

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the extent to which Independent Schools are Learning Organisations and the role that can be played by leadership in implementing a Learning Organisation culture. This chapter is divided into five parts. Part One briefly introduces the key concepts of the Learning Organisation. Part Two identifies the Research Questions posed for this study. Part Three outlines the Significance of the Research. Part Four examines the Context in which the Study was carried out, focusing on the nature of Independent Schools and their Principals. Part Five provides an overview of the Design of the Study and the Structure of the Thesis.

THE LEARNING ORGANISATION

If you want one year of prosperity, grow grain.

If you want ten years of prosperity, grow trees.

If you want one hundred years of prosperity, grow people.

- Chinese proverb (cited in Kouzes and Posner, 1987: 161).

The underlying meaning of this ancient proverb lies at the heart of the philosophy of the Learning Organisation. The fundamental importance of people and their growth is the primary core value of most of today's successful Learning Organisations. It is often said that people are the organisation, or that people are the most important investment or resource that an organisation has. And yet rarely do organisations place the growth of

their people at the centre of their day to day activities (or even at the periphery). Downs (1995: 57) suggests that the key employee trait in the twenty- first century will be a willingness to learn, which will enable them to adapt to change more easily. Marquardt and Reynolds (1994: v) argue that “The world of business has now entered the knowledge era where knowledge is power, and learning rapidly and competently is seen as the pre-eminent strategy for global success”.

The concept of Learning Organisations is receiving prominent attention in the current management literature. Early this decade Fortune magazine suggested that “The most successful corporation of the 1990’s will be something called a learning organisation” (July 3, 1989: 48). Donegan (1990), in his studies of the development of the British Petroleum Group suggested that the question of whether organisations will take on the qualities associated with Learning Organisations is now beyond doubt. Howard (1990) suggested that learning at all levels of organisations were an imperative for success. Garvin (1993:78) emphasised that organisations seeking continuous improvement require a “commitment to learning” and to be competitive in today’s marketplace, organisations cannot afford to stand still or they will inevitably be left behind. Thus, the critical importance of a commitment to learning and the development of a culture of continuous improvement is now seen as paramount.

What then, is a Learning Organisation? Garvin offered a cogent definition (1993: 80).

“A learning organisation is an organisation skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behaviour to reflect new knowledge and insights.”

Senge (1990) stated that the key characteristic of the Learning Organisation is that an environment is created where the organisation and everyone in it does the learning for themselves, or more pertinently, where the organisation is on a continuous quest to expand its ability to invent its own future. He suggested five broad areas or models in developing a Learning Organisation:

- *systems thinking (looking at the complex process holistically rather than isolating particular problems),
- *personal mastery (a constant personal focus on individual and organisational goals, achievements, weaknesses, philosophies),
- *mental models (focusing on adaptability and welcoming of change),
- *team learning (open communication within groups that have meaning and decision-making power).

By integrating prominent recent writings on Learning Organisations (which will be discussed in greater detail later), it is possible to identify a number of their key elements:

- *Learning at all levels is vital.
- *Change is inevitable.
- *There is an inherent culture of continuous improvement.
- *The importance of people is fundamental.
- *Development of a reflective practice is recommended.

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- *There is a clear link between the individual and organisation (values wise).
- *Risk taking is encouraged.
- *Development of shared vision occurs.
- *The importance of learning for its own sake is highlighted.
- *Leaders model learning.
- *There is a commitment to knowledge.
- *Collaborative learning is encouraged.

(see for example Kline and Saunders, 1993; Wick and Leon, 1993; Donegan, 1990, Bhindi, 1997; MacNeill and Silcox, 1996).

Many educational managers, practitioners and researchers have suggested that there is a connection between the development of a learning culture, human resource management strategies and organisational effectiveness. Duignan (1994) and Schon (1983) both suggested that the most effective learning systems would be developed in an organisational culture where differences were encouraged, change welcomed, compromise was a positive process and reflection a priority. Wick and Leon (1993: 19) also argued that people in a Learning Organisation feel a greater commitment to the organisation and enable the organisation to operate more effectively. Block (1987: 86) took this connection one step further by suggesting that “Learning and high performance are intimately related; the high performers are those who learn most quickly”.

Duignan has suggested that leadership exercises strong influence in the transformation of organisations into Learning Organisations, in that “Successful leaders help create the conditions within which such processes can develop and flourish” (Duignan, 1994: 3-6). This is exemplified in their commitment to a culture of continuous improvement, reflection on practice, development of corporate vision, goals and outcomes, and greater focus on effective human resource management and development strategies. Wick and Leon (1993:16) reinforce this view by suggesting that “An active commitment to your own learning is your greatest leverage in getting your people to grow and develop”.

The literature on Learning Organisations emphasises the critical importance of leaders developing a shared vision. Duignan (1994) also acknowledged the significance of leaders developing a clear values system and organisational vision, with both of these being consistently espoused and related to learning at all levels. Bennis and Nanus(1985) and Northfield (1992) also emphasised the idea of effective leaders being effective learners. Leaders, particularly those with a high level of influence (as is clearly the case in Independent Schools), can be described as culture shapers or culture builders (see Bolman and Deal, 1991). Therefore, if the development of a learning culture is seen as desirable, then the concept of the leader as a learner becomes critical. Bhindi (1995b) focuses on values and people in the organisation and also links the management of change to leadership and organisational culture. Leadership is all about integrating vision, culture, motivation, recognition and collaboration.

Thus, there are four aspects or views of leaders of Learning Organisations that have been identified as being of particular importance:

- *Leaders as learners,
- *Visionary leadership,
- *Transformational leadership,
- *Leaders as culture builders.

It is possible to build on the insights reviewed so far and propose a working definition of a Learning Organisation for the purposes of this study:

A Learning Organisation is a visionary organisation that has a clear focus on learning with a view to continuous improvement. It embraces change, is responsive to external change factors, and empowers, involves and values its people.

The key elements of this Learning Organisation include:

- *People are central to the organisation – they are empowered, involved and communicated with,
- *There is a culture that is open, diverse, and trusting,
- *Learning and change are embraced and insisted upon,
- *There is a shared vision,
- *Continuous improvement is strived for throughout the organisation.

Most of the material available on Learning Organisations comes from the business field.

There is clearly a dearth of research data on schools as Learning Organisations. This

dearth is certainly not related to a lack of relevance of the concept in an educational context. The concept of the Learning Organisation is of significant relevance to the management and effectiveness of educational organisations. For example, organisations such as TAFE, NSW, are currently giving priority attention to translating their organisations into Learning Organisations. The NSW Department of Education and Training (Hill et al, 1995) recently produced a paper on “Schools as Learning Communities”, touching on many of the fundamental underlying concepts. Retallick (1996) suggests that schools can and indeed should become Learning Organisations, through attention to workplace learning, the use of action research and the development of team building practices. He argues that schools can more effectively promote student and staff learning by implementing the key concepts of the Learning Organisation. In 1995, the International Confederation of Principals devoted its entire theme to “Leadership for Learning” as the topic for their second world convention in Sydney.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aims to investigate three research questions:

1. What are the key elements of the Learning Organisation?
2. To what extent do the Independent Schools of today fit the description of a Learning Organisation?
3. What role can leadership play in developing and implementing a Learning Organisation culture in Independent Schools?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Independent Schools in today's competitive market and economic circumstances exhibit many corporate culture characteristics, whilst at the same time reflecting their distinctive characteristics as educational or human service organisations. Tradition is no longer a guarantee of future enrolments as prospective parents compare schools in searching for value in their educational dollar. If Independent Schools are to remain distinctive, competitive and at the forefront of educational developments and reform, then they may well need to be pro-active and reposition themselves as Learning Organisations. An organisation must seek continuous improvement, and be responsive to societal and market changes, to succeed into the next millennium.

Schools that seek to engender a lifelong love of learning amongst their students (clients) must surely be effective role models by embracing learning themselves. It stands to reason that educational organisations that spend all of their time disseminating knowledge and nurturing others should be more amenable than many other types of organisations to the development of learning cultures. It appears that time constraints, the traditional "mind-set", autocratic leadership styles, and clearly a lack of knowledge about what Learning Organisations actually are (and their associated benefits), has led to many schools not developing such a culture where continuous learning and self-improvement are valued.

It is hoped that the findings of this study will provide important pointers to the Principals of Independent Schools on the leadership role that they can play in the development of a Learning Organisation culture. Strategies and behaviours such as modelling and encouraging continuous professional improvement and development of themselves and their staff, and a strong commitment to organisational effectiveness and quality outcomes, must become focal to the daily lives of Principals. It is also hoped that Non-Independent Schools may find the outcomes of the study relevant and worthwhile. The findings of this study will certainly be of significance to the Councils of Independent Schools as they develop selection criteria for senior management positions. Importantly, this study will hopefully reinforce the notion that the culture of a Learning Organisation is desirable for all educational organisations of today that wish to move forward into the twenty-first century.

STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The structure of the thesis follows the following format:

- *An introductory chapter providing an overview of the study and its context
- *A review of the literature to examine the key concepts of the Learning Organisation philosophy, and associated material
- *An overview of the research methodology employed for the study
- *Presentation of the data collected and analysed in summary form
- *An examination of the extent to which Independent Schools can be classified as Learning Organisations
- *A discussion of the role that leadership can play in developing a Learning Organisation culture
- *Concluding remarks
- *Appendices

CHAPTER 2

THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

This study focuses on Independent Schools as Learning Organisations.

For the purposes of this study, Maslen's (1982) definition of Independent Schools will be used. He suggested that "Independent Schools have school councils with the right to appoint their own principals or headmasters who then have the power to appoint their own staff." Partridge (1969: 8) sums it up nicely, stating that

Non-government schools represent an alternative to the state (or government) system of education, an alternative with roots stretching back into British history and steeped in the tradition that education is 'inseparable from religious and moral training.'

In 1993, 28.1% of Australian students were educated in Independent Schools, with almost 70% of these being at Catholic Schools (Yearbook Australia 1995). In 1971 less than 22% of students were educated in Independent Schools (Coppell, 1994), which is indicative of the strong growth of Independent Schools over the last two decades. Over seven percent of students in total attend Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA) schools, and thus this category of school has become quite significant in recent times. There is a definite increased middle class component associated with this growth, which effectively acts to perpetuate the class differences seen in society today (Maslen, 1982).

The constitution (1985) of the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA) highlights two key attributes of Independent Schools, namely:

- Independence of the schools' governing bodies in determining aims and policies,
- Independence of their Heads' in the matters of employment and management of staff, and the enrolment and discipline of pupils.

The constitution goes on to categorise Independent Schools' into two groups, depending on their governance:

- Governance by some legally established body corporate, which applies particularly to schools in the Protestant tradition,
- Governance by a religious order (not the Catholic Education Office), which applies particularly to schools in the Roman Catholic tradition.

Independent Schools are generally associated with traditional religious affiliations (particularly the Catholic Church), charge fees, and promote distinctive cultural values. They are independent in terms of organisation, education, activity range and general philosophy relative to government schools and each other (Partridge, 1969). As systemic Catholic schools are considered as separate entities in their own right they are not considered part of this study.

Maslen (1982) highlights a number of important characteristics of Independent Schools, including:

- *Schools relate to clients through a market,
- *Uniforms are often an important aspect of the school culture,
- *Sporting achievements are often fundamental aspects of the school culture,
- *There is a blend of “Old School” traditions and innovative market responses,
- *There is a strong sense of order,
- *There is a high range of diverse activities available,
- *There are generally higher tertiary matriculation rates,
- *There is often a strong alumni network,
- *There may be a powerful traditional prefect system,
- *They are generally found in areas of higher socio-economic status.
- *Formal teacher / student relationships are encouraged.

These characteristics apply most clearly to the older style Independent School of the upper and middle classes. With the development of many new Independent Schools, particularly those controlled by parent groups, a greater diversity is enriching the AHISA group of schools, making it harder to simply categorise or box AHISA schools into the older style or elite Independent movement.

Maslen (1982) goes on to suggest that other common characteristics of Independent Schools are: a strong ritual sense especially regarding religion, stable staffing, a personal interest in pupils, a strong sense of pastoral care through a House system, a higher retention rate (Coppell, 1994), extensive alumni fund raising especially for building, very strong influential Head of School, smaller class sizes, regimented and hierarchical

management structure, overemphasis on success, commitment to traditions, strong sense of community regarding post-school contacts and opportunities, and an extended high sense of conservatism.

Although the culture of this category of Independent schools is supported by the community, it can be very conservative and even entrenched (see Bhindi, 1995b). Leadership at these schools can tend to be bureaucratic and autocratic, with Principals often having a large degree of control and decisional power. Independent School Principals as a result are often termed culture builders or shapers (Deal and Peterson, 1990). Chapman (1990) described these types of Independent School Principals as having a Chief Executive Officer's role. If guided properly, the leadership of the Principal can play a significant role in the development of a Learning Organisation where there is a continuous commitment to human resource development.

THE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Chapman (1984) provided a personal “profile” of the role and problems of the Independent School Principal in Australia:

- sixty five percent are male, aged on average between forty five and forty nine, and are regular churchgoers
- he / she is more likely to have attended an Independent School
- more than one-third have higher post-graduate awards
- they are generally older than the norm
- they display some of the following traits; zeal, good temper, common sense, punctuality, tidiness, dignity towards subordinates, self-sacrifice, methodical habits, capacity to handle stress, a love of students, a sense of spiritual conviction, a good schoolmaster and communicator.

More specifically, Kefford (in Simpkins et al. 1987) identifies five specific areas of focus for the Principals of Independent Schools:

1. Chief Executive of an organisation. They have greater decisional power and strategic planning needs than Government counterparts, and spend a great deal of time communicating these decisions.

2. Facilitator. They spend one third of their time helping other people to do their job. The importance of collaborative management and shared leadership is critical.
3. Pastor. They help other people.
4. Figurehead. This involves doing what everyone thinks is the Principal's job, i.e. ceremonies and other occasions, offering the school community vision, direction and inspiration.
5. Friend raiser. This entails getting peripheral members of the school community to help the Principal.

There is a multiplicity of tasks and expectations, and it is impossible to do everything equally well. The key is to do the most important things really well, and at all times appreciate the role of the Principal as culture shaper, lighthouse keeper, agent of change and influencer of all members of the school community.

More recently, Kane (1992) has suggested that Independent School heads spend the majority of their time communicating with the varied constituencies of the school, have great latitude in defining their own job, have a high degree of self-knowledge and realise the importance of vision.

McArthur (1993) compares leadership from an Independent and Government perspective using personal experiences. He proposes that Independent School leaders in reality have greater freedom to exercise professional leadership, they have a greater capacity to

implement school programs that emphasise the education of the “whole person”, and they are more able to tap the friend and parent power to improve school resources.

Rae (1993) proposes a number of priorities for those who head Independent Schools, suggesting that they need to teach, guide the physical development of the school, attract and retain good teachers, assess staff as carefully as possible, assist staff, children and parents to cope with change, ensure the school remains decently conservative, and be constantly concerned with things of the spirit. In essence this tends to suggest that two of the more unique and significant roles that Independent School heads have is their influence on staffing matters and school culture.

Paterson (1995) also promotes strategies for Independent School leaders to encourage quality learning in their schools. Some of these include decreasing paperwork and manual size, developing a leadership view that embraces change, empowering staff through genuine listening and delegation, management by walking around and listening, promoting “humming” classrooms and staff members, demanding honesty, integrity and commitment and getting the basics right.

In summary, the nature of Independent Schools that distinguishes them from other schools relates to the degree of self-governance or freedom they enjoy for site-based management which gives their leaders greater decision-making power (especially in staffing matters). They relate more closely to market forces and are often associated with religious or community ties. In addition they may have more traditional and deep-rooted

structures and norms, together with a greater emphasis on sport and other extra-curricular activities.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA) was used as the sample population for the study. The traditional, established mainstream non-systemic Independent Schools (generally with a Church background), located in the Greater Sydney region are a significant component of this association. This sample was selected as it could be definitively identified and covered a range of school styles. The researcher is employed at one of these schools (making the study perhaps more relevant on a personal level).

Document analysis was considered well suited to the task of developing a greater understanding of the characteristics of Learning Organisations. A quantitative-oriented methodology was chosen to collect data to answer the second and third research questions. A questionnaire was developed in an attempt to gain a reasonably large data base of information relating to the extent to which Independent Schools fit the model of a Learning Organisation, including the relevant aspects of leadership. Originally it was hoped to follow up this component of the study with some mini-case studies, but the large amount of data collected from the questionnaires and the time constraints of the researcher meant that this did not eventuate. Thirty schools were randomly selected and invited to participate in the study, with twenty agreeing to do so (the sample was split into boys', girls', and coeducational, with ten from each category invited to participate). From each school twelve staff members were randomly selected across a range of seniority levels and asked to complete the questionnaire. Nineteen schools eventually

returned data, with fifteen of those returning seventy five percent or more of the individual responses. The data was then collated on a school basis, and a number of sub-categories developed. The categories that were developed from the questionnaire items were Vision, Positive Thinking, Risk Taking / Openness to Change, Communication, the Importance of People, Resources, Leadership, and Professional Development / Learning Power (note the clear link between these categories and the earlier proposed key characteristics of Learning Organisations). The data will be presented in summary form, providing mean values and standard deviation for individual schools, school types (boys', girls' and coeducational), and for all schools combined (cumulative totals). This data will be provided for individual questions, for the Learning Organisation categories and for the cumulative total.

The Learning Organisation category average values, comparing the boys', girls' and coeducational cohorts involved in the study, will be analysed statistically. 't' tests will be conducted on this data to examine the differences in the responses of these groups to the survey material.

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter selectively reviews key organisation theory movements and their impact on management thought, practices and processes, and organisational structure. The emergence of the Learning Organisation and the significant principles underpinning them is then discussed and their appropriateness for educational settings canvassed.

Leadership is identified as a key imperative in leading Learning Organisations. Aspects of leadership that are central to the concepts of leading Learning Organisations are then reviewed.

ORGANISATIONS

It is appropriate to review basic organisational theory before focussing on the Learning Organisations theory, as many of the underpinning concepts are linked to other organisational movements.

“Organisational theory is the study of organisational structures, of how organisations function, the performance of organisations and how groups and individuals within them behave” (Bennett, 1994: 248).

Carlson (1996) gives an excellent historical overview of organisational theory, dividing the significant works carried out into four main eras. These eras were classified as :

- The Classical Organisational Theory Movement ; 1900 --1930
- The Human Relations Movement ; 1930 --1950
- The Organisational Behaviour Movement ; 1950 --1975
- The Socio-Cultural Period ; 1975 -- present.

The Classical Organisational Theory Movement emerged during the industrialisation of the United States. Taylor's ground breaking work of 1911 emerged (along with others), and the metaphor of the "organisation as a machine" held sway. Organisations were viewed as machines that could be dissected into minute parts in order to maximise efficiency, while the people were seen as appendages to these machines. Efficiency was the 'holy grail' and worker behaviour was tightly controlled, and productivity closely monitored and linked to increased remuneration. This approach was bound to lead to worker alienation and unrest.

Later the work of Weber became critical to the development of organisational theory. He coined the term 'bureaucracy', suggesting it to be a particular form of organisation that would help define the characteristics of modern industrial society. In essence, bureaucracy results in an organisation whereby organisational goals are considered paramount over personal goals. Weber conceded that this form of organisation would override the notion of human freedom but maintained that this was essential for the betterment of modern industrial society (see Haralambos, 1983 : 279-284).

The second major era was known as the Human Relations Movement, which attempted to explain how one's behaviour is influenced by being part of a change process. Mayo's work of 1933 (cited in Carlson, 1996) was important because it focused on the importance of the needs of workers for the good of the organisation. The influence of informal groups or cliques and the social needs of the workers were recognised as important in sustaining their well being and productivity.

The Organisational Behaviour Movement attempted to fuse these earlier perspectives. In the earlier period organisations were clearly stressed to be more important than people, while the more recent period, if anything, tended to stress people over organisations. The essential notion of the work of this era thus focused on the dualism of the individual and the organisation, whereby both needed the other to function effectively.

The Socio-Cultural period, according to Carlson, has centred on the amalgamation of the behavioural approach and the methodologies anchored in the paradigms of interpretism and criticism. There has thus been a greater appreciation of the intangible, the social phenomena that influence the lives of people in an organisation. Research during this era has therefore inevitably been more descriptive and less prescriptive than earlier work.

The strong current (and previous) interest in organisational culture is a prime example of this ideology. It is imperative to note here that the earlier three movements still have a significant influence on current managerial/leadership practices.

Recent work by Bolman and Deal (1991), and Morgan (1986), has been of much significance. Morgan's focus has been on the use of metaphors to describe organisations. He suggested that the use of metaphor implies a way of thinking, seeing and interpreting the world around us (1986: 12). Some of the metaphors he uses for organisations in his work are organisations as machines, organisations as organisms, organisations as brains, organisations as cultures, and organisations as political systems. Morgan's idea of organisations as cultures focuses on the notion of the values, norms, rituals, and beliefs that sustain organisations as socially constructed realities. This concept will be examined in further depth later in this review.

One of the most significant contributions to organisation theory in recent times is that of Bolman and Deal (1991). They identify four main frames or perspectives of understanding and analysing organisational processes. There is a rational systems based approach that is goals and outcomes based, looking at things from a structural point of view (with inputs, outputs and processes being key terms). There is a political frame based on the idea that people use power, persuasion and influence to get things done in organisations, and this is closely linked to the cultural frame. There is a human resource perspective which considers the notion that organisations are inhabited by people with needs and feelings that have a capacity to learn and develop. The final frame that Bolman and Deal use is the symbolic or cultural one, where organisations are seen as tribes, focusing on meaning, language, stories, myths, heroes, mottoes, crests, rituals and ceremonies (see also Duignan, 1993). The view taken here is that culture is people and

that an organisation is a culture based on the above factors, but always being driven by values.

Bolman and Deal (1991) propose that in reality no one frame should ever have a monopoly on the way organisational processes are viewed. There will always be political power struggles in an organisation where people are competing for scarce resources.

There will always be a need for a rational approach where information is gathered and analysed in an attempt to most effectively distribute resources. The symbolic or cultural frame is, as previously stated, of much current significance and is based on values.

Throughout Peters and Waterman's ground-breaking analysis of the excellent companies in the USA (1982), the importance of shared key values within the organisation continually crops up (as does the importance of culture). The human resource frame can also be seen to be very important as the organisations of today are seen as dealing primarily with people.

Thus, a holistic perspective combining the needs of people, the structure of organisations and the role of politics is now seen to be essential to the wellbeing of the organisations of today. The critical importance of culture amongst all of this is now generally accepted.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Following on from basic organisational theory, it is necessary to now develop the concept of organisational culture before moving on to the specific features of Learning Organisations. Culture is clearly seen by many authors as definitive of organisations themselves, and leaders may be described as culture shapers or builders (as opposed to, say, culture creators).

Throughout their work Bolman and Deal (1991) emphasise the link between culture, leadership and organisational effectiveness:

“Leaders fail when they take too narrow a view of the context in which they are working. Unless they can think flexibly about organisations and see them from multiple angles, they will be unable to deal with the full range of issues that they will inevitably encounter” (p450).

Bhindi (1995a) sees organisations as webs of relationships sustained by common values and mutual interest. He proposes that while all organisations possess some common characteristics allowing a degree of interchangeability, they also possess distinctive features requiring a degree of specificity in their management. He sees organisations as people and values. These values, he suggests, are reflected in the organisational culture and provide the basic synergy for their continuing existence. This view of organisations is clearly taken from primarily a cultural perspective.

In a further paper (1995b) Bhindi suggests that organisational cultures impact on management practices, organisational effectiveness, morale, productivity and quality. He also emphasises the importance of the management of change and the link with leadership and organisational culture.

Recent writings reiterate this view that there is a clear link between organisational culture and organisational effectiveness. (See for example, Peters and Waterman, 1982; Jans and Fraser-Jans, 1991; Sinclair, 1991; Deal and Kennedy, 1982).

It is not the place of this review to give a detailed description of the myriad of works of note on culture. Rousseau (1990: 154) suggests that “Notions of shared values, common understandings, and patterns of beliefs and expectations underlie our views on the nature of culture”. She goes on to give a working definition of culture as **the way things are done**.

Sergiovanni (1984: 9) argues that common to most definitions of culture is the notion that its fundamental ingredients are the shared values and beliefs of organisational members which are expressed through such symbols, processes and structures as myths, rituals, stories, legends, specialised language, policies, rules and regulations.

Bhindi (1995b: 1) writes that organisational culture in its symbolic form can be seen as “A communion of people with shared values which mutually excite, energise and guide

persistence and commitment of true believers'. The only problem with this definition is that there are many organisations where the core values are not necessarily shared, nor is there a level of excitement present in them. However, this arguably only serves to reinforce the link between a strong organisational culture and organisational effectiveness and the need to transmit and integrate the core values throughout the organisation. The same would apply to the transmission of the values of the Learning Organisation.

Duignan (1993) identifies ten cultural norms for organisational success :-

1. Vision based on values,
2. A philosophy of the possible,
3. The customer is right,
4. Teamwork and cooperation,
5. Adaptability,
6. Total involvement,
7. Commitment to quality,
8. Commitment to continuous improvement, i.e. learning,
9. Commitment to Human Resource Development,
10. Wise use of resources.

Bates (1982: 6) suggests that culture is actually the prime resource of educational practice and that educational organisations spend most of their time maintaining, transmitting and recreating the culture of the day.

Linking the role of leader to organisational culture is often debated. Bolman and Deal (1991) suggest that sometimes leaders are seen as creating culture within their organisations while often it is assumed that leaders are formed by the culture in which they find themselves. Deal and Peterson (1990: 14) argue that in educational organisations most Principals work with the existing culture, reinforcing and reshaping areas of weakness without unravelling shared meaning. They state that core values, be they individual or organisational, are very important and very hard to alter. Rosenholtz (1989: 221) supports this perspective by stating that “in successful schools, regardless of all past history, shared principles govern. We find most often in successful schools a capacity to cherish individuality and inspire communality that is the hallmark of our loftiest institutions.”

Carlson (1996: 46) summarises this line of thinking suggesting that looking at organisations as cultures permits a greater appreciation for ambiguity and diversity which is an important characteristic of educational organisations.

Thus, one can argue that culture is really what happens on a day to day basis in an organisation, and how and why it goes on. Leaders who fail to acknowledge the importance of culture are perhaps ignorant of the importance of the people and the history that organisations have. There is a clear link to the philosophy of the Learning Organisation in much of the writing on organisational culture and success – vision, people, quality, collaboration, and improvement.

LEARNING ORGANISATIONS

The concept of “Learning Organisations” is receiving prominent attention in the current management and educational administration literature.

Donegan (1990), in his studies of the development of the British Petroleum Group suggested that the question of whether organisations will take on the qualities associated with Learning Organisations is now beyond doubt. Howard (1990) suggested that learning at all levels of an organisation is an imperative for success. Garvin (1993: 78) emphasised that organisations seeking continuous improvement require a “commitment to learning”, and that to be competitive in today’s marketplace organisations cannot afford to stand still or they will inevitably be left behind. They all point out the critical importance of a commitment to learning and the development of a culture of continuous improvement in today’s competitive environment.

Garvin (1993: 80) defines a Learning Organisation as an organisation that is adept at creating, collecting and sharing knowledge. It also needs to retain the ability to change where necessary as a result of this knowledge. Implicit in Garvin’s definition is that new ideas are essential for learning to take place. He suggests that without modifying work practices only the potential for improvement exists. He notes that many organisations are successful at acquiring new knowledge, but far less successful at applying or transferring that new knowledge to their own activities. The importance of valuing the input of employees is emphasised -- this is a common thread that runs through most of the

Learning Organisation literature. Learning Organisations are not built overnight, and although many changes can be made quickly, building an authentic Learning Organisation requires very careful management and a steady approach to change. Crucial early steps include the fostering of an environment that is conducive to learning, to opening up boundaries and stimulating the exchange of ideas. Once this has been achieved learning communities with explicit learning goals can be created.

Braham (1995) proposes that a Learning Organisation is an organisation that prioritises learning and is committed to the continuous improvement of every facet of itself. Here, learning is integrated into daily life, and teamwork, trust, and empowerment are all key elements of organisational functioning. O'Brien (1994: 4) provides a more detailed definition, encompassing more realistic and applicable concepts for educational settings.

A learning organisation is an organisation that has woven a continuous and enhanced capacity to learn, adapt, and change into the fabric of its character. It has values, policies, practices, programs, systems, and structures that support and accelerate organisational learning. Its learning results in changes in the ways individuals and the organisation operate.

However, it was the seminal work of Senge (1990) that really put the concept of the Learning Organisation onto the world stage of organisation theory / development. He described Learning Organisations in the following manner:

In Learning Organisations ... people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free and where people are continually learning how to learn together. (cited in Bhindi, 1997: 18)

Senge (1990) stated that the key characteristic of the Learning Organisation is that an environment is created where the organisation and everyone in it does the learning for

themselves, or more pertinently, where the organisation is on a continuous quest to expand its ability to invent its own future. The organisations that will power into the next century, he argues, will be those that succeed in tapping into the talents of their work force, that gain the commitment of their workers and expand the capacity to learn at all levels of the organisation. Senge suggested that in developing a Learning Organisation there were five broad areas or models that needed consideration:

- Systems thinking

This is the key fifth discipline, an age old scientific model that uses inputs, processes, outputs and feedback to study the way things operate and function. A defining characteristic of a system is that it cannot be understood as a function of its isolated components (Kofman and Senge, 1993: 13). It primarily involves looking at the complex process (organisation) as a whole, rather than isolating particular problems. This entails less compartmentalising and seeing organisations as complex organisms with myriads of inter-connecting threads. Non-systemic approaches lead to short term solutions that merely hide or shift the underlying problem(s) temporarily.

- Personal mastery

This model involves a constant personal focus on individual and organisational goals, achievements, weaknesses, philosophies and so on. Any organisation's ability to learn is never better than that of the individuals who work for it, and an organisation's biggest resource is the undiscovered potential in its own people. Personal mastery is all about

being totally clear about the things that really matter and focusing one's energies on that.

Vision is a critical component of this model.

- Mental models

These are the world views that we hold, the assumptions we make and the frameworks we believe in. Here there is a particular focus on adaptability and a welcoming of change. Mental models are designed to challenge the quick, automatic judgments of people, ideas and innovations and to encourage people to consciously think and assess their long held and half-conscious beliefs. Entrenched mental models are one of the major impediments to change and learning.

- Building a shared vision

Vision must be more than just a statement but a conviction held by all members of the organisation. It is effectively a picture that illustrates what the organisation is trying to create or achieve. The building of shared vision is the cornerstone of leadership and organisational culture, especially if it is developed and shared by the members of the organisation and effectively communicated to all involved. It provides windows into the future. Shared vision is vital for the Learning Organisation.

- Team learning

Teams are the base units of modern organisations and also their fundamental learning elements. The basis for Senge's model of team learning is dialogue, namely open communication within groups that have meaning and decision-making power. If teams

learn effectively, they become models on which the organisation can build and develop into Learning Organisations.

Donegan (1990) in his study of British Petroleum identifies four key characteristics of the Learning Organisation:

- recognition that organisations must adapt to a future of constant change.
- acceptance of the key role of people in this process of adaptation.
- facilitation of the learning and personal development of all people in the organisation through a truly empowering culture.
- the use of the combined energy, creativity and commitment generated among employees by this developmental climate to fuel an ongoing process of organisational transformation.

Donegan emphasises the notion that learning and development is a career long process and is relevant not only in terms of hierarchical progression, but for everyone. This concept will inevitably change the view that we have of managers today, as they will have to consistently model the behaviours that reflect the underlying values of the organisation and empower employees to learn, grow and develop. Donegan also suggests that training does not necessarily equate with learning, and that more is not necessarily better. Vision, values and a holistic approach are the foundations of Donegan's British Petroleum model of a Learning Organisation.

In his analysis of the concept of the Learning Organisation, Bhindi (1997) suggests that it is characterised by:

- a culture of continuous improvement
- support and tolerance of risk taking
- people-oriented, facilitative leadership.

He goes on to state that in such organisations:

- learning is a habit
- individual and organisation capacity are continually developed
- collaborative learning and interdependence are recognised and encouraged
- there is constant effort to improve, correct and excel
- reflection-in-action becomes a part of the culture.

Leadership is thus vital for the development and maintenance of a Learning Organisation culture.

MacNeill and Silcox (1996) suggest that Learning Organisations must have four elements present :

1. The facilitation and promotion of learning at all levels;
2. The transformation of organisational and individual practices;
3. Demonstration of organisational and individual improvement;
4. Ability to adapt to and lead change.

Swieringa and Wierdsma (1992) suggest that the Learning Organisation is all about organisational change and see learning as the changing of behaviour.

One of the more recent in-depth studies on Learning Organisations is that of Kline and Saunders (1993) -- "Ten Steps to a Learning Organisation". The cornerstones of their work are the crucial importance of fostering / seeking continuous improvement, of seeing people as an organisation's most valuable resource, and nurturing the development of a culture where learning, individual responsibility and creativity flourish at all levels of the organisation. The authors propose that there are ten steps that should be sequentially followed in the development of a Learning Organisation :

1. Assess your learning culture
2. Promote the positive
3. Make the workplace safe for thinking
4. Reward risk taking
5. Help people to become resources for each other
6. Put learning power to work
7. Map out the vision
8. Bring the vision to life
9. Connect the systems
10. Get the show on the road.

Central to Kline and Saunders model is the building up and utilisation of people.

Kline and Saunders argue that much of today's training is useless and does not equate with learning. They argue that learning at work should be more similar to the informal learning that occurs at home. Two techniques -- mind mapping and kinesthetic modelling are focused on to develop the idea of visualising learning. The notion that learning and decision-making ability go hand in hand is emphasised, and consequently the traditional pyramidal management structure and style is deemed inappropriate in a true Learning Organisation. The vital importance of the development of shared vision is given extensive coverage. It is argued that greater commitment will result from the involvement of employees in the development of the organisation's vision. The genuine support and role modelling of the head of the organisation is especially significant here. Kline and Saunders note the link between the individual and the organisation, suggesting a fairly loose but nonetheless integrative bond needs to be developed with respect to vision and goals. Senge's concept of systems thinking as a more holistic approach is also utilised by Kline and Saunders model of a Learning Organisation. The link between individual and organisational goals is amplified by the belief that

... an ideal state for an organisation is one in which each individual makes a unique contribution by 'marching to a different drummer', but with an underlying common sense of purpose and direction. (Kline and Saunders, 1993: 115)

Kline and Saunders (1993: 16-18) list sixteen principles that underpin the concept of the Learning Organisation. Notable principles include viewing mistakes as opportunities for growth, celebrating all learners equally, developing a supportive corporate culture, celebrating learning for its own intrinsic value, embracing different learning styles, teaching a process of self-evaluation, broadening the fields of knowledge of all

employees, encouraging open dialogue, re-examining and investigating everything. An early key to developing a Learning Organisation is changing the attitudes of the people so that they are more positive, and one of the easiest ways to do this is to offer more sincere praise. Kline and Saunders (1993: 66) emphasise the need that,

“... All people be treated with respect and dignity at all times”.

They go on to suggest that it is imperative to have a learning culture that understands how everyone adds value.

The challenge for an organisation that professes to be a learning one is to

... create a climate where all people will look for ways to do their job better. where the attitude behind quality control and continuous improvement, and all the other goals of today's corporations is built into everyone's behaviour and expectations. (Kline and Saunders, 1993: 70)

Something foreign to most organisations, particularly educational organisations, is the notion that to say “I don't know” is a good thing. This, combined with the development of a learning environment where it is safe to take risks and try things differently, are also crucial components of Learning Organisations.

Some of the key concepts of learning that Kline and Saunders emphasise are that the learning must come through the work itself, it must be developmental, it means discovery, there should be no separation of the learning from the doing, it is valuable in its own right and perhaps most importantly it never ends. “For learning is the key to an organisation's survival and success, and the capacity of its individual members to learn is both its most precious and most inexhaustible resource.” (Kline and Saunders, 1993: 131)

Another significant work on Learning Organisations is that of Wick and Leon (1993), entitled “The Learning Edge”. They highlight the relationship of learning in the workplace to success in job performance (1993: 34). Wick and Leon suggest that learning is the activator, accelerator and quiet unassuming source of all significant business breakthroughs. They state that, “Learning at work is about becoming a person. An active commitment to your own learning is your greatest leverage in getting your people to grow and develop.” (Wick and Leon, 1993: 16).

Wick and Leon’s views echo many of the key concepts of the Learning Organisation that have already been reviewed; namely the fundamental importance of learning, the essential link between learning and work, the central importance of people as an organisation’s chief asset, the idea that learning is the responsibility of the individual and that it has to be fun, and the crucial role that leadership plays in modelling the learning concept (they go so far as to say that you start the fire at the top).

Wick and Leon (1993: 17) believe that “The best way to learn is by giving people challenging jobs that stretch their abilities.” They suggest that in a developmental culture constant learning is the norm and the chief mechanism that leads to continuous improvement. Other central features of their model include the notions that learning from mistakes leads to success, the experience of learning on the job is most beneficial,

experiential learning is valuable, formal training can be beneficial if it is relevant and followed through in the workplace, sharing of learnt concepts is vital, and that although it is the individual's responsibility to learn it is also the manager's responsibility to seek out and provide valuable learning experiences.

They are at pains to suggest that it is easy to get caught in the daily grind and pressures and let learning slip (a very common problem in educational workplace settings). They propose a learning plan based around a S.M.A.R.T. model, which basically entails the development of a chosen and specific intentional learning plan based around a particular learning goal with specific time set aside for learning and for complete follow through.

The key features of the Wick and Leon framework are

- development of a clear vision
- an emphasis on quality
- people- driven philosophy
- commitment from the top
- learning goes far beyond training and developing individuals; it permeates the processes used throughout the organisation.

The vision, they believe, must stretch the capabilities of the organisation but must not seem impossible to reach. They should be so designed to make the organisation and its product the customer's first choice. Reinforcing Donegan's views, they suggest that "Managing change is the key to success for any organisation."

Quinn Mills and Friesen (1992: 46) also suggest that in the current turbulent business climate organisations must transform themselves into Learning Organisations. They define a Learning Organisation as

One able to sustain consistent internal innovation or ‘learning’, with the immediate goals of improving quality, enhancing customer or supplier relationships, or more effectively executing business strategy, and the ultimate objective of sustaining profitability.

Quinn Mills and Friesen name three important characteristics of a Learning Organisation:

- It must make a commitment to knowledge, particularly in the selection of people. There needs to be well developed mechanisms to encourage learning internally through a variety of means.
- A Learning Organisation must have a mechanism for renewal within itself, to be able to adapt, to learn.
- A Learning Organisation must be open to the outside world so that it may be responsive to what is occurring there.

Quinn Mills and Friesen, as for the majority of other authors, suggest that traditionally structured hierarchical organisations are less suited to the philosophies of a Learning Organisation. They suggest that the formation of clusters, with fewer managers, and designed for close interchange with customers and for intimate communication internally, is well suited to the Learning Organisation by allowing for greater collaboration and communication as required, and by encouraging greater responsibility, flexibility, innovation and adaptability among employees. However, they do argue that it is possible

for the traditionally structured organisation to be a Learning Organisation, although it is hard to stop the rigidity and learning for simply hierarchical reasons over time.

Regardless of the structure of the organisation, they argue that an organisation which aspires to be a Learning Organisation must teach its employees how to learn, and they must reward them for success in learning.

Watkins and Marsick (1993) suggest that the common features of Learning Organisations are :

- Leaders model calculated risk taking and innovation
- Decentralised decision making and empowerment
- Skill inventories and audits of learning capacity
- Systems for sharing and utilising learning
- Rewards and structures for employee initiative
- Consideration of long-term consequences and impact on the work of others
- Frequent use of cross-functional work teams
- Opportunities to learn from experience on a daily basis
- A culture of feedback and disclosure.

They go on to name six complementary action imperatives in the design of Learning Organisations :

- Create continuous learning opportunities
- Promote inquiry and dialogue
- Encourage collaboration and team learning

- Establish systems to capture and share learning
- Empower people toward a collective vision
- Connect the organisation to its environment.

Kofman and Senge (1993) further developed the concept of the Learning Organisation, derived from 'The Fifth Discipline', terming them "communities of commitment" (p5). Their key focus is on systemic thinking, where again "the memory of the whole" (p6) rather than fragmented and isolated thinking / problem solving is considered the key to the development of the Learning Organisation. They emphasise the critical importance of reflective thinking in action. Kofman and Senge also suggest that the overemphasis on competition today has led to the notion that looking good is more important than being good. They believe that this is fundamentally linked to a lack of desire for learning, and to an inability to acknowledge that there are things that we don't know and activities that we need to carry out more effectively. Kofman and Senge are also critical of the reactivity and problem solving attitudes current in management, arguing that these interfere with continuous learning, inhibit creativity and develop a black box mentality where thinking again becomes fragmented and a holistic approach becomes impossible. Kofman and Senge (1993: 17) argue that,

.... Learning Organisations are both more generative and more adaptive than traditional organisations. Because of their commitment, openness and ability to deal with complexity, people find security not in stability but in the dynamic equilibrium between holding on and letting go -- holding on and letting go of beliefs, assumptions, and certainties. What they know takes a second place to what they can learn, and simplistic answers are always less important than penetrating questions.

Duignan (1995) also proposes the concept of systemic thinking as a tool to maximise organisational learning by suggesting that it encourages shared, interrelated and expansive patterns of thinking and inhibits a traditional fragmented way of thinking. He goes on to suggest that learning programs and work-based learning initiatives are unlikely to succeed if they fail to consider the complexity of organisational life and the structures and processes that support such life. He states that while “individuals and groups can be provided with learning opportunities, the challenge is to ‘transform’ this learning into organisational learning.” (p 12). Duignan also suggests that traditional hierarchical structures restrict or even prevent learning by restricting the free flow of information and knowledge, and by encouraging conformity rather than creativity and risk-taking. Our mental models of learning equating with passive classroom learning also do not help to develop the philosophy of lifelong learning, and of learning being interesting.

Calvert (1991) argues that people approach the management of change in different ways, and that learning and the capacity to manage change are directly related. Organisations need to develop a culture that encourages a breadth of learning approaches if people are to manage change effectively,

Guns (1996: 2) simplifies all of this organisational theory by stating that,

“Learning-based organisations focus on getting the job done better. They view learning as the best way to improve long-term performance.”

Drawing upon the definitions/concepts/insights from literature reviewed in this chapter, the researcher has put forward a working definition of a Learning Organisation :

A Learning Organisation is a visionary organisation which has a clear focus on learning with a view to continuous improvement, embraces learning, and empowers, involves and appreciates its people.

The most important elements of the researcher's model of a Learning Organisation are :

Vision

Positive Thinking

Risk Taking / Openness to Change

Communication

The Importance of People

Resources

Professional Development / Learning Power

Leadership.

THE CONCEPT OF THE LEARNING ORGANISATION IN

AN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Much of the literature on Learning Organisations reviewed focuses on businesses which are very much outcome and product oriented. However, there is a dearth of literature on schools as Learning Organisations, save for a few references to schools in Senge's seminal work. Herein lies the crux of many of today's educational management issues. Despite their business orientation, Learning Organisations hold important relevance to the school situation. Independent schools in particular, but all schools to some extent, are now being run as businesses and have to be able to compete in the marketplace. They are also similarly primarily concerned with people management and the development of effective practices to achieve desired outcomes (MacNeill and Silcox, 1996). Thus, metaphors such as marketing, productivity, quality, improvement and innovation have entered the 'corporatised' educational management jargon of today (see Sinclair, 1991). Nevertheless, schools are still primarily human service organisations where profitability and efficiency are fundamentally secondary in nature to the meeting of human needs.

It is apparent that much of the business literature has been ignored or taken on board slowly by educational organisations. This view is supported by MacNeill and Silcox (1996), who go even further by suggesting that graduate courses in educational administration have been lacking by failing to consider much of the business organisation experiences and practices that are clearly relevant in today's educational context. However, in an organisation which professes to promote learning (and hopefully lifelong

learning skills) amongst its 'clientele', it is surely natural and appropriate that the concept of the Learning Organisation become an important item on the educational administration agenda (Bhindi, 1997). Surely those who handle "learning" need to be good role models in encouraging a pathway of lifelong learning. As Bhindi (1997: 18) notes,

The most apparent benefits of the Learning Organisation are its basis as a platform for staff capacity building, transformation of educational leadership as stewardship, and reformation of management structures and processes for quality outcomes.

MacNeill and Silcox (1996) also argue that many educators fail to realise that teaching is not necessarily synonymous with learning, or even education. They suggest that one of the key problems facing educational organisations is that they are ill-adapted to change in a rapidly changing and increasingly technological society. They too describe the environments of Learning Organisations in similar tones to those of other authors previously referred to, using metaphors like reflection on practice, empowerment, holistic value, culture, goals, innovation and risk taking and so on. They suggest that it is far easier to build a Learning Organisation culture in a new school than it is to attempt macro-cultural change in established schools. They also suggest that incremental change in an existing / entrenched culture is far more attractive and easier to implement than dramatic wholesale changes. Whitely (1995) argues that the vehicle for successful macro-cultural change is that of shared vision and values.

Holly and Southworth (1993), in discussing school development, write inadvertently about schools as Learning Organisations without any reference to the business literature. They argue that the most important element of the learning school is the leadership, with

emphasis on learning, consultation, teamwork and participation. They propose five characteristics of a learning school that outline the role of the key players (which are remarkably similar to much of the business literature):

- the focus is on children and their learning;
- individual teachers are encouraged to be continuing learners themselves;
- the group of teachers (and sometimes others) who constitute the ‘staff’ are encouraged to collaborate by learning with and from each other;
- the school (i.e. all those people who constitute the ‘school’) learns its way forward. The school as an organisation is a ‘learning system’ ...
- the head teacher is the leading learner (p3).

Bhindi (1997) suggests that all organisations are Learning Organisations to some extent. He sees the challenge as being able to enact a deliberate, effective learning culture, considering the current state of educational organisations, particularly in the areas of staffing, resources, leadership and entrenched cultures. Bhindi goes on to develop Kline and Saunders ‘Ten Step’ Learning Organisation model previously outlined into his own model more specifically designed for the school context. His model involves four key strategies:

- Strategy 1: Formulate a learning development philosophy / platform.
- Strategy 2: Infuse learning as a habit or way of life.
- Strategy 3: Focus on leadership, management structure and processes.
- Strategy 4: Acknowledge the importance of performance appraisal, feedback and renewal.

Retallick (1996) also discusses the concept of the school as a Learning Organisation, noting that learning is more often something that students do -- teachers teach, not learn. When teachers do learn, it is often off-site professional development, rather than a stimulating part of everyday life on the job. He goes on to suggest that recognition of the importance and relevance of learning in the workplace, and the development of new mental models associated with this shift in thinking can transform school culture and lead to the development of Learning Organisations. He also highlights the critical importance of team learning in the early stages (achieved through shared individual learning).

Watkins and Marsick (1993: 26-27) provide an excellent argument for the school as a Learning Organisation with the following comment:

People can learn at any time by converting ordinary challenges in their work into learning opportunities ... learning is a continuous cycle of acting and reflecting that grows out of work.

This comment counters the argument that the repetitive, isolated and individualistic work culture that teachers work in today is an impediment in itself to learning in the workplace. It is in fact our entrenched mental models that prevent us from seizing the numerous learning opportunities that come up every day.

Ryan (1996) in a discussion on professional development highlights a number of critical factors of Learning Organisations that schools are beginning to take on board. They include the development of shared vision, reflection in practice, personal growth,

collaboration, personal mastery and the sharing of learning and experiences within and between schools.

In 1995 the NSW Department of School Education produced a discussion paper entitled “Schools as Learning Communities” (Hill et al, 1995). This drew mainly upon Senge’s five disciplines, together with many of the common features of Learning Organisations already described, including the Principal as the leading learner, continuous improvement, reflection in practice, collaboration, team learning, and shared vision.

Velayutham (1996) develops the notion of the school as a Learning Organisation, where learning is not just centred around the formal curriculum, but also around life itself, and suggests that schools should be *communities of inquiry*. He too notes the importance of systems thinking, the leader as learner, and the building of shared vision and collaboration.

Clearly institutions that advocate lifelong learning need to value the learning and professional improvement of their staff members. Learning needs to become valued explicitly, and a culture developed whereby learning is shared freely. Development of collaborative leadership strategies also needs to occur to give greater ownership and responsibility to individual employees, generating greater commitment and productivity in the process. Independent Schools are businesses, albeit non-profit human service organisations. They have to compete to survive, and competition effectively means seeking continuous improvement. The Learning Organisation philosophy is one area

from the business world that is of immense relevance to the schools and leaders that wish to succeed into the next millennium.

LEADERSHIP

The importance of leadership is reiterated throughout the organisation and management literature (see for example, Chance, 1992, Leithwood and Montgomery, 1982). It is not in the scope of this section to review all of the relevant literature on leadership. Only four aspects of leadership closely related to this concept of Learning Organisations will be reviewed:

- *Visionary leadership
- *Transformational leadership
- *Leaders as culture builders.
- *Leaders as learners.

What then, is leadership?

There are many definitions of leadership. Kouzes and Posner (1987: 15) maintain that it involves:

Challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, modelling the way, and encouraging the heart : these are the practices that leaders use to get extraordinary things done in organisations,

whilst for Dubin (1968: 385) it is “the exercise of authority and the making of decisions.”

Crosby (1996: 2) states that “Leadership is deliberately causing people-driven actions in a planned fashion for the purpose of accomplishing the leader’s agenda.”

Mitchell and Tucker (1992: 31) see “Leadership is less a matter of aggressive action than a way of thinking and feeling - about ourselves, about our jobs and about the nature of the educational process”, while Barth (1988: 640) argues that “Leadership is making what you believe happen”.

In his seminal work on Learning Organisations, Senge (1990: 340) characterises our traditional societal view of leadership as being problematic in that:-

Our traditional view of leaders - as special people who set the direction, make the key decisions, and energise the troops - are deeply rooted in an individualistic and non systemic world view. Especially in the West, leaders are heroes - great men (and occasionally women) who ‘rise to the fore’ in times of crises. Our prevailing leadership management are still captured by the image of the captain of the cavalry leading the charge to rescue the settlers from the attacking Indians. So long as such myths prevail, they reinforce a focus on short-term events and charismatic heroes rather than on systemic forces and collective learning. At its heart, the traditional view of leadership is based on assumptions of people’s powerlessness, their lack of personal vision, and inability to master the forces of change, deficits which can be remedied only by a few great leaders.

Before delving further into the concepts of leadership, it is perhaps worthwhile to give a historical overview of leadership theory, which was, until relatively recently, largely anecdotal. Carlson (1996) provides an excellent overview, noting that leadership theories closely followed shifts in the nature of organisations. Carlson suggests that leadership theories can be grouped into four main categories. These are linked, at times closely, to his previously reviewed overview on the history of the development of organisational theory.

1. Classical Leadership Theory, 1900-1930.

This involved the notions that leaders were born not made, that nature was more important than nurture, that instinct was more important than training, and during this period the great man approach and the study of leadership traits was developed.

2. The Human Relations Approach, 1930-1950.

This clearly involved the development of new management practices in an attempt to minimise strike actions by workers. This included the development of MacGregors (1944) Theory X and Theory Y (cited in Carlson, 1996) which considered varying aspects of workers motivation, the former related to economic and the latter to intrinsic factors.

3. Behavioural approach, 1950-1975.

Here the focus shifted to the leader's behaviour in context, and developed the concepts of different leadership styles (such as autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire). Two dimensions of leadership were identified during this era:

- initiating structure (organisational patterns and procedures),
- consideration (people oriented values like trust and respect).

Thus, the notion of task-oriented versus relationship oriented leadership behaviour developed. It is generally accepted that both kinds of behaviour are required for successful leadership.

4. The Socio-Cultural approach, 1975 - present.

During this era, many of the above concepts were integrated and refined. The key concepts that have developed during this era include:

- Leadership as a transformational process in emphasising change, distinguishing better management and leadership and focusing on the concepts of charisma, vision, trust, empowerment, and systemic thinking. The roots of transformational leadership lie in Weber's earlier works. Burns (1978: 20) states that transformational leadership is a process where "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation".

- Leadership as a dialectical process. The key concepts of this process involved the implications of paradoxes, dilemmas, dualisms, hard choices, embracement and incorporation of different views, and the importance of a moral framework.

- Leadership as a democratic process. The major issues here concerns the role of the school as a support for democratic and community values. As a result local control is enhanced, and terms such as collaboration and micropolitics take on much greater significance.

•Leadership as a culture building process. Sergiovanni (1984: 87) describes leadership within a cultural perspective, emphasising the importance of what the leader stands for and his/her communications to others.

Fullan (1992) suggested that the deliberate study of educational innovation, reform and the nature of leadership, only really began in earnest in the 1960's.

Thus, following on from Carlson's broad historical overview of leadership theory is a more detailed review of contemporary educational leadership.

Fullan (1992) identified four themes of educational change:

1960's The Adoption Theme

1970's The Implementation Theme

1980's The Multiple Innovation Theme

1990's The Dynamic Complexity Theme

During the adoption era the emphasis was on the development and generation of innovations and the decisions to implement them. Change occurred for the sake of change and the more innovations being attempted the better. The role of the Principal during this era was not clear. Neutral or benign leadership was adequate, as long as decisions to launch the innovations were made.

During the implementation era the role of school leadership became clearer. The Principal's attitude to the various innovations became significant. Thus not only did the Principal have to allow innovation, he / she now had to actively lead it.

Throughout the 1980's, effective schools research, vision, strategic planning and site-based management gained greater prominence. Principals became the focus of change implementation and were expected to inspire their staff with their charisma and vision. They were becoming 'big picture' thinkers. These concepts will be developed later.

Finally, Fullan argues that strong leadership alone is insufficient because of the inherent complexity of educational reform in post-modern society. Fullan suggests that the leader's new work for the future lies in building Learning Organisations, with leaders of these Learning Organisations being characterised by Senge (1990: 340) as 'designers, stewards and teachers'. These concepts will also be developed further later in the review.

Beare, Caldwell and Millikan (1989) illustrate the contemporary features of leadership in their model proposing the development of excellent schools. Prominent features, many of which will be discussed in greater detail later, include:-

*vision in leadership (i.e. a mental picture of a preferred future, which is shared by the school community and communicated clearly and regularly and institutionalised,

*desirable leadership traits such as sense of responsibility, concern for task completion, energy, persistence, risk-taking, originality, self-confidence, capacity to handle stress, capacity to influence, and capacity to coordinate the efforts of others in the achievement of purpose,

*emphasis should be given to transformational rather than transactional leadership, i.e. not simply responding to needs but developing motivation and relationships,

*the critical importance of core values. Greenfield (1986: 166) asserted that “Organisations are built on the unification of people around values”.

*the leader has an important role in developing the culture of the organisation, especially through the development of shared values and beliefs, stories and myths, rituals, ceremonies,

*strong support for school-based management and collaborative decision-making within a framework of government policies,

*there are many kinds of leadership forces - technical, human, educational, symbolic and cultural - and these should be widely dispersed throughout the school (Sergiovanni, 1984),

*both masculine and feminine stereotype qualities are important in leadership regardless of the gender of the leader.

Guns (1996) proposes that a focus on reflective thinking and vision are imperatives for leadership success.

Strong (1994), one of Australia's highest paid Chief Executive Officers (Qantas), states that leadership, as a very important part of management, involves the key issues of:

- influencing people in their attitudes and behaviour
- setting the tone and atmosphere
- communicating plans and priorities with inspiration
- thereby creating momentum and direction
- by working through people, and
- coaching them to individual and group success

Put simply, the key concepts are **VISION, CULTURE, MOTIVATION, RECOGNITION, COLLABORATION.**

Bennis (1991) believes that leaders and managers roles differ enormously. He suggests that most organisations are underled and over managed, stating that "Leaders do the right thing, managers do things right" (p13). He does emphasise the fact that both roles are important. Again, vision comes up as a crucial theme - in terms of its development, excitement, clarity and communication of its meaning. He also develops the concept of empowerment, identifying four themes that indicate its presence: people feel significant, learning and competence matter, people are part of a community, and work is exciting. Empowerment is effectively giving teachers and students a real input into important organisational decisions and activities that affect them, and giving real leadership opportunities in school-specific situations that really matter. Thus, empowerment / collaborative management is not simply delegation but a form of shared leadership (see Barth 1988).

Kouzes and Posner (1987) suggest that there are five best practices common to extraordinary leadership:

1. Challenging the process - effective leaders encourage innovation, search for opportunities, are open to change, view mistakes as learning opportunities, encourage risk-taking, and model reflection and provide feedback.
2. Inspiring a shared vision - effective leaders develop a vision, communicate the vision, enlist the support of others, encourage commitment to a common purpose.
3. Enabling others to act - effective leaders infuse people with spirit, develop cooperation rather than competition, trust, delegate, foster collaboration, strengthen others.
4. Modelling the Way - effective leaders are clear about their values and beliefs and act consistently with regards to them, set goals, set an example, plan for small wins, build culture.
5. Encouraging the heart - effective leaders recognise contributions by others, celebrate accomplishments, nurture a team spirit, have high but fair expectations, use a variety of rewards (especially non-monetary), don't give up on people.

Leaders who use these five practices consistently, maintain they are more successful than others.

An analysis of the last few authors' views on effective leadership indicates that there is clearly strong relevance and affinity to the key concepts of the Learning Organisation, and organisational effectiveness.

Sagor and Barnett (1994) took a slightly different, though nonetheless related tangent to the Learning Organisation in their book on "The TQE Principal: A Transformed Leader". Although the terminology is different, many of the underlying concepts are similar, with the foundations to both practices being the seeking of continuous improvement and the development of shared vision with people at the centre of the organisation. They argue that excellent performance only occurs when and where leadership simultaneously provides focus, pressure and support for those working in the organisation.

They also identify the management of change, hiring and induction processes, and recognition of staff efforts as important leadership practices.

They also note a complementarity between Total Quality Management (TQM) philosophies and the concept of the Learning Organisation:

"The hallmark of the TQE school is that it is a *learning community*," and

"The principal can lead a school toward becoming a *genuine* learning community by casting him or herself as the *lead student*" (Sagor and Barnett, 1994: 139 -140, emphasis own).

The key difference here is that in the TQM movement quality is the key concern, whereas in the Learning Organisation learning by people is.

Leithwood (in Joyce, 1990), in considering the role of the Principal in teacher development, touches on a number of key concepts covered throughout this review. He suggests that there are four main foci of Principal style:

1. Administration or plant manager focus
2. Interpersonal relationships or climate focus
3. Program focus
4. Student development focus (from Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982).

He argues that the first two foci serve to maintain the school and are the basis by which the majority of Principals operate from. The latter two, on the other hand, are less common, but relatively important in improving a school's contributions to student outcomes.

Consistent with the principles of the Learning Organisation, Leithwood identifies four helpful teacher development strategies:-

1. Treat the teacher as a whole person,
2. Establish a school culture, based on the norms of technical collaboration and professional inquiry, i.e. REFLECTION AND COLLABORATION (see also Oberg and Field, 1986), developing schools as learning communities for all,

3. Carefully diagnose the starting point for teacher development, especially regarding teacher evaluation (which is rarely a teacher development process; see also Lawton et al, 1986),
4. Recast routine administrative activities into powerful teacher development strategies.

In summary, interpersonal communication, vision, goals, consistency, learning focus, recognition and collaboration were labelled as key features of effective Principal behaviour that aided teacher development (see also McEvoy, 1987).

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Burn's (1978) seminal analysis of leadership developed in detail for the first time, the concepts of transactional and transformational leadership, proving in many respects to be well ahead of its time.

Transactional leadership, he argued, worked through the distribution of incentives, creating a system of economical, political or psychological incentives for hard work and for the successful performance of designated tasks. Thus, a degree of control is required from a leadership point of view.

In summary, transactional leadership is based on an exchange of services for rewards, leads to recognised reward for meeting standards, tends to maintain the status quo and be less embracing towards change, focuses mainly on operational details and does not lead to high levels of personal commitment or personal growth in the long term.

Transformational leadership, on the other hand, works by transforming the goals and aspirations of organisational members. Burns (1978) and Sergiovanni (1990: 23) also suggest that there is a definite sense of morality to transformational leadership. It arises when leaders are more people or relationship oriented, rather than focusing primarily on task orientation. Transformational leadership is especially effective where the cultural settings are unclear or unsuitable. Transformational leaders tend to create a vision of the

future, communicate the vision to the entire school community, implement and model the vision in the organisation, put great faith in people, build relationships based on trust and respect, create a positive role model, focus on big issues (think systemically), display self-confidence, focus on what is right and good rather than what looks good or is popular, use symbolism, and are seen by their followers as being fair, of high integrity, open, supportive but firm, and with high expectations. Transformational leadership has the effect of increasing motivation, self-discipline, effort, commitment, self-confidence, trust, respect and a sense of community, satisfying higher order needs amongst individuals within an organisation. The organisation thus benefits through greater productivity, quality and creativity.

Transformational leadership provides a focus for people-oriented change. As Roberts (1985) explains:

The collective action that transforming leadership generates, empowers those who participate in the process. There is hope, there is optimism, there is energy. In essence, transforming leadership is a leadership that facilitates the redefinition of a people's mission and vision, a renewal of their commitment, and the restructuring of their systems for goal accomplishment. (in Leithwood, 1992: 9)

However, to be effective, transformational and transactional leadership practices must be viewed as complementary and interdependent. Sergiovanni (1990) and Bass (1987) both consider transactional practices to be central in maintaining the organisation on a day-to-day basis. Transformational leadership, on the other hand, provides the incentive for people to attempt improvement in their practices. This links back to the notion that both task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership behaviours are required for successful

leadership practices (Carlson, 1996). This is why Avolio and Bass (1988) use the term “value added” to depict transformational leadership.

Leithwood (1992: 9-10) suggests that transformational leaders generally pursue three fundamental goals:-

1. Maintaining a collaborative culture,
2. Fostering teacher development,
3. Improving group problem solving.

In an address to Australian educators resonating the principles of Learning Organisations, Leithwood (1994: 2) observed:

Transformational approaches to school leadership are especially appropriate to the challenges facing schools now and through the remainder of this decade: these approaches ought to be advocated more strongly to practicing school administrators and featured much more prominently in the preparation experiences of those aspiring to formal school leadership positions.

Leithwood also identifies four dimensions of transformational leadership:-

1. Purposes - development of widely shared VISION, builds goal and priority consensus, holds high performance expectations ;
2. People - provision of individual support, provision of intellectual stimulation, role modelling good professional practice ;

3. Structures - decision making in the school, involving wider distribution and greater individual responsibility ;
4. Culture - strengthens and builds culture through vision, communication, collaboration, symbols and rituals.

He goes on to argue that comprehensive application of these transformational leadership dimensions are required for truly effective leadership and the management of change, that transformational leaders display high levels of problem-solving expertise, that transactional practices can fit under the umbrella of transformational leadership by being redefined 'individual consideration' practices. Perhaps most importantly, however, Leithwood (1994: 15) states that, "Initiatives giving rise to organisational learning and teacher's commitment to change must be counted among the most important of transformational leadership practices".

VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

The close correlation between vision and leadership permeates through almost every major theory / works as one of the paramount tools for effective leadership. Robinson (1996: 27) sums it up stating,

“Vision is the key to growth and accomplishment – in one’s personal life and business life”.

To date it has been stated repeatedly that the crucial elements of leadership involve:-

- development of a vision
- sharing of the vision by the organisation’s members
- communication of the vision’s meaning
- developing commitment to this common purpose so that it pervades policies and practices.

What exactly is vision?

Bennis and Nanus (1985: 89) state that **“a vision articulates a view of a realistic, credible, attractive future for the organisation, a condition that is better in some important ways than what now exists.”**

Conger (1989: 29) defines vision “as an idealised future goal that the leader wishes the organisation” to achieve while Kouzes and Posner (1987, 83) suggest that

“Until recently, vision was not part of the management lexicon Purpose was an acceptable term, but not vision”.

David Berlew, President of Situation Management Sys, Inc. (cited in Kouzes and Posner, 1987: 106) also highlights the importance of communicating the vision for leaders ;

“The executive must find a way to communicate the vision in a way that attracts and excites members of the organisation”.

With reference to schools, Chance (1992) argues that the vision must reflect local needs and values.

“A vision must exist if schools are to effectively prepare children for the 21st century” (Chance 1992: 42). He also suggests that the whole school community must work together to ascertain the vision for their school. This view is reiterated by Covey (1989: 142).

However, Leithwood’s research (1994) refutes this claim, suggesting that vision can either be developed this way or be developed by the Principal alone. It is the relevance, communication of and commitment to the vision that is most crucial to its successful attainment.

Kouzes and Posner (1987) suggest that vision serves as a guide for all involved with the school, and reiterate the importance of the leader and his / her role in the development of a vision with regards to organisational effectiveness. They propose four steps for a leader to follow in developing and sustaining a vision:

1. Self-assessment - personal vision
2. Vision statement for a school
3. Communicating (and actualising) the vision
4. Sustaining the vision.

It is vital for a leader to be pro-active here, rather than reactive, with the goal of creating an optimally functioning organisation foremost in the leaders mind. This idea of effective leaders being pro-active is backed up by Leithwood and Montgomery (1982), who actually found that the typical school leader tended to be primarily responsive or reactive. This concept of pro-action is consistent with the principle of Learning Organisations which require leaders to be generative rather than merely be reactors.

Duignan and Macpherson (1992) go so far as to suggest that the essence of leadership is the ability to transform the vision into daily management practices (through processes of cultural elaboration).

Fullan (1992) argues that visions are necessary, but that they are misunderstood and misapplied during the change process. He argues that visions are often implemented prematurely, without the time given for adequate reflection. He also argues that shared vision is essential for success, and thus must evolve through the dynamic interaction of all members of the organisation.

Visions come later because the process of merging personal and shared visions takes time. Senge (1990) provides an illuminating discussion of the tension between personal and collective ideals.

Shared vision is vital for the Learning Organisation because it provides the focus and energy for learning....Today, 'vision' is a familiar concept in corporate leadership. But when you look carefully you find that most 'visions' are one person's (or one group's) vision imposed on an organisation. Such visions, at best, command compliance - not commitment. A shared vision is a vision that many people are truly committed to, because it reflects their own personal vision. (Senge, 1990: 206).

And,

Organisations intent on building shared visions continually encourage members to develop their personal visions. If people don't have their own vision, all they can do is 'sign up' for someone else's. The result is compliance, never commitment....The most direct is for leaders who have a sense of vision to communicate that in such a way that others are encouraged to share their visions. This is the art of visionary leadership - how shared visions are built from personal visions (Senge, 1990: 211-212).

Thus it is the shaping and reshaping of visions that is of the utmost importance for truly effective visionary leadership.

LEADERS AS CULTURE BUILDERS

Although not the first, Sergiovanni is the pre-eminent writer on leaders as culture builders, (see also Selznick, 1957; Barnard, 1938). Sergiovanni (1984: 87) developed a hierarchy of leadership forces:

1. Technical - derived from sound management techniques.
2. Human - derived from harnessing available social and interpersonal resources.
3. Educational - derived from expert knowledge about matters of education and schooling.
4. Symbolic - derived from focusing the attention of others on matters of importance to the school.
5. Cultural - derived from building a unique school culture.

Sergiovanni suggests that the first two forces are given too much attention, and identifies the vital components of leadership activity as the meanings that are communicated to their fellow workers. Providing meaning and rallying people to a common cause “constitute effectiveness in symbolic leadership” (Sergiovanni, 1984: 8).

In fact, he argues that the first three forces are essential for competence in schooling, with the latter two leadership forces leading to excellence in schooling (similar in many ways to the link between transactional and transformational leadership).

Sergiovanni, (1987) concurs with the view of the importance of a vision, and that greater commitment to the vision will result if all are involved in its development. He also highlights the critical importance of a set of tightly held core values.

Sergiovanni (1984: 10) states that “Culture building requires school leaders to give more attention to the informal, subtle and symbolic aspects of life.” This philosophy follows on from the idea that leaders can be culture shapers by looking at all of the aspects of school life that determine and mould its own identifiable and unique culture (see Bolman and Deal, 1991, and Deal and Peterson, 1990).

Duignan (1993) develops Sergiovanni’s findings further in his research on developing a quality learning culture with positive leadership, advancing three proposals:

1. Leadership is a cultural activity that derives, primarily, from the ordinary, everyday interactions and activities of organisational life. This view is reiterated repeatedly in Peters & Waterman’s (1982) bestseller on excellent companies. Thus, the ordinary management tasks that crop up continually provide meaning and are vital aspects of effective symbolic leadership (the key is that they must not be the only aspects of it).
2. Leadership is the key to the development of a quality culture, within which the dignity of the human person is respected, growth and learning are valued and all

who participate in the life of the organisation have the opportunity and the freedom to develop themselves spiritually, intellectually, emotionally and physically. This proposition provides much of the underlying concepts for the Learning Organisations previously described. Key terms here include empowerment, excitement, leaders as learners, reflection.

3. A reliance of management practice on bureaucratic thinking and rationality may lead to efficiency, but it is unlikely to lead to excellence in leadership. Again this proposal borrows much of the philosophy of the Learning Organisation, focusing on the importance of people and encouraging openness to change, creativity, and risk-taking.

Sergiovanni (1990: 27) suggests that,

“The successful leader is also a good follower, one who is committed to ideas, values and beliefs.” A successful leader builds up the leadership of others, striving to become a leader of leaders. When this occurs a new kind of hierarchy can emerge in the school - one where values, purposes and commitment are paramount. Moral authority, he argues, is the added component that is the key to excellence in schooling.

Sergiovanni (1992) further developed some of these ideas, developing the notion that principals would be freed of the burden of “control” as teachers became more committed and self-managed. This, he argued, went hand in hand with the concept of school’s being “true communities”, rather than organisations. Freeing Principals of the burden of

control would allow greater time to be spent on issues of substance, with the primary aim to improve the quality of LEARNING. This concept also involves following a vision rather than a person.

Sergiovanni (1992: 42) argues that “The more professionalism is emphasised the less leadership is needed. The more leadership is emphasised, the less likely it is that professionalism will develop.”

Sergiovanni (1992: 43) defines professionalism as competence PLUS virtue, involving:

- a commitment to practice in an exemplary way,
- a commitment to practice toward valued social ends,
- a commitment not only to one’s own practice but to the practice itself,
- a commitment to the ethic of caring.

He argues that these dimensions are more likely to be present in school communities than in school organisations. In a school community the leader is a servant, rather than the followers serving the leader (Brandt, 1992: 46). Again there is a focus on the concept of moral authority. Thus, Sergiovanni strongly questions the concept of instructional leadership as it takes away from the autonomy and professionalism of the teacher.

“In dynamic learning cultures, organisational members know what they stand for and where they are going” (Duignan, 1995: 22). This statements underlying meaning is that

vision generation and articulation are the keys, and that a culture needs to be built around these core organisational goals by the leader.

Schultz (1994: 156) emphasises this view of leaders as culture builders by proposing that

An organisational culture must be created that will sustain an environment that values various and often conflicting points of view and considers many options. The creation of this culture is the job of the leader.

LEADERS AS LEARNERS

Senge identifies three core capacities that are required of leaders of Learning

Organisations; namely leaders are “designers, stewards, and teachers” (Senge 1990: 340).

As designers:

The leaders who fare best are those who continually see themselves as designers not crusaders. Many of the best intentioned efforts to foster new learning disciplines founder because those leading the charge / forget the first rule of learning: people learn what they need to learn, not what someone else thinks they need to learn.

In essence, *the leaders' task is designing the learning processes* whereby people throughout the organisation can deal productively with the critical issues they face, and develop their mastery in the learning disciplines. This is new work for most experienced managers, many of whom rose to the top because of their decision-making and problem-solving skills, not their skills in mentoring, coaching and helping others learn (pp. 345, emphasis in original).

As stewards, leaders continually seek and oversee the broader purpose and direction of the organisation, but:

In a Learning Organisation, leaders may start by pursuing their own vision, but as they learn to listen carefully to others visions they begin to see that their own personal vision is part of something larger. This does not diminish any leader's sense of responsibility for the vision - if anything it deepens it (p. 352).

The leader as teacher is not about teaching other people one's own vision:

Leaders in Learning Organisations have the ability to conceptualise their strategic insights so that they become public knowledge, open to challenge and further improvement ... (Leader as teacher) is about fostering learning, for everyone. Such leaders help develop people throughout the organisation develop systemic understandings. Accepting this responsibility is the antidote to one of the most common downfalls of otherwise gifted learners - losing their commitment to the truth (p.356).

Fullan (1992: 12) provides eight action guidelines for leaders committed to building learning schools:

1. Understand the Culture of the School
2. Value your Teachers: Promote their Professional Growth
3. Extend What You Value
4. Express What You Value
5. Promote Collaboration: Not Cooptation
6. Make Menus, Not Mandates
7. Use Bureaucratic Means to Facilitate, Not to Constrain
8. Connect with the Wider Environment

The key concepts conveyed in this review are that leaders need to be learners, they need to facilitate (not direct) the learning of others, they need to develop a broader community held vision (rather than their own), they need to be culture builders, they need to value others, and they need to promote collaboration and professionalism on a continual basis.

Fullan (1992: 13-16) concludes with regards to the leadership of future Learning Organisations:

- Principals that are strong “unilateral” leaders or Principals that are “weak followers” are irrelevant
- the relevant leadership skills require great sophistication; for example conflict negotiation, valuing of relationships

- the current view of principalship may even disappear (see the earlier description of Sergiovanni's work of 1992). The concept of shared leadership or substitutes for leadership may take greater prominence in learning schools.
- Learning Organisations must develop learning relationships with the outside world to prosper over the long term, due simply to the nature of change.

Donaldson & Marnik (1995) provide a number of valuable principles and guidelines for "Becoming Better Leaders", based on the fundamental challenge of improving student learning (the absolute key to all schools, effective or not). The three key principles that they identify, together with a number of more specific guidelines are:

1. True school leaders enhance learning outcomes for students through influencing others in the school community to take collaborative responsibility for their own learning and work.
2. Learning to lead more effectively involves learning how one's beliefs and behaviours at school affect others and, in turn, how this cumulatively influences the ability of students to learn.
3. School leaders learn best when they fashion their own goals and follow their own learning styles, but they also need a supportive, colleague-critic network that is committed to such learning-in-action.

Schein (1992: 361-373) sums up the situation well, suggesting that the challenge for leaders is to help create and support dynamic organisational processes, along with a culture that encourages and supports reflection and learning. He goes on to suggest that,

•“A learning culture **must** contain a **shared** core assumption that the appropriate way for humans to behave is to be **proactive** problem solvers and **learners**”

(p.364, emphasis own),

- leaders as learners must have faith in people,
- leaders as learners must have a future’s orientation,
- leaders as learners must communicate and inform effectively,
- leaders as learners must value diversity,
- leaders as learners need to develop their own personal insights AND assist others to do so.

Schon (1983) argues that reflection on self and on practice is central to what successful leaders do to improve their performance and that of others through empowerment and development of self-confidence. Thus they use their experiences as learning opportunities, becoming more open to change and new ideas. Such reflection on self and on practice is important in providing leaders with a “memory bank” that enables them to approach “unique” or difficult problems more appropriately.

Schon (1983) promotes the philosophy that reflective practitioners promote organisational learning cultures that encourage and develop reflection, criticism,

negotiation and compromise. They try to build a total quality culture whereby all organisational members contribute positively, embracing change in the process of moving closer to the organisations vision.

Perhaps most succinct, though, is Bolman and Deal's (1995) description of the way leaders learn best from their experiences, both positive and negative. A key quality of these leaders is a reflective capacity to learn individually.

Northfield (1992) concurs that the effective leader is essentially a learner. Following their study of American business leaders, Bennis & Nanus (1985: 188) also emphasise this notion :

Nearly all leaders are highly proficient in learning from experience.....

Learning is the essential fuel for the leader, the source of high-octane energy that keeps up the momentum by continually sparking new understanding, new ideas and new challenges. It is absolutely indispensable under today's conditions of rapid change and complexity. Very simply, those who do not learn do not survive long as leaders.

Block (1987: 86) also argues that through a commitment to learning, leaders can break the shackles of rigid bureaucratic thinking habits and apply new solutions to new problems that arise:

“Learning and performance are ultimately related; the high performers are those who learn most quickly.”

Kofman & Senge (1993: 17) argue that leadership of Learning Organisations is inevitably collective (rather than heroic), reiterating the concept of “servant leadership” offering great promise.

Atkin (1994: 22) suggests that,

“The key to releasing the creative energies of others is by giving them ‘ownership’.”

She develops the notion of leadership as *‘power with’*, rather than the more traditional form of ‘power over’. She also highlights the importance of the leader in encouraging the learning process,

“A learning community starts with the leader as learner” (Atkin, 1994: 25).

Bhindi (1995) in his paper on Leaders as Learners, develops the concept of the Learning Organisation further with particular emphasis on leadership in these organisations. He proposes that leaders as learners possess the following characteristics :

- openness and commitment to individual and organisational learning,
- learning from feedback and mistakes,
- creating mechanisms for evaluating feedback data and for transferring learning into action and change,
- providing vision, determination and leadership to succeed.

Furthermore, he believes school leaders must be committed to a development platform based on the following guidelines:

- commitment to reviewing and renewing management practices
- commitment to strategic thinking
- commitment to continual reflection in practice (see Duignan, 1995)
- commitment to authentic leadership, including credibility (Bhindi and Duignan, 1997)
- commitment to on-going personal learning and development
- commitment to learning and growing with the job
- more effective leadership training (incumbents and aspirants)
- commitment to more effective use of proven leaders (past and present) in leadership development
- commitment to providing greater opportunities for incumbents and aspirants
- commitment to greater exchange of experiences and communication
- commitment to contents of leadership programs

“Unless we are committed to continuous learning, we will not progress” (Bhindi, 1995: 5).

The critical importance of effective leadership in developing a Learning Organisation is unquestionable. The following aspects of leadership were analysed more thoroughly as

they are perceived by the researcher to be of particular relevance to the philosophy of the Learning Organisation :

- *Visionary leadership
- *Transformational leadership
- *Leaders as culture builders
- *Leaders as learners.

These aspects of leadership are vital for schools that wish to develop a learning culture, especially in Independent Schools where the leader has greater autonomy and decision-making power. They all help to promote the key elements of the Learning Organisation model previously described.

In summary, in this chapter the researcher has provided a brief overview of organisational theory developments, and discussed the key principles that underpin the concept of the Learning Organisation. The aspects of leadership that were deemed to be most pertinent to the concept of the Learning Organisation were then reviewed. These were relevant to the researcher's focus of study.