at the school since its establishment. When interviewed she spoke of planning to retire temporarily for a rest because the school had taken over so much of her life. High staff turnover means

that the school has to accommodate the new teachers who bring with them their own convictions and expectations which may not be identical with those of the school's founders. While the appointment of new teachers may have the salutary effect of an injection of energy and enthusiasm, it may also entail controversies and conflicts which the school has to deal with.

In a small alternative school the teacher may have to be "both the administrator and guiding spirit of the whole scheme and also a very tied-down teacher in various subject areas" (Lamb, 1977, p. 18) with not enough time to fully concentrate on one without getting anxious about the other. At Toronto's S.E.E., the teachers expressed frustration about the demands of their jobs, which included mounting programs in two or more subject areas, co-ordinating diverse activities, planning individual projects with students, communicating the purpose and direction of the school, and attending meetings devoted to decision making and to resolving conflicts. Similarly, the teachers at Chicago's Metro High School took on many tasks which in conventional high schools are assumed by specialized personnel, such as, planning and evaluating school wide programs, counselling students in groups and individually, making contacts for courses offered outside the school and monitoring the quality of these courses. The result of taking on so many tasks is role overload, strain, and in some cases, teacher exhaustion.

## Review of key points

The literature reviewed suggests that at the meso level, a favourable condition for the implementation of the interactive model would include a supportive group of parents, enthusiastic about establishing a school which uses the interactive model and willing to agitate for state support. Such a group of parents would understand the purpose of the interactive model and the

values it is based upon and have a strong commitment to its implementation. Parents would be able to assist their children in coping with the demands and responsibilities of decision making. Parents and members of the community would be willing and able to support the school in additional ways: by performing administrative, clerical and supervisory tasks, thus freeing the teacher for working with the students.

Among the teachers in the school there would be clarity about, agreement and commitment to the goals of the model, and understanding of the values and beliefs underpinning them. There would be appropriate decision-making structures established to enable participation of students of different abilities and experiences.

Sufficient human and material resources would be available in the school or in the local community to accommodate the execution of the diversity of projects planned. There would also be sufficient time for curriculum planning and time and willingness for periodic analysis of the existing situation and of members' progress in attaining identified goals. There would also be a willingness to modify existing practices to adjust to changes or developments in the school situation.

Frames comprising an unfavourable condition at the school level would include a lack of understanding of the interactive model, lack of interest in relation to its implementation and satisfaction with what conventional schools already provided. Teachers disinclined or unable to effectively communicate with parents and other members of the community are unable to garner sufficient support for the school, and may be a threat to the school's survival. Also, an unreflective attitude and a zealous commitment to achieve the goals seen to be congruent with the rationale of the interactive model, in spite of apparent difficulties, would impede the teachers' ability to deal with

problems as they arise. Other impediments would be the teacher's efficiency at decision making which may undercut students' efforts, unwillingness to learn from the experience of others, and the belief that an appropriate democratic decision-making structure would evolve naturally without organization on the teachers' part. Lastly, the lack of required time and resources for implementing curriculum plans would be a serious constraint.

## Conditions at the Micro Level

The teachers and the students are the key actors at the micro level and therefore it is important to examine the factors which hinder or support their activities. The quality of their interactions are not determined solely by their attitudes, skills and knowledge. Their roles and interactions in the clasroom are also influenced by frames at the school and system levels.

### Affecting the teacher's role

The enthusiasm, energy and commitment of teachers to make alternative schools work has been an important enabling factor at the school and classroom level in their interactions with students. Alternative schools were established by teachers, many of whom "have grown weary of trying to work for change within conventional schools and ... find the freedom of the alternative school exhilarating" (Duke, 1978/79, p. 75). Nias (1975) reports that teachers working in British alternatives criticize their previous experience in conventional schools for "the sterility of formal syllabuses, the numbing sameness of the methods enforced by work for external examinations, the narrow academicism of the school ethos" (p. 1042). They turn to alternative schools because "these offer opportunities for

close personal contact, pastoral care, small group teaching" (p. 1043). For example, the teachers who chose to work at Chicago's Metro High School felt "that lack of student involvement in shaping decisions that affected their lives was a major cause of alienation and disruption within conventional high schools" (Center for New Schools, 1972, p. 315). Those teachers who were involved in the establishment of the school were "willing to stay until five or six every night to work with students and to discuss problems entailed in this attempt to reconstruct just about every aspect of a school's educational and social organization" (Center for New Schools, 1972, p. 315).

The way teachers conceptualize their role in Canberra's S.W.O.W. is typical of the ideals of many teachers in alternative schools:

> The teacher needs to strike a delicate balance between on the one hand, encouraging skills, and on the other helping to create a genuinely free, non-coercive learning context in which individual students can develop their own autonomy and their own values, and determine the nature and direction of their own learning.
>
> (S.W.O.W., 1978, p. 4)

It is precisely this "delicate balance" in role which may be difficult to attain. The realization of the ideal may involve learning new skills and attitudes, even perhaps a complete reconsideration of role and resolution of role conflicts. When this did not happen either because of resistance from the teachers or because of impediments at the school and system levels, then conditions at the classroom level emerged as unfavourable for interactive decision making.

A new teacher at an alternative school, like a new student, has to become socialized to the culture of the school.

This may be one where the teacher's authority and control of the learning situation are not reinforced by the school's organizational structure since the conventional rules and sanctions for controlling the student's behaviour may not exist. Attendance or the completion of assignments may not be compulsory for students. The students may question and criticize the teacher's ideas and methods, and she may have to explain herself. In this context her success may depend more on her personality and on the quality of the social relationship she establishes with her students than on her knowledge of subject matter.

Beardsley (1974), the co-ordinator of an alternative school in Toronto, writes about the frustration of an experienced mathematics teacher who was recruited to the school but sat for two months "unused in a corner of a ping pong room, like a dusty reference book in a film library" (1974, p. 107). Mathematics was not a compulsory subject and the students chose instead to study yoga, astrology, Sanskrit, Cantonese or psychology. Two months into the academic year some students discovered that they needed mathematics for astrology and statistics for psychology, so there was a sudden demand for his services. Cheered by this turn of events, the teacher attempted to organize classes and draw up a timetable. Again he met with frustration. His structuring of time was not compatible with that of the students and few students appeared for scheduled classes. Eventually he abandoned all attempts to timetable classes and developed semi-independent study programs for interested students and this scheme worked.

Beardsley concludes that the teacher in an unstructured alternative school needs "resilience and knowledge, enthusiasm and flexibility and the ability to lead students to lead themselves" (p. 108). When these qualities are lacking in a teacher at a conventional school the school structure may carry the teacher but such supports are not available in alternative schools.

Many alternative schools seek to abolish the inequalities in status between teachers and pupils, which are obvious in conventional schools, and they strive to establish a new relationship based on co-operation, dialogue, and shared decision making. The problem is that they cannot abolish differences between adolescents and adults, between students and teachers. The two groups do not, in all cases, have the same outlook on their participation in the life of the school. They do not have an equal sense of responsibility for operating and maintaining the school, and they do not have an equal desire to influence each other. An illustration of the latter point is the desire of the teachers in Chicago's Metro High School to develop in students the skills to question and analyse the political and social structures which maintained the divisions of labour in society, and the attitudes which trapped people into cycles of unsatisfying jobs and low pay. They found, however, that the majority of students were not accustomed to questioning or challenging those in power and they were not disposed to ask the kinds of political questions the teachers wanted them to ask (Center for New Schools, 1975). Working out a way of reconciling equal status with differences in intentions and values and different perceptions of responsibility between teachers and students proved to be very difficult in some alternative schools.

In the two Berkeley high schools studied by Swidler (1979) the teachers perceived themselves more as friends and companions than as teachers. They did not, for example, claim any special treatment because of their status such as deference or obedience, and they did not attempt to obtain the compliance of students to participate in formal lessons or to complete assignments. Nor did they use the conventional sanctions to obtain compliance, such as detentions, poor grades, suspension from school, or resort to exhortation for attention and orderly behaviour. Classes were more like informal discussions initiated and sustained by the students. The teachers

functioned as group participants who could, like other members of the group, influence the flow of activities by their suggestions, power of persuasion or by the appeal of their personalities. The social order of the group, was, therefore, not based on the teacher's authority or on the curriculum because the teachers did not claim any authority over what or how the students were to learn. They did not make any claims about their expertise in a subject area and tried to teach whatever subject the students wanted to learn. The social order of the group was based on the group's own standards of success or failure and these standards had to do with "the ability of the group to generate participation and solidarity among its members" (Swidler, 1979, p. 21), not with problem solving or the completion of a task.

In both schools, the teachers believed that close personal contacts led to more effective teaching and learning and that the conventional role of the teacher was a barrier to such contacts. While the teachers had rejected authoritarian relationships and had effectively dismantled the institutional structures and sanctions which support the teacher as an authority in the classroom, they nevertheless wished to maintain the school's existence and hoped to influence the students. While all teachers rely to some degree on personal influence to regulate student behaviour, the teachers in these schools, in the absence of conventional sanctions, relied much more on their personalities to attract and influence the students and to obtain the desired degree of co-operation. Since the schools' budgets were based on student enrolments the careers of the teachers were directly dependent on their ability to attract students to their courses. Their popularity with the students and their students' loyalty to them could ensure the security of their positions. Thus the teachers attempted to infuse their courses with interest by making themselves more interesting as people, e.g. by developing interesting hobbies or by taking evening courses or by making their own private lives public and

using them as teaching material. Thus, in seeking to establish the desired closeness, teachers and students became increasingly involved in each other's private lives.

For many teachers understanding the students' personal lives became central to their conception of their role (Swidler, 1979, p. 58). This focus was advantageous for students. As the teachers came to know them better it was easier for them to relate the subjects being studied to the students' lives. But in the case of the teachers at Ethnic High, this closeness and personal knowledge also had debilitating effects. The complexity of the students' personal problems undermined the teachers' confidence in their own skills and made them feel ambivalent about academic values. The status equalization goal also inhibited them from using their academic skills or deriving prestige from their expertise in a subject area, in the belief that in so doing they would intimidate the students or alienate them. The nature of the students' problems and their "street-wise" toughness made the teachers' lifestyles and problems seem conventional and trivial by comparison.

The teachers in both schools were accountable to the Berkeley School Board for running the school. They accepted the responsibility but tried to fulfil it without resorting to conventional methods. The main tactics used to obtain the students' co-operation were personal appeal and self-revelation. At Group High these tactics were accepted by the students and were largely effective because they were linked to a lifestyle which set a high value on close, personal and open relationships. The teachers were also admired as interesting personalities and their behaviour and attitudes emulated. At Ethnic High, however, the teachers were not all liked, and therefore, the tactics of personal appeal and self-revelation did not work for those teachers who could not generate friendship or admiration from the students. Self-revelation on the part of a teacher without a base of friendship could lead to

contempt for the teacher. The more these teachers injected their private lives into their teaching, the less valuable what they had to offer became (Swidler, 1979, p. 81). Personal appeals also proved to be ineffective because many students had a conventional view of the teacher's proper role: to impose control. While they liked the freedom and respect they experienced in the school, they resented the teacher who attempted to obtain co-operation through personal appeal rather than authoritarian means, and they regarded this behaviour as a sign of weakness. The teachers, on the other hand, were committed to being anti-authoritarian, despite students' expectations. They turned to personal appeals even though they often failed because they had no alternative. In Swidler's words:

> When they were in trouble, the traditional options - to get angry, make threats, and reassert control - were closed off. Personal appeals were the only strategy teachers had for coping with the alternative school setting. The effect of this strategy was to put a tremendous premium on a teacher's ability to make himself charming, interesting or glamorous enough so that intimacy would be an enticing reward.
>
> (1979, p. 66)

The more successful they were in doing this the more worn out they became.

In rejecting the conventional teacher role based on authority, teachers may be uncertain about what to put in its place. They have to define their role as teachers without resorting to telling the students what to do, and and their role has to be compatible with all the aims of the school. Many teachers may unconsciously encourage dependence if they see their role in didactic terms as telling or showing. They may also unconsciously discriminate against students on the grounds of age. Both these factors are likely to discourage student participation. New skills, abilities and attitudes require time

to be learned in such a way that they are not just practised mechanically but become a part of one's personality, as a way of being.

At Group High the dominating model of the educational process was a "therapeutic" one (Swidler, 1979, p. 58), expressed in the teachers' definition of their roles as one of understanding the students' personal lives. Problems arise, however, if teachers feel incompetent in the new role and perceive their expertise as lying elsewhere. This was the situation at Toronto's S.E.E. (Simon et al., 1973). The teachers were divided in their attitudes towards their role as academic adviser and as personal counsellor. Some of them questioned the legitimacy of the latter role because they felt incompetent to handle the serious personal problems of some students. Some of them were also ambivalent about personal contacts with students and the implications of such contacts for their responsibilities as teachers. Some wished to separate the two roles, while others saw close personal contacts as a foundation for the more serious pursuit of knowledge.

At Berkeley's Group High, the academic guidelines provided by the School Board for graduation were flexible enough to allow the teachers to redefine them and to subordinate them to the school's predominant social and individual development goals. Since there was wide agreement about the focus in the school's goals there was no demand on the teachers to exercise academic authority or to impose a structure on the curriculum. Decisions about school-wide or class activities were determined collectively by consensus and the teacher was just another participant in the decision-making process. The students were the children of well educated families and sufficiently motivated to pursue academic interests and the teachers thus felt justified in devoting their attention to the achievement of individual and social development goals. But to what extent teacher/pupil roles can be equalized when the student population

is not homogenous and how teachers can use their expertise without alienating students or taking the initiative for learning away from them is a dilemma for many teachers in alternative schools.

Assessment of students' performance and achievement also poses dilemmas for teachers in alternative schools. Many of them perceive education as the starting point for changing society to one which is less competitive and less bureaucratic, where people have the freedom and opportunity to develop personal interests whether or not these lead to upward change in social status. They thus wish to promote the personal development of their pupils in a non-competitive, humanistic environment, and to establish close and friendly relationships with their pupils. The process of assessing students' work and of grading and ranking them appears at odds with these aspirations and creates role conflicts for teachers.

Also, in linking assessment with the exercise of power and in rejecting this model of the educational process there seems to be a problem of finding satisfactory alternative procedures compatible with alternative school philosophy and the role of the teacher. Assessment is, therefore, either abandoned or reluctantly exercised in a unilateral way to satisfy parents or other institutions of further education.

At Toronto's S.E.E., for example, the teachers could not reconcile the use of objective criteria and standards for assessing students' work with a school philosophy which emphasized individuality and plurality of goals and means. Teachers found difficulty in "Relating to students in a friendly informal way and knowing them as people ... and also having to evaluate their work and make decisions which affect their futures" (Simon et al., 1973, p. 79).

At the Canberra S.W.O.W., assessment does not seem to be a problem. Assessment procedures are planned by the teacher and the groups studying a course. Records are kept of assessment

data for each course for inspection. Course reports are issued at the completion of each term's work in each course. When students complete the 12th year at S.W.O.W., they leave with a secondary school record, listing all units and courses completed with scores for each. Those seeking entry to a tertiary institution also receive an A.S.A.T. score, a statement of competence in English expression, the school's recommendation on suitability for tertiary study and a statement indicating the student's rank in class.

The approach taken by the Canberra school may not be satisfactory for teachers who perceive any form of assessment as harming their relationship with students. Yet it seems difficult to avoid the need to set limits and standards for the students' academic work, for the quality of the work done, for setting and completing assignments. Teachers need to learn skills to relate to students as friendly supportive adults and as critics. Perhaps one source of difficulty is that assessment has been concerned with the outcomes or the products of schooling and teachers themselves are conditioned to this perspective. Academic outcomes alone are not, however, reliable indicators of the learning process. They cannot adequately measure the growth in confidence, self-understanding, skill in decision making, rate of learning or perseverance. To tap the quality of the learning process for individual pupils and their personal growth, teachers need to collaborate with the students and develop more comprehensive assessment criteria and methods of assessment which provide a fuller profile of student development, rather than abandoning any form of assessment.

## Affecting the student's role

Teachers in alternative schools aspire to have students assume a major role in determining their own learning. They attempt to engage students in decision making at every level:

at the school level in decision making about school policy, overall school organization and in administration, and at the classroom level in decision making about the curriculum content, learning activities and assessment. Principles are formulated and structures established to facilitate participation and much effort is expended to obtain it. As already indicated, this ideal is, however, not always realized. The student's actual role seems to be shaped more by home background, previous school experience and expectations rather than by current experience and opportunities in alternative schools.

Duke (1978/79) maintains that alternative schools attract students with histories of "disciplinary difficulty" but available studies provide only limited support for this claim as far as the public alternative schools are concerned. At Chicago's Metro High School, for example, there was a distinct sub-group of students who <u>were</u> alienated from schools in general, and would rather not have been in school at all were it not for the law or their parents. But there was also a school-oriented sub-group and an alternative school-oriented sub-group.

One common characteristic of students attending alternative schools seems to be dissatisfaction with conventional schooling rather than a history of discipline problems. This was the case of the students who were instrumental in establishing the alternative school in Oslo (Hauge, 1973). The students attending the alternative schools studied by Swidler also chose to attend these schools because they embodied "a new set of values and teach new patterns of social relationships" (1979, p. 14).

With respect to the intellectual abilities of students attending alternative schools, Reisler and Friedman (1978) claim that the students are a heterogeneous population including those who are very bright but rather "turned off" and bored by their

previous school experience; those who are just getting by and those who are doing poorly. Evaluation studies of students attending or having attended alternative schools appear to support this claim (Duke and Muzio, 1978; Tuckman and Hill, 1979; Center for New Schools, 1975; Reynolds et al., 1976).

Given heterogeneous student population in terms of ability, motivation and sex (since no study indicates that either sex predominates) with middle-class socio-economic origins, what are the factors which obstruct or inhibit student participation in decision making?

Chesler (1973) maintain that some of the barriers at the institutional level include the students' prior socialization to depend on adult authorities, the students' lack of political skills, and the creation by the adult professionals of school structures and processes that are more comfortable for adults and thus easier to dominate. Research findings at Chicago's Metro High School support this point of view. Those students who were concerned with participating in decision making at the institutional level tended to have the same background and life style as the majority of staff members. They were also attuned to the same political issues and had similar ideas about the need for freedom in education and for radical alteration of conventional schooling (Center for New Schools, 1972). Even these students, however, encountered difficulties in the decision-making process. They lacked experience and skill in committee work, the hub of the decision-making process, an activity which involved formal procedures over long periods of time, meeting and communicating with adults, expressing one's ideas and arguing a particular point of view. Many students were easily discouraged by the delays and failures of formal decision-making processes. Students who lacked communication skills were often perceived as uninterested by the teachers and treated as observers or visitors.

Many of the students coming to Metro from conventional schools were also initially more concerned in gaining autonomy in what Etzioni (1965) and Bernstein (1973) have called the "expressive" realm, that is, control of decision making over conduct, social interaction and movement in the school, and rules related to smoking, eating and dress. Once these students had obtained the desired degree of freedom in this realm they perceived little reason for becoming actively involved in decision making in the "instrumental" realm, i.e. the curriculum content, teaching methods and assessment, except to react to or to criticize the decisions made for them. The teachers assumed that because the students had chosen to attend the school they were also motivated to take part in decision making. There was, however, a sub-group of students who were at Metro reluctantly because schooling was compulsory to age sixteen. Metro was chosen only as the least of evils. The negative attitudes of these students to compulsory schooling influenced their motivation in the classroom. One student expressed this attitude in the following terms: "You'll let us decorate our zoo, but you won't let us out" (Center for New Schools, 1972, p. 22). Such students felt that the most fundamental choice - to attend or not to attend school - was denied them and, in comparison, the choices available at the classroom level seemed irrelevant.

The teachers also assumed that if the students chose a course voluntarily the choice would be based on interest. In fact, this was not the case for many students. As already mentioned, the students had to satisfy the requirements of the Board of Education for graduation by taking a specified number of courses in designated subject areas. This was one of the constraints on students' choices. Another constraint was the school-without-walls situation where the study of a course took students away from the school creating difficulties in the timetabling of courses offered within the school. In many cases, then, a student's choice of a course was determined by

what could be fitted into the timetable to satisfy Board requirements and not by interest. Thus a frame beyond the teacher's and student's control could influence their interaction.

The teachers expected the students to contribute to the planning of courses and to initiate independent study projects. They assumed that the students who did not participate in such activities did not want to. This was indeed the case for some students whose stereotyped perceptions of the teacher's role (e.g. responsibility to plan courses) made participation difficult. But other students lacked self-confidence and the decision-making skills to initiate their own study programs. For these students "The idea that one could arrange to study what one wanted and be granted institutional recognition for it was completely alien" (Center for New Schools, 1975, Vol. 11, p. 173). These students felt that the teachers were the only ones qualified to determine what should be studied in school and how it should be studied. They rejected their own ideas and those of their peers sometimes from fear that they were not appropriate for school. Also many students needed an introduction to the subject matter and an acquaintance with the possibilities before they could help plan a course. The teachers also found it a difficult task to help students convert their interests into educational activities that could expand the students' perspectives. Many students were also more accustomed to a reactive mode, i.e. reacting to the teacher's suggestions of project, rather than an active one of initiating their own. Finally, the teachers did not anticipate the skills required for independent study and had not resolved the question of how much teacher supervision independent study required. Only the students who were already self-directed were likely to work effectively on their own. These students tended to be in a minority.

Duke and Perry (1978) who studied the conduct of students in eighteen Californian public alternative high schools found that those students who were successful were self-

motivated, able to function well in small groups, were willing to assume responsibility and willing to participate in activities (p. 380). Those who were not able to function in these ways require a transition period of assistance in moving towards self-direction; that is, assistance in setting goals, selecting topics, locating resources and collecting information, interpreting information, organizing time and meeting deadlines.

## Summary

This chapter has attempted to identify the general conditions required for implementing the interactive model by examining studies of those alternative schools which have attempted to accommodate student participation in curriculum decision making and are thus congruent in principle with the interactive model. These conditions were identified as consisting of frames at the macro, meso and micro levels which promoted or hampered the effective operation of alternative schools, particularly in relation to joint decision making and should thus be cultivated or avoided, if possible, in relation to the implementation of the interactive model.

At both the meso and micro levels a policy of gradual implementation of the interactive model is suggested by the practical difficulties encountered by people working in alternative schools. The founders of alternative schools tried to establish collaborative structures for decision making at both school and classroom levels in the belief that such structures were more democratic and would lead to better student/teacher relationships, a stronger sense of community and the development of programs more relevant to the students. It was also expected that such structures would foster the development of critical and independent thinking, problem solving, initiative, creativity and self-direction; and given the opportunity, students would participate with enthusiasm in

all aspects of their education, in decision making at the school level and at the classroom level.

The practical situation may be far removed from these expectations, as some of the studies discussed in this chapter indicated. The difficulties encountered justify the proposal put forward in Chapter II, that the interactive model be implemented gradually in a developmental sequence as suggested by Figure 2.4 in Chapter II.

A developmental sequence is justified on the grounds of differences among students in their ability and desire to participate in decision making. Students may not be able to cope as expected in a situation for which their previous school experience and socialization have not adequately prepared them. Committed teachers should not assume that all their students share their attitudes towards co-operation, authority and decision making. Students may expect discipline and clear direction from the teachers because that is what they are used to. They may need time to learn to deal with their teachers as sources of assistance, of skills and knowledge, rather than as authority figures. Also, the desire to participate in decision making may not be intrinsically appealing to all students. It may be only motivated by specific issues of concern to all students. The immediate concern of many students may be with gaining autonomy at the expressive level and they may see little relevance in expending energy in time-consuming decision making, even if it may be in their best interest to do so (Center for New Schools, 1972, p. 318). Also, some students are more comfortable in a passive or a reactive role, even if given the opportunity to act upon their interests. At Toronto's S.E.E., even many academically motivated students were dependent on the teachers for direction, structure and assessment (Simon et al., 1973). Failure to anticipate a less than ideal situation and to plan a course of action to accommodate individual differences among students may lead to frustration, confusion and disillusionment.

The implications of a developmental sequence are that student participation in decision making is better regarded not as a right to be earned but as a complex of skills to be developed over a student's secondary school career. Few of the available accounts of alternative schools indicate that sufficient attention and time is given to the direct cultivation of the skills involved in decision making. The development of the intellectual and social skills, the communication skills and the self-confidence required for decision making seem to be only the fortuitous by-product of the close-knit community life experienced in some small alternative schools rather than the result of direct cultivation. Alternative schools provide decision-making experiences but they do not seem to do enough to assist students in developing the skills and capabilities to cope with these experiences.

A variety of decision-making experiences could be made available to students and assistance given to help them develop the skills and capabilities to cope with these experiences. With a small student population the all-school meeting may be an effective way of clarifying the goals of the school and of interactive decision making and of introducing students to democratic processes. Such meetings can provide students with the opportunity "to experience the problems and frustrations of developing a social order out of a collection of differing individual interests and motivations" (Simon et al., 1973, p. 70). The teachers may, however, have to be prepared to play an active role initially in structuring such meetings and in modelling the desired discussion and decision-making procedures (Hersh et al., 1979), rather than assuming that the students possess the appropriate skills.

Hersh et al. (1979) report on the organizational problems of an alternative school which were alleviated by thoughtful teacher intervention in the form of an elective course in democratic process offered to the students in the school's first

year of operation, analysis of the procedures used in the school meetings, visits to other schools and communities and an orientation program for students new to the school.

The weekly school meetings were structured to enable students to develop procedural and management skills. A different group of students was responsible for leading the meeting each week with one member of the group chairing it. There was an attempt to achieve a consensus in views rather than a majority vote by dividing the discussion into two rounds. The first round was concluded by a straw vote which was followed by a second round of discussion to allow the minority voters a second chance at persuading the majority.

The teachers also played an active role in the discussion by modelling discussion techniques and principles of fairness, e.g. asking for reasons why a position was held, raising issues of fairness, relating proposals to the groups welfare, encouraging a diversity of opinions, insisting on the right of dissent, protecting individuals from personal attack and accepting the majority's decision (Hersh et al., 1979, pp. 238-39).

To maintain the interest of the students in the school meetings the teachers attempted to include on the agenda issues which were not only of current concern but posed a moral dilemma for the students and would likely engage them in moral reasoning. The community meetings could thus offer students a multidimensional learning experience, one in which they could learn and practice principles and procedures, moral principles and moral reasoning skills. This did not, however, occur by chance, and had to be planned by the teachers.

Short-term ad hoc committees of students could also be established to provide experience in decision making on issues of immediate and deep student concern. More formal,

representative committees, requiring longer periods of commitment, such as the school Council at the Oslo school, could also be established, to advise and make recommendations about programs, administration and resource allocation. By means of a variety of structures students could acquire experience in decision making and have both a direct and an indirect input into the process.

The view that the prerequisite for participation in decision making is the development of certain skills over time implies a program which provides opportunities for a gradual increase in responsibilities as students' skills and confidence develop through their experience of activities which demand from them increasingly more initiative.

As proposed in Chapter II, in the early years of secondary school the teacher's responsibility for decision making about the form and content of the curriculum would be greater than the students'. The implementation of the interactive model does not, therefore, mean that the responsibility for decision making is thrust entirely on the student. In a developmental framework a leadership role is envisaged for the teacher, one which may be described as guiding the students towards self-direction (Torbert, 1978). That is, the teacher provides leadership by introducing students to new ways of perceiving their roles in the learning process and using her authority to support increasing student responsibility. However, a new student role may be resisted by students even at the tertiary level (Powell, 1981).

A developmental sequence should entail a gradual transfer of responsibility and the decision to reduce the amount of teacher direction should depend on the teacher's judgement of the students' readiness to assume more responsibility and not on the students' grade level. Thus there may be students in the middle years of secondary school who may require more direction

than those in the early years. This direction should include helping students extend and amplify their inquiries, providing them with criticism and criteria for assessing completed projects, and helping them assess to what extent their current choices may limit or expand their future options. However, the help teachers provide should "not have the effect of creating a new brand of passive learning within a more humane environment" (Center for New Schools, 1972, p. 304).

One of the interesting paradoxes noted by Swidler (1979) of organizations which attempt to establish egalitarian decision-making structures is "that they both need and abhor leadership" (p. 81). They need leadership to establish and maintain the appropriate decision-making structures and to model the behaviours the organization seeks to foster in its members. They also need leadership in times of crisis. But the leaders also symbolize the fact that inequalities exist in the organization. The possibility of ambiguous attitudes to the leadership role of the teacher need to be remembered in times of conflict.

The leadership role envisaged for the teacher upon the implementation of the interactive model includes that of consultant and critic. It is not limited to being a provider of resources and a supporter of students' decisions. The inequalities implied between the teacher's and students' roles are based on differences in the knowledge, skills and experience the two groups may possess not on their ascribed status, power and authority in the school and the education system.

By their existence alternative schools challenged conventional organizations and confirmed the power of the will to create alternatives to conventional institutions in contexts which imposed limitations on freedom of action and the achievement of goals. Nevertheless, they offered hope of improvement to people disillusioned with existing schools. The

implementation of the interactive model, in some schools at least, could similarly offer an alternative form of education to that which is available in conventional institutions. Chapter VI will examine the feasibility of implementation in a specific context, that of the N.S.W. state education system.