

CHAPTER SEVEN

ORGANISATIONAL POWER AND FUTURE CHANGE *The Effect of Power on Teacher Directed Change*

INTRODUCTION

The themes that emerge from this study into the organisational dynamics of this School centre on the enabling and constraining use of power within a framework of passive acceptance by staff of their position and roles within the organisation and their perceived ability to control both choice and decision-making. This passive acceptance of the status quo is a consequence of the traditional structures of the School and the use of strategic power to maintain control.

The organisational structures are considered necessary, and even desirable by staff, to perpetuate the traditions of the School and maintain stability and purpose upon which the educational goals and values can be built. The facade is of a 'value-rational' institution (after Satow 1975) if one takes the educational aims of the School at face value. However, a distinction must be made between Satow's (ibid.) definition of such an establishment and this School. Parallels exist, but the inter-personal dynamics and use of power to maintain traditions limit the input of staff to the decision-making processes and rational objectives. Ultimately, as is demonstrated by staff's involvement in the departure of the former Headmaster, rational values and goals are projected by staff. However, such demonstrations of unity and consensus are rare and only result when there is a perceived extreme threat to either tradition, expected practices and customary ways of dealing with staff or their collective or personal values, goals and expectations.

Order and stability are an integral part of the hierarchy's structural power and, as stated, staff see this maintenance of harmony and regulation as desirable and indeed a necessary and crucial part of the management of the School. Power is expected to be exercised by those in charge to maintain this stability and its use sets the philosophical base on which educational objectives are to be built. However, such order and wielding of power is in itself the catalyst for conflict

if the 'power in the glove' (staff 1: 12/1994) is expedient, amoral or strategic in its delivery. Battles, passive resistance, absenteeism and conflict are the result of a failure to communicate goals and values successfully or a lack of appreciation by the leaders as to the consequences and effects of their actions or non-actions. If change and in particular the fermentation of new ideas are not allowed to flourish then conflict would arise between those parties who hold differing goals as to the directions and purpose of education at this School. Conflict is defined as being not just open hostility but more importantly is related to its more covert effects of rebellious behaviour, passive resistance, absenteeism and non-participation.

The ability of the teachers to implement change will ride on their awareness of the politics of change in a power driven organisation. Conflict will arise between the parties concerned when there is a divergence of perceived goals, a lack of knowledge as to what the educational or institutional directions actually are or as a result of mis-management or mis-communication of respective goals. The Headmaster's style of leadership and the teachers' perceptions of their power to activate change will also be key factors in determining the likely success of the curriculum initiatives.

Whether the leadership of the School is Machiavellian, in other words a deliberate and schemed operation of strategic power and exploitation, is to a certain extent impossible to prove and not the objective of this study. However, the important point is that if the staff, or some of the staff, think that the manner of management and leadership is Machiavellian then the staff would act accordingly and the manner in which they act would affect the likelihood of change. Fundamentally, staff, as has been seen in the previous chapters, alter their goals and objectives to ensure that personal cost rationales are fulfilled. It will be seen in the following chapters on the change process itself that the cost to staff who pursued change is in fact too high.

This chapter will outline how the teachers view the operation of the School. This includes topics which relate to the effects of their and the Headmaster's actions; differing goals and the expedient use of power which ensures both stability of structure; the 'place' of each individual within that design; and the consequences of the above on the processes of change.

The themes that will be explored focus on whether staff interactions are anarchic, organisationally or naturally chaotic or simply battlefields of differing goals and values set within a structure where the exploitation of power and status is used to achieve objectives. It would be easy to be cynical and belittle an institution and display leaders' perceived shortcomings, faults, blunders and ineptitude without also outlining the difficulties that they also encounter. However, it is essentially the teachers' standpoint that is analysed in order to

understand the effect their views of organisational reality have on the processes of change. It is predominantly their actions which either allow, intentionally or by default, educational changes to flower, bear fruit or wither on the vine.

This chapter will therefore focus on the teachers' reflections on leadership, organisational order and conflict and their perceptions as to their ability to change the existing curriculum structures within the culture of this School.

A. Leadership: how effective is the leadership? In particular, how wise is the use of power, constructive communication of goals and values, decision-making skills and liaison between staff and the leaders.

B. Organisational order, conflict and chaos: conflict is related to the normative culture of the School, the degree to which order is imposed and the emergence of behaviour which is to the detriment of the educational objectives of the teachers themselves.

C. Organisational reality: conflict stems from the level of understanding by leaders of the relationship between their intentions and staff's perceptions and interpretations of those intentions. That is, the divide between perceived and intended organisational reality.

THE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP

The question as to whether the Headmaster is Machiavellian, compassionate, dictatorial or divisive in his style of leadership depends on which facet of the image is perceived by the staff. Imagery by definition is never reality, only the shadow of it.

Owing to their experiences some staff conclude that the Headmaster's actions are Machiavellian, others that his actions are deliberately of a nature to 'divide and rule' the staff, and some see him as a misunderstood person whose only problem is that he finds it difficult to communicate his ideas, manage people effectively and envision clearly his goals and values. Whatever the perception, the conclusion that can be reached concerning the hierarchical structure of this institution is that key executives have critical responsibilities and their styles of leadership dominate staff's perceptions as to their motives, goals and abilities and in particular the part staff feel they can play in the processes of change.

Two basic questions need to be answered with respect to leadership.

- i. Who shall rule and with what justification? (Greenfield 1975: 163)
- ii. How should they rule?

Chapter 5 discussed the first question and the answer given by the staff would be simply that the Headmaster and his Deputy rule within the boundaries of curriculum issues and day-to-day management. Staff would also state that this is the way it has always been and failing any suitable alternative should be. There is no discussion from staff as to another model of an organisational structure and indeed many either see no need, have no time to contemplate the issue or perceive the futility of exploring the possibility of changing the existing system. There is passive, obliged, sanctioned or encouraged acceptance of the status quo which is a consequence of the traditional, structural nature of power and its effect on the teachers' views as to their ability to change the overall power and control mechanisms of the School. The fact that staff do not consider this an option and it has a very low priority in both conversation and goal orientation is testimony to the significance of the stability generated by the historical legacy of traditional power.

However, the answer to the second question is more problematic and certainly the only conclusion that is reached by Greenfield (1993) is that the leader should experience differing cultures and have an understanding of political and moral matters. Hodgkinson (1978: 203-221, quoted in Greenfield *op.cit.*: 165) suggests that the administrator 'must know two things: where the values are and where the power lies'.

The actions of the Headmaster suggest that he is aware of where the power lies - it rests with him. Tribal elders and other empowered individuals by their own admission see their power as being a matter of influence rather than sanctionable authority. The heart of the problem concerning conflict and order in this School is the relationship between personal or traditional values and goals of the Headmaster and those of the teachers and the methods which are employed in their execution or to keep their respective dominance.

The predicament that Machiavelli (1958[1513]) does not resolve and which also besets this leader questions how a leader's power might be used wisely to create effective governance. Firstly, how to achieve personal and traditional goals without the use of excessive power in trampling the goals of others. Secondly, how to keep control of negative and destructive (to the stability of the organisation) comments from staff without losing their respect. The Headmaster (3/1995) expresses the problem thus:

I could have come in and said, 'do it, I want it done this way'. But I felt that these are the senior staff, colleagues. If I come in heavy-handed, I will get a reluctant cooperation ... You must lobby, sell your ideas, that is the only way, you must talk to people. That this is right and discuss it and not come on too heavily.

The dilemma that the Headmaster has to face is how to use power to control the debate on sensitive issues without cramping the enthusiasm and input of the teachers. As is seen in the preceding chapters, many staff's experiences teach them that to express openly controversial sentiments could provoke negative responses and in some cases draconian action. The expedient, political use of the Headmaster's power may have achieved the objective of silencing vocal critics but at the cost of reducing staff's likely involvement in future activities. Hoyle (1975: 34) appreciates this quandary by recognising the:

... tension between the requirements of coordination (control) and the requirements of the exercise of professionalism (autonomy).

The Headmaster has formal authority to lead the School but 'leadership authority is different in that it appears to be something which is **conceded from the followership**' (Hodgkinson 1978: 94, original emphasis). In other words the Headmaster may have traditional power to sanction his actions but the cost of such deeds may result in the distancing of staff. Order may be re-established but at the cost of increased open conflict or passive resistance if the teachers feel that their needs were not being addressed.

Leadership is a complex interaction between the leader and the respective individual(s) and relates to:

- i. the issue in question (certain topics are much more sensitive than others).
- ii. the power relationship between the leader and the staff member.
- iii. the setting in which the incident occurs.

For staff to implement change successfully they must be politically aware of the above three situations and manipulate and appreciate them accordingly. Staff need to appraise which parts of the curriculum proposals will likely be objected to by the Headmaster and allay his fears in these areas **before** conflicting views and goals arise. Secondly, staff must be aware of the differing relationships staff have with the Headmaster and gain the support of the 'tribal elders'

and other empowered individuals to aid their cause and not to enlist the overt help of those with whom the Headmaster is likely to conflict, like the teachers on the 'blacklist'. Thirdly, the Headmaster, as the majority of staff are aware, does not operate effectively nor is comfortable in an open forum and thus all sensitive issues incorporated within the curriculum proposals must be held in small meetings, preferably on the Headmaster's 'home turf'.

Thus staff must use their political acumen relating to the culture of the School and the leadership traits of the Headmaster to achieve their aims. For example they must acknowledge that the Headmaster will not allow open discussion on controversial issues, that he operates best on a one-to-one basis and that certain, specific staff would have more success than others in pursuing their cause.

Staff at the School recognise the key leadership traits of communication skills, the processes of decision-making and goals-setting, as significant attributes which affect the operation of the School, the attainment of educational values and structural change.

The Ability to Communicate Ideas and Goals

The ability to be able to argue the rationales for the reasons for decisions and to rebuff or accept counter-proposals with succinct objections and argument is a primary expectation of staff. The teachers expect debate on current issues and there is a desire, an ideal, that good ideas should be implemented with poor ones being weeded out through considered argument.

The Headmaster's methods of communication are essentially 'formal things, briefings, meetings, notices, minutes, especially minutes' (Headmaster: 3/1995) with further dissemination through committees like the Housemasters' and Coordinators'. There are few open forums (the reasons for which have been cited earlier) and ideas and suggestions are referred through agenda items at committee meetings. Most staff see this formal approach as intrinsically flawed and see little evidence that their ideas are taken on board. If they are they appear to be simply lost within the mire of meetings, future agenda and yet more meetings. As one senior staff member (staff 13: 12/1994) remarks:

... he [communicates] through the committee system. It does not work; he does not like to upset people. Basically he knows what he wants but he feels everybody should have an opportunity to have their say.

Staff see the formal mechanisms as defective because this process does not allow an open sifting of information **for all to see** so that staff are able to appreciate better the arguments

and counter-arguments that have been put forward and be either accepted or dismissed. As staff 1 (12/1994) comments:

... he allows the Coordinators and others to have committees but he will not accept that people there have listened to what has been discussed, come up with a distilled essence and it is best there is on the table.

The use of memoranda is seen as hindering the open and effective communication of information, staff's involvement in the decision-making process and their ability to express opinion. As staff 15 (10/1994) states:

... everything has to be memoed backwards and forwards and can be ineffective at times so that when decisions are made there is a reference to them. One of the problems we have with communication this year is that sometimes there is a breakdown in the memo circuit, middle management to upper management.

The Headmaster's channels of communication to the teachers are through the executive body, the Coordinator and Housemaster groups either by being present at these meetings or via memoranda to the chairperson. Formal communication is the preferred method of dissemination of ideas and direction. However, this indirect process of communication to the classroom teacher relies heavily upon the communication skills of intermediaries. Often the flavour and substance of what the Headmaster has said is lost by the time it has filtered through. As staff 16 (3/1994) bemoans:

... [the Headmaster] communicates through staff 35 which is a very scary way of communicating. Staff 35 is a competent administrator, he is well organised, he has all his 't's crossed but he is not [a good communicator].

Another senior teacher (staff 11: 11/1994) also remarks on the problems of communicating through intermediaries:

Another thing which has not helped him [the Headmaster] I feel is that he relies on staff 32 to tell the staff about what we are doing. Staff 32's manner is, 'we are doing this, we are doing that', and anyone who says, 'but sir', staff 32 snaps their head off. [This gives the appearance of] orders coming down from the top.

It is suggested by staff 11 (11/1994) that the Headmaster himself should discuss the issues in the morning meetings instead of his senior staff.

Staff 16 said [to me], 'if you get the Headmaster's ear tell him he should be making more announcements in the common room'. Because something had happened, the Headmaster wanted something done, whatever it was, we were to implement it. It all made sense and it would have been a popular decision but the way staff 32 delivered it, it got lost. Staff 16 said if only he [the Headmaster] had explained it people would not have minded.

The majority of staff are aware that for some reason the lines of communication are not working and that values and goals are not being adequately disseminated with staff's ideas being lost along the way. As a teacher (staff 6: 11/1994) laments:

... I do not know whether it is a lack of communication from the very top or from the top to the executive and the executive to us, then us [the Coordinators] to the staff. There is a hiatus, a hiccup, between that point 'A' and this point 'B' here. Something has gone array, often I believe, you are never able to pin-point the problem area. I do not know whether it is difficult by design or its just difficult.

The result is that individuals and small groups interpret what is happening out of context. The perceived paucity of information and the inadequacy of the formalised methods of communication give rise to gossip, innuendo and suspicion as to the real intentions of decisions reached. The following comment from staff 2 (11/1994) highlights this situation:

... staff are always kept in the dark about things which is not healthy. Having no information is more damaging than the truth. Psychologically saying you have input, via the sub-committee ... I do not believe that occurs, personally. I believe that the sub-committee that he [the Headmaster] produces is his way of using it as a scapegoat if something goes wrong.

The time delay that the due processes of committees seem to make is also interpreted by staff as an example of power play which limits adverse decisions being reached, allows the Headmaster to procrastinate or avoid controversial issues. As staff 2 (11/1994) further remarks, 'the staff thinks it [a particular discipline committee] is still going, but it dies. Then staff lose the momentum and they have been manipulated'. It may indeed be the case that the Headmaster does use his authority and power to defer making decisions but staff are unable to discriminate between an act of expeditious scheming or a simple case of a Headmaster taking his time weighing up the 'pros and cons' of a particular decision.

Communication by the present means are seen to be ineffective owing to the methods employed, the manner of its delivery, the time involved and also the perception by the Headmaster that he himself is in fact communicating competently. Staff 11 (11/1994)

comments in this regard:

... he does not [communicate well with the staff]. I think sometimes he thinks he does, but he does not.

Another teacher points to this misperception and, more importantly for management practice, the importance of being seen and heard about the School. A staff member (staff 1: 12/1994) asks of the Headmaster:

... please come to the meetings, come into our classrooms, make it seem as though you are interested in what is happening. He was genuinely hurt, he said, 'but I do, when I come down and teach my periods, I see the staff in the corridors and things like that'. That was him communicating with the staff and [showing] understanding. 'Show enthusiasm', I said, 'you may not be enthusiastic about what some teacher says, or is doing, but show enthusiasm and give them encouragement'. He said, 'but I do'.

The style and method of communication are seen as direct consequences of certain characteristic traits of the Headmaster and his leadership skills. These can be summarised as:

- * The use of formal lines of communication through committees, official meetings, minutes of meetings and information sessions are important.
- * That it is not in the best interests of everybody to know all the 'ins' and 'outs' of an incident and all the reasons why decisions are made.
- * Staff input can be through formal channels and respective committees with little through open forums or semi-structured debate.
- * Employ intermediaries to disseminate information concerning decisions made by the leaders which affect the operation of classroom teachers.
- * Use 'time' as a 'judgement filter' in order to weigh the consequences and validity of alternative proposals or ideas.

The above summary has considerable implications for staff if they wish to push for change. The above characteristics require, as has been seen in earlier examples, power to maintain and to operate. If the formal lines of communication are to exist, informal ones must be curtailed because if not the stability of control and structured communication would be jeopardised. The culture of the School dictates that public argument is the quickest way to receive rebuke

and censoring (as staff 1,2,4,5,28 and many others have found out to their cost). It is perceived by staff that successful communication of ideas is through the formal, lineal methods of communication, through the various committee agenda and along the stages of hierarchical ascent to the Headmaster. After due consideration and in-house debate a decision is reached. At each stage the progress is minuted, examined, objections raised and future implications voiced. This process can take weeks, months or even years to reach fruition by which time often other more contentious issues have raised their head or staff involved have lost the energy to proceed further.

Staff see the lack of active, participatory staff meetings, where new ideas are thrashed out quickly and vocally, as a severe handicap to the expression of their ideas and initiatives. They envision the present leadership style as projecting an image of authoritarianism, tight control, a wielding of unnecessary executive power and bureaucratic domination. The characteristics of the Headmaster's leadership, although on one level accepted and rationalised by staff who know him better, are recognised by the majority to inhibit change and create a situation of perceived conflict, 'divide and rule' or 'them and us'. Again, it must be stressed that this may not be the objective of the Headmaster and he certainly does not want to see develop the scenario of the last Headmaster, but the consequences of his actions create a culture where he has achieved the very things that he had hoped would not happen.

The tight and formal lines of communication which require the exercising of power to maintain control are perceived by the staff to oppose their goals and educational objectives and right to voice opinion, concern and differing goals.

The consequences for the agents of change are twofold. Firstly, that they must either exploit the present channels of formal communication and survive the rigours of time and counter argument to achieve a situation where all obstacles are overcome, in other words a process of attrition and political manoeuvring. or secondly, meet the system head-on. For the latter situation to develop there must be strong collegiality between the staff, a steadfastness of action and direction, a willingness to counter opposition and the effects of active power, isolationism (where the main proponents might be 'picked-off' one by one), a cultural awareness of the politics of the organisational culture and power stratagems. It will be seen in chapters 8 and 9 which approach the staff concerned take and the reasons why particular approaches are taken.

The Ability to Define Goals and Future Directions

A main characteristic of staff's value-rational objectives is the need to define goals and educational direction. It is on this matter that the previous Headmaster was tackled and ultimately defeated. There is disagreement and conflict between what the teachers hold to be the true and right way to run a school and the way they perceive that the School is being run. Staff's perception of the collective culture culminates in an open ideological battle as to how people are to be treated and their goals and values attained. As a respected, senior member of staff (staff 16: 3/1995) who was present through the turmoil of the departure of the last Headmaster says:

... you must remember that the staff would do exactly the same thing if they felt that the person involved was wrong, wrong for them, wrong for the School.

The importance of the leaders of the institution enunciating their goals should not be underestimated. The power and authority of the Headmaster is accepted but together with this 'giving of power' comes the responsibility to lead. With that responsibility comes the obligation to articulate goals, set the educational agenda and enunciate values continually. One teacher (staff 1: 12/1994) summarises the situation of staff wishing to have goals firmly established as a marker and baseline from which they can build:

... you could take nine out of ten people and they would be all full of good ideas, values and all the rest. The only people who can run a school or a business are those who are capable of marshalling the human resources. They communicate their ideas and they are also able to get those people to move in one direction. It is simply not true that the staff want to go in a different direction, they want to go in any bloody direction and they want someone to say in what direction they are going. That is all, please lead.

Almost none of the staff are able to articulate succinctly what they think are the goals and philosophies of the Headmaster. They appreciate his role as a compassionate counsellor to both staff and students alike and usually remark positively on this trait. As the Headmaster (3/1995) himself re-iterates:

... my goals go very much along these [the stated goals of the School]. A major objective of mine was the pastoral emphasis to see that we could get a, proper, caring, Christian, happy family environment.

Most staff would recognise these sentiments and goals and the following statement by staff 7 (12/1994) would be indicative of the general response of the teachers:

... the Headmaster's goals, or my perceptions of them at least, are to provide all he can for every single kid here. His goals go way beyond the academic and my reading of the situation is that he finds it very, very difficult to turn kids away from here ... a lot to do with his Christian background.

Staff 3 (10/1994) recognises this aspect of the Headmaster's leadership but draws attention to the problems he faces by not verbalising his educational philosophy more clearly:

... the Headmaster is a very sensitive, cultured man. [He] came with the best intentions in my view, has tried [but] found himself lacking the people who can understand his vision. It may well be just a matter of communication.

Staff independently refer to the lack of direction and goal setting in terms of a rudderless ship (staff 22, 21, 14 and 27) and certainly the lack of goal-setting is keenly felt. Staff 16 (3/1994) perceives that the Headmaster is aware of the situation but does not know how to resolve it:

... I think he [Headmaster] knows what he wants and he knows where he wants things to go. It upsets him greatly when the wheels fall off.

But the key issue remains that there is a chasm between what staff perceive the Headmaster's goals to be and the Headmaster's actual thoughts on what should be the direction of the School. One very senior member of staff (staff 11: 11/1994) appreciates this divide, real or imaginary, between the respective party's goals:

... I think they [the Headmaster's goals] are the same as the staff. There is a far greater degree of common[*ality*]. There would be more in common with their points of view than probably either realise. In part [it is due] to how decisions are made and handed down ... It is a shame.

Mutual goal definition and perceived or actual differences in the respective actors' value-driven objectives underlie the conflict or imagined conflict that is in evidence in this School. The conflict that is seen can be largely attributable to the methods and manner of the Headmaster's communication skills and his desire to employ predominantly more formal styles of dialogue. This aspect of the organisational dynamics can be summarised, as follows.

- * Ill-defined or poorly communicated goals cause division and conflict.
- * The commonality between the staff's and the Headmaster's goals may not indeed be dramatic. However, any imagined or actual gulf is exacerbated by a

lack of effective formal or informal mechanisms or managerial structures to remediate the problem.

- * Staff are mis-informed, ill-informed or un-informed as to the goals of the leaders and vice-versa.
- * Staff's perceptions and expectations as to the role of a leader in setting goals or facilitating their development or discussion are not fulfilled.
- * Formal channels of communication do not facilitate clear and direct transfer of mutual goals and educational beliefs.

The lack of definition of goals is a serious threat to the processes of change if no one really knows what various key staff think on certain issues.¹ Teachers try to anticipate what responses the leaders will give if they suggest new ideas or changes to the existing structures.² Owing to the collective of the organisation, which stipulates caution, they will err on the side of discretion. Lack of mutually defined goals creates a situation of 'shadow boxing' where change agents try to 'out-guess' what they see as the 'opposition' and try to develop political tactics to circumvent or 'out-think' what they anticipate might be the leader's reactions. Such chicanery is not only time wasting but often unproductive as fortune-telling is never very successful. Not one member of staff claims to be able to predict what the Headmaster's reaction to any issue might be. Even those 'tribal elders' or other empowered individuals cannot 'read' the Headmaster. As staff 11 (11/1994) comments in this regard, 'the Headmaster takes me in more than most. But even so ... that is how I know he is a very private man because I do not share many confidences with him.'

The Ability to Make Decisions Expeditiously

Kets de Vries and Miller's (1985: 93) extensive research into the roles, traits and types of leadership highlights the significance of the symbolic capacity of the leaders of any hierarchical organisation and how small events can be magnified and given cultural significance as to how the organisation and the people within it operate:

It is the responsibility of senior executives to recognise the effect of their behaviour on subordinates. They should never underestimate the symbolic role

¹See p. 232 in Chapter 9 for the effects of the lack of goal definition in the change process.

²See the section on 'passive power' in Chapter 6.

that they fulfil for the people with whom they interact. What may seem inconsequential behaviour to them may easily be a catalyst for transference reactions.

The teachers see the Headmaster as the decision-maker and the final arbiter on matters of curriculum and educational matters. How they perceive his ability to make decisions and the mechanisms by which such decisions are made influence their political strategies when it comes to changing the established order.

Staff 16 (3/1994), a person who knows the Headmaster well, remarks that the Headmaster comes to decisions slowly and after considerable thought and weighing of the problems involved:

... he thinks very, very carefully about things, he ponders over them for hours and hours and hours.

However, the majority of the staff who are not party to how the Headmaster operates see the decision-making process as vacillatory and too centralised to be effective. They cannot understand why decisions, even (or perhaps especially) on important areas, are not made and see this as a sign of poor leadership and lack of direction in his underlying educational philosophy. The following comment by Staff 10 (11/1994) illustrates this point:

... I cannot work out why he [the Headmaster] just will not go with the decision. I think he is loathe to make unpopular or difficult decisions. He does not find it easy and he has surrounded himself with all sorts of defence mechanisms so he can say, in many ways, it is not my decision, it is the committee's decision. I am just instituting it.

The structure of the School determines that important decisions are taken by one or two senior staff members. The development of delegated power and responsibilities has not devolved sufficiently to allow other staff members to make independent judgments except on relatively minor issues. Even staff 16 (3/1994) who has status and power³ to act relatively autonomously realises that major decisions are sanctioned only at the top:

... I remember we had to go back to him because a lot of the time we had been at meetings and we had said it is pointless making these decisions and going back to find out what he thinks. In that regard the whole School and the management of anything in the School is very reliant on what he feels about them, what is going on, because he has not devolved a great deal of decision-making to people further down.

³ See 'tribal elders' and 'technological power' in Chapter Five.

making to people further down.

Paradoxically on some issues the Headmaster is able to act and achieve his objectives swiftly. As one teacher remarks (staff 1: 12/1994), 'he is a great wielder and dealer in terms of getting decisions through and getting morey to build'. However, staff see the decision-making process, with respect to the academic domain, as being slow and lacking an understandable direction. As one teacher (staff 14: 1/1994) pessimistically remarks on educational issues:

... I do not think educational aspects are important at all and I think that has been very obvious since he came here. It has been very obvious that academic work, the academic side, the teaching aspect of the school is of no importance whatsoever.

Such pessimistic conclusions are indicative of a collective culture in which teachers often equate the speed at which goals are attained and decisions reached as a direct relation to the importance with which they perceive that the leaders are supporting these issues. Staff see 'the multiplier effect of delays' (staff 1: 12/1994) as a reflection of a leader's desire not to have that objective in the first place.

Staff's views on the formal mechanisms of committee decision-making are echoed by Hoyle (1975: 37) when he remarks that:

... sub-committees claim that they pass recommendations up the line but do not make decisions; the main committee claims that the real decisions are made below and that it acts merely as a rubber stamp.

Staff know that it is the Headmaster who makes the final decisions on educational issues. The Council will naturally need to vet any proposed changes but if the Headmaster is behind the change he would expect their backing. The main restraints to their endorsement would be financial and security of established traditions rather than educational.

Thus the teachers are aware that even though they may be in full agreement as to the directions they want to follow (as they are in this case) it is the Headmaster who ultimately decides. The consequence is that the focus of the change agents veers away from the practical implementation of the most suitable new curriculum structure to a more pragmatic, political recognition that the best hope of achieving their educational objectives lies with a plan which the Headmaster is likely to sanction more than any other. As staff do not know what the main educational goals of the Headmaster actually are the 'game' becomes complicated; a game in which there is an ill-defined target and cultural perceptions are the main sources of knowledge

as to the obstacles that are likely to be encountered. This is where the teachers' perceptions of organisational reality becomes important as they are the sources of cultural knowledge from which their strategies are built.

The perceptions staff have of the decision-making process are that, firstly, it is a formal process with consultation through the committee system to the situation where, ultimately, it is the Headmaster who is the final arbiter as to whether an outcome is reached or a decision made. Secondly, that power is perceived to be used in a variety of forms to cause delay and that the formal channels encourage, wittingly or unwittingly, procrastination. They are seen as sign of indecision, poor leadership skills, a lack of direction and goal-setting or an inability to confront people with unpopular decisions. Thirdly, decisions that are reached quickly and expeditiously are implicitly regarded by staff as being more important than those over which there is protracted discussion, vacillation or in-decision. Lastly, decisions are perceived to be often of a political nature rather than those which maximise the attainment of rational goals.

Staff perceive that the Headmaster comes to decisions slowly after a careful look at all alternatives, obstacles and likely areas of opposition and conflict. Documentation on the proposed curriculum-based changes will have to be complete and definitive and answer any criticism from educational, philosophical, structural or traditional perspectives. The new curriculum model must perpetuate the traditional values of the School, be educationally advantageous, cheap (there is never, ever any spare cash) and run the course through the formal mechanisms of communication and committee endorsement. In other words, staff who wish to engineer the curriculum-based change must be both culturally and politically aware of the pitfalls and impediments that the proposals will meet and the mechanisms by which decisions on these matters will be made.

Conclusions for the Process of Change

Greenfield (1986: 9) suggests that 'decision-making is the heart of administration', and the procedures by which decisions are made have significant impact on the processes of change, on staff's perceptions as to how decisions are made and their relation to the issues under discussion. Greenfield (1990: 215) recognises that control over the educational agenda is 'a matter of will and power; of bending others to one's will and of being bent in turn by others. He (ibid.: 216), like Hobbes (1968[1651]) and Machiavelli (1958[1513]), considers 'a hierarchy of the good is therefore inevitable, as is the demand to ground it in authority and to further it through leadership'. It is not so much the power inherent in the structure that allows change to develop or be stifled but rather the manner in which these organisations are led and the place

and role of the individuals and groups within it.

Machiavelli's (1970[1519]) analysis of government centres on the expedient nature of power. He outlines the consequences of non-action or action which are the crux of decision-making. Machiavelli's (ibid.: 399) comments that, 'one rarely comes across men so indignant at an unjust act as to endanger themselves to such an extent by seeking vengeance', can be directly applied to the incident at this School at the time of the departure of the last Headmaster. Staff weigh the consequences of their actions and appreciate the personal cost if they are not successful. Other incidents which are discussed in previous chapters point to expedient behaviour by the leaders to maintain the status quo and control at the expense of any personal, or moral values that they may personally espouse.

Barnard (1938: 260) comments on the virtues of leadership that:

... it is the aspect of individual superiority in determination, persistence, endurance, courage that ... determine the **quality** of action ... the quality which gives dependability and determination to human conduct, and foresight and ideality of purpose. (original emphasis)

Such 'qualities' reflect the personality traits of the leader and if the leader, as is the case at this School, is the central decision-maker and power broker then these traits will be magnified. As Greenfield (1975: 73) further explains, concerning organisational dynamics and perceived realities, 'if we are to understand organisations, we must understand what people within them think of as right and proper to do'. And further to this, how staff, once it is established how they see the culture of the School, set about changing the structures to implement change.

ORGANISATIONAL CONFLICT AND ORDER

The statements by Greenfield (1975: 87) that 'organisations are battlefields rather than instruments of order' and Hills' (1980: 34) commentary in reply that 'organisations are battlefields rather than not' underestimate the effect of power to determine whether a battlefield is in fact permitted to exist. They do not consider the paradox of the structural duality of traditional power suggested by Giddens (1979) in that the traditional, hierarchical structure is in itself a source of conflict. Perhaps the statement that could be applied to this School is that organisations are battlefields **because** they are instruments of order.

The School's organisation is a highly ordered and managed state of affairs. At any moment in the day one can predict with a high degree of probability what staff would be doing and where

they would be doing it. However, neither the traditional order, the hierarchical nature of the School nor the monopoly on the processes of decision-making by the higher echelons, in themselves, are the source of the battles. Conflict can in part be related to the degree to which the expedient use of power is utilised to achieve leaders' objectives and goals and staff's perceptions of their participation in those directions. A more fitting statement should be that organisations are battlefields **when** they are instruments of a **domineering** order.

The force behind Hobbes' (1968[1651]) philosophy of a humanistic elite to govern an organisation or community relies upon the premise that the power vested in the ruling group should not be abused and that the remaining populace will see the wisdom and benefits of this structure and leadership. Staff at this School are of a like mind with respect to this philosophy. However, conflict arises when there is a perception that the responsibilities of position of the leader have not been fulfilled and that staff's collective, cultural visions as to how the organisation should be managed have not been adequately satisfied.

The organisation does not have to be a battlefield and as one frustrated teacher (staff 16: 3/1994) laments:

... I think the thing that irks me the most in management is this business where it has to be confrontational. In a school like this we are all basically working for exactly the same reasons and the same sort of goals. Why does it have to be confrontational? It does not have to be.

Hills (1980) amplifies his statement on 'battlefields' and 'order' when he comments that battlefields are in fact quite ordered and require careful planning and execution. However, Hills (ibid.: 32) does not pursue the issue and dismisses the idea that anything other than order is what needs to be researched when he comments that:

... the only alternative beyond deterministic and probabilistic relationships among variables, or states, is chaos, a state in which absolutely no generalisation can be stated.

Greenfield comments on Hills' rationality and 'functional' approach when he reflects on the latter's desire to put everything into perspective by failing to acknowledge the conflicts in the perspectives he is so neatly arranging. Greenfield (1978: 17) cites the example of a quartz crystal which on the outside is beautifully, hexagonally cleaved, but at the level of individual crystals:

... we are likely to find that the forces at play in the conflict are inconsistent

with each other or even irreconcilable.

Or in other words the external parameters may appear to be ordered and logical but if you look closely other forces are at play to determine the form taken with the internal shapes bearing no simple relation to the external structure. Unlike Hills, Greenfield intimates that a chaotic state may exist but he does not develop the argument.

The next step in the order-conflict paradox is to pursue the notion that there might be also chaos within a given system, an inherent instability which contrasts with the ordered framework. Such inherent instability could reflect the divergence of the personalities of staff, differing backgrounds and the degree of cultural familiarity with the School's traditions.

However, there is no evidence of truly chaotic behaviour and it seems that what is being witnessed during the research is something akin to Greenfield's crystals, disorder within order. The propensity for disorder being a reflection of how the individuals in the School see their reflected worth in the mirror of the Headmaster's estimation.

Within the ordered structure there is evidence not so much of chaos or turmoil but a tendency towards passive anarchy and covert conflict which produces a culture which is counter to rational objectives. In this respect 'disorder' is seen as a reactive behaviour of staff to their perceptions of how the organisation should be run, which are indeed value-driven, and also their response to the use of power which may be perceived to undermine their personal values and goals. A common response by staff is to 'do one's own thing' or flee to the domain of the classroom, a locale in which there is little external interference.

The implications for the agents of change are that this 'disorder' must be managed constructively and recognised as an unavoidable consequence of this School's organisational culture. Conflict will be found in many quarters and, incorporating the ideas of Silverman (1970: 215-219), can be an outcome of:

- i. Impaired progress of staff's professional growth and accomplishment.
- ii. Conflict between perceived goals of the hierarchy and those of the staff.
- iii. A perception of oppressive or clumsy human-management skills.
- iv. Inability to express openly individual's aspirations, values and concerns without fear of intimidation or sanctioned response.

- v. Conflict emanating from the differing perceptions as to the roles and responsibilities of the leaders than that which is experienced by staff.
- vi. Poor communication between staff.

Schmuck's (1972) discussion on the sources of conflict in an organisation are not particularly relevant in this organisation. There are few battles over the division of resources, little evidence of power struggles to attain positions of authority or external stress imposed by either parents or other power bases. The main focus and centre of conflict is goal and value driven set within a political and power-sanctioned framework and an unequal balance between the differing actors' wills and intentions. Open conflict is not uncommon and when in evidence is soundly greeted with an appropriate measure of overt power to avert its spread. The organisation, therefore, cannot be described by the concept of a traditional 'battlefield' but is more akin to covert, passive campaigns characterised by occasional skirmishes, passivity and 'point-scoring' rather than open hostility.

Thus within the ordered framework and processes of the School's administration quiet, unobtrusive battles are being waged. A staff member may read his paper whilst the Headmaster is addressing staff, deadlines may not be kept and material needed for administrative operations may be delayed for a few days. Staff may give 'lip-service' to minor instructions and urgings to correct any particular topical issues which need attention. Teachers may withdraw their support from additional extra-curricular responsibilities or be loathe to pursue further committee work which may require lengthy discussion and documentation and may have little subsequent influence on any policy change. The teachers' actions are thus passively resistant rather than disordered or chaotic, quietly anarchical rather than openly confrontational and political rather than rational. To paraphrase one teacher (staff 20: 10/1994), 'open anarchy is tiring and confrontation energy sapping'. What is being witnessed here is **not** dysfunctional nor irrational in the eyes of the teachers. Their rebellion is purposeful, an expression of their individuality in a structure that does not tolerate individualism. It is meaningful and has direction, however, not in a way that helps the educational goals of staff or the School.

Active, open resistance to procedures, managerial practices and demands for change require a great deal of time, commitment and energy. Staff are so involved in the daily round of classes, meetings and extra-curricular supervision and training that there is little time for anything else, especially if the cost return for such efforts is hazardous, doubtful or marginal. The implications for the processes of change are that the agents must appreciate that the patience of staff will be limited and their commitment transitory if results are not forthcoming or

progress seen to be muted. If the change agents are not able to keep staff well-informed and enthusiastic then pessimism about the likely success of the curriculum changes will creep in. It will be subsequently almost impossible to encourage the teachers to participate in the hours of extra work necessary for the new structures to be implemented.

The change agents must understand the undercurrents of discontent and find ways of ensuring that morale is kept positive and productive. There will be no open battles fought by the staff to strive for curriculum development and a realisation of their goals; the culture of the organisation precludes that. The change will just die a quiet death, but all will not be forgotten nor forgiven. The experience will form just another episode in the collective imagery of the normative culture and weigh heavily against any subsequent initiatives.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND CHANGE: Concluding Comments

Staff view the organisation, its leadership, goals and processes of communication from contrasting perspectives and act accordingly. The interpretation of the hierarchy's motives are based on information and knowledge received from a variety of quarters, namely:

- i. Responses by the leaders to actions or non-actions taken by staff.
- ii. Cultural interpretations of the leaders actions. The contrast between the implied and stated reasons for those actions.
- iii. Hearsay, gossip or direct, observable knowledge relating to the consequences of other's actions.
- iv. Traditional knowledge, the collective imagery which portrays the previous experiences of the staff.
- v. Discrepancies between formal and informal channels of communication.

Staff are acutely aware of what actions might precipitate a sanctioned response and other deeds which would be encouraged and greeted warmly. The teachers are also cognisant of the fact that the processes of change are inextricably linked to the goals and directions of the Headmaster in his role as the leading decision-maker. All new ideas and innovative concepts will eventually fall at his door and the likely success or failure of the proposed changes will finally rest with him. Staff will need to be sufficiently politically aware of the procedures that

would have to be undertaken to ensure that due consideration is taken of their suggestions. Staff will also need to be aware that there is a time and a place for the communication of these new ideas and the manner in which these suggestions might be phrased.

The concept of power and its use is a central theme running through the findings and its effects are prominent aspects of the organisational culture. It is this cultural awareness that will be critical to the curriculum-based changes being implemented or swallowed up in the organisational inertia and traditional mechanisms of control, stability and the status quo. The change agents must acknowledge where the power lies, mobilise the support of those individuals who are able to influence the decision-making process and understand the means by which the decisions are made.

The change agents must appreciate the fears, aspirations, goals, ideals and values of staff, probe areas of weakness and devise strategies to overcome staff passivity and quiescence. The agents of change must fully comprehend the time and place where controversial aspects of the changes can be discussed effectively and productively; in other words, not in public meetings or in forums where the staff or the Headmaster are likely to feel intimidated or threatened.

The style of the Headmaster's leadership must be analysed to ensure that the planned changes do not impinge on key, sacrosanct educational philosophies and accommodate his idiosyncrasies and strengths within their aims and objectives.

The above approach is a political one where assessment is made of the organisational culture, an appraisal taken of the effects of power and an understanding of the Headmaster's own agenda. Success will require adroit cultural and political awareness, a thorough examination of viable strategies and cognisance of obstacles and conflicts that are likely to be met.

The alternative is to meet the organisational structure head-on, to pit the Headmaster's power against those of the staff. This requires a practical evaluation of the relative strengths of the Headmaster and the teaching staff coupled with an assessment of who would be likely to win such a confrontation, if indeed there are to be any winners. The main weapon in the armory of staff is that they have been actively and successfully mobilised once before (in the precipitated departure of the last Headmaster) and the Headmaster is acutely aware of the power of the staff body acting as a unified group.

Both cases have two main concepts in common. Firstly, both require an accurate and profound understanding of the organisational dynamics and culture of the School. Secondly, both need the political skills, à la Machiavelli, to plan and analyse opposing strengths and

weaknesses in order to develop a plan of action.

Both scenarios require courage, diplomacy and tenacity on the part of the agents of change and are not for the faint hearted. If they fail the culture of change will evolve into one of no-change, a culture which accepts that change cannot be made from the grass-roots level.

The following chapter will follow the processes of curriculum change from their inception in the latter half of 1992. A chronological account will be given of the sequence of events which unfolded over the subsequent years. The progress of change will be monitored to see what strategies the change agents used and the reasons why particular methodologies were utilised. Their cultural awareness will be analysed as the events unfold to see if they were politically astute in their appreciation of the effects of power within the organisational dynamics. Their achievements and failures will be mapped through their thoughts and perceptions. These unfolding events will be the focus of the next two chapters.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE PROCESSES OF CHANGE

The Journey Towards Curriculum-Based Change Begins

INTRODUCTION

As stated in the introductory chapter the focus of this inquiry is on the difficulties of educational change and to reiterate the words of Machiavelli (1958[1513]: 29):

There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.

Such thoughts are echoed by Rudduck (1991: 28) when she comments on the processes of change as they relate to schools:

The tight weave of traditions and routines, combined with the loose coupling of their internal communication systems, can make schools almost as impermeable as a fortress.

Such resistance to change within the school environment is pithily expressed by C.P.Snow (1961: 1587) whose perceptive eye focuses on the 'corridors of power' within academic institutions. He remarks that:

In a society like ours, academic patterns change more slowly than any others. In my lifetime, in England, they have crystallised rather than loosened. I used to think that it would be about as hard to change, say, the Oxford and Cambridge scholarship examination, as to conduct a major revolution. I now believe that I was over-optimistic.

The reasons for such a pessimistic outlook on school change finds sympathy in other quarters, notably Sarason (1977), Holt (1987) and Bennis (1990). The cause of such inertia within

schools is the driving force behind this study's conception and subsequent research.

As can be seen in the previous chapters the problem of educational reform, above all other factors, is a function of how people perceive their respective places within their organisation and the culture of the school. The political use of power within traditional, hierarchical structures is a social dynamic by which differing staff actualise their goals. Such processes could ultimately distil into the realms of values and moral expediency. It should be clear from the findings that this School does not operate in an ordered or rational fashion despite outward appearances to the contrary. The School is a complex environment where feeling and passion are everyday expressed and personal desires and professional expectations are either fulfilled, unresolved or left pending.

Tangerud and Wallin (1980: 45) summarise the problem of the slow pace of change in schools when they comment, 'it can be said that by and large they have not changed fundamentally over some decades'. As Carpenter-Huffman, Hall and Sumner (1974: 3) remark in their introduction to educational change, 'few sectors show so much stability; one can reasonably ask why'.

What follows in this chapter is a documentary of the proposed curriculum-based changes from the perspective of the teachers themselves; after all it is they who initially proposed the changes, are expected to do the majority of the work and it is they who perceive the educational need.

THE BEGINNING

The type of school in this study was not specifically targeted, neither was the subject of the change, rather it was hoped at the outset to find a topic which was not controversial from an educational perspective and was a subject which sprang from some common philosophical goal of the teachers. The change would, it was hoped, have the full support of staff and not be threatening to the traditions of the School, as would, for example, a move to coeducation from the status of an all boys' school. From a change agent's perspective 'everything was going for it'; there would be staff involvement and discussion from the outset, significant educational and philosophical goals to be attained and no unresolvable threat to the fabric and institutional rituals of the School.

If staff at the School thought that some particular philosophy of educational development would be advantageous to the students then how would such changes be implemented and,

perhaps more importantly, if the proposed changes failed to materialise then why was this the case? As Sarason (1977: 220) remarks on the failure of educational changes to even get to first base:

... some of the most interesting and important aspects of the processes of change are revealed before the point of implementation of proposals for change. The importance of these aspects resides not only in how they affect implementation **but in the degree to which they result in no implementation at all.** (original emphasis)

An 'ideal' situation was thus sought; ideal in the sense espoused by Bennis (1966: 176) in that the change effort should be 'self-motivated and as voluntary as possible', or as Havelock (1973) points out involve full participation of all the teachers concerned.

The concept of change is often seen simply as a procedural process by theorists, notably Havelock (1973) and Rogers (1983). This approach must be questioned if there is to be an explanation as to the displacement between theoretically sound educational goals and their implementation. The research focuses on the early stages of the development of the changes and probes the daily life of the School to ascertain the reasons why an educationally significant idea either fails or succeeds to be implemented. The logical sequence of events that needs to be undertaken by agents of change that Havelock (1973) systematically outlines in his book successfully profiles the chain of such events and the broad picture. However, whilst such mappings have their place they give little insight as to why educational change is so difficult to manage or nurture from its conception. The nexus between what actually happens and what should happen in the change process is the overriding objective of this research.

The change in this study has the full backing of staff, is theoretically sound and more importantly, inspiring to the staff. If such a change then fails, the reasons as to why it flounders might shed some light on the fundamental problem of educational inertia and organisational torpidity.

BACKGROUND TO THE CURRICULUM CHANGES

As the research progressed it became increasingly apparent that change was not, as originally thought, simply a procedural process which could be treated in vacuo and separate from the cultural, political and human dimensions of the School. As Patricia Riley (1983: 414) suggests 'organisations are not the rational monoliths they appear, but complex mixtures of game playing, rule following, self promotion, competition and hidden agendas'. One might also add

in the light of this research that the constraining and enabling uses of power are also dominant features in the management of ideas and resources and that essentially change is a matter of considering the importance of people as the perpetrators and carriers of the School's culture, structure and dynamics.

The Curriculum Changes

Initial stimuli

Attempted curriculum changes in the 1970s and 1980s in Australia hoped to achieve equal outcomes for all students by targeting disadvantaged schools and groups but they did little to achieve the overall educational objectives of providing a system or structure which maximised opportunity for as wide a community of students as possible. The McGowan Report (1981: 7) outlines recommendations as to how the equity problem might be resolved by suggesting that:

Students should be able to select courses on the basis of their readiness and ability to undertake them rather than on the basis of their age or their year. That is, it should be possible for classes to reflect ability grouping across years.

McGowan (1985: 111) also remarks that, 'the greatest barrier to better education is the timetable'. The debate on educational structures and curriculum issues precipitated the move by some principals in N.S.W. schools, notably by the Headmaster at The Entrance High School¹ to embark on a 'Vertical Semester Organisation', (hereinafter referred to as VSO) in an attempt to implement McGowan's recommendations within a practical framework.

Charles Price the principal of Sarah Redfern High School in Sydney also undertook a major revision of the curriculum and stated in his foreword to his school's prospectus, which outlined the changes, that:

... 'it was good enough when we were kids' is no longer an answer. Lock step progression (promotion regardless of performance), two and three year long courses without chance to vary, 'streaming' of students into common levels for several subjects, little or no opportunity for consolidation, remediation or acceleration, and a meaningless credential only after four years of secondary education, are some of these incongruities.

¹ See Cohen, D. and Maxwell, T. (eds) 1985 *Blocked at the Entrance*, Entrance Publications, Armidale. Also Marshall, T., Walton, T., Maxwell, T. & Laird, D. 1988, *Alternative Patterns of Curriculum Organisation: A Report on State Schools in New South Wales, Years 7-10*. University of New England Press, Armidale.

The release of the Finn Committee's report in July 1991² focused the educational community on the concept of employment-related key competencies and outcomes for schooling in educational policy debate. The committee's task was to:

... examine and recommend upon pathways and opportunities available to young people in post-compulsory schooling ... in this context the committee was concerned to develop a clear understanding of the concepts of 'vocational' and 'general' education and of how these concepts can most meaningfully be interpreted and applied in the modern education .. environment. (quoted from the N.S.W. Board of Studies circular May 1992 page 3)

One of the major outcomes of the Finn Report was the recommendation that the curriculum must be made relevant and accessible to all students and that success and satisfaction in their learning would arise if they were sufficiently challenged to their respective ability levels. The establishment of the Mayer Committee by the Australian Education Council and the Ministers for vocational Education, Employment and Training (MOVEET)³ was subsequently initiated in 1992 in an attempt to assess how the Finn committee's ideas might be implemented.

Mike Middleton, an education consultant and university lecturer, visited the School in the year prior to my arrival and discussed the findings of the Finn, Mayer and McGowan reports as they might relate to the School.⁴ He outlined how future policy directions and 'pathways' initiatives might be developed into educational strategies in order to widen the students' curriculum options. Implications of the recent Education Department reports were summarised and the main points clarified. The newly appointed Director of Studies attended a similar conference after this visit and presented a paper to the School discussing the outcomes of these recent educational developments (see Appendix 1. All reference names have been deleted).

Thus the initial impetus for the change came from external agents coupled with the desire of a key staff member who saw the potential for the students and the School's reputation which would result from new curriculum objectives. As a result a series of staff inservice meetings were held. It was at this point that the changes were researched and monitored.

² See the N.S.W. Board of Secondary School Studies N.S.W. 1992 report on K-12 curricula and 'The Finn Report' of 1991.

³ Board of Secondary School Studies N.S.W. Focus K-12, National Initiatives in Curriculum Update, May edition 1992.

⁴ See Middleton, M. *School Curriculum Structures for the 1990s: A Paper Prepared for the Hunter Region Conference 5/6th Sept 1991* and also *The Vertical Timetable and the Inclusive Curriculum: A Paper Prepared for Schools Interested in Exploring the Concept of Vertical Timetabling, 1992.*

The early meetings

At a staff day (Day 1, Year 1, Term 3)⁵ staff 27 outlines the findings of the above NSW state government committees. These are set against the backdrop of a move to assess and analyse the School's current academic position. Staff 27 stresses the importance of finding strategies and steps that might be taken to ensure that not only is the School at the forefront of innovations in this area but also proactive in developing alternative educational structures and strategies. He envisions that the curriculum developments should give every student the opportunity to develop their talents and differing skills within a suitably flexible timetable structure. Such a timetable must accommodate both the statewide recommendations and the staff's desire for a more enlightened teaching methodology and structure.

Six groups are formed after this initial meeting, each group being staffed by a representative selection of the teachers with differing responsibilities within the School's hierarchy. Staff tend to polarise along faculty lines and subject areas but otherwise the groupings are relatively heterogeneous. Each group is asked to meet at suitable free times and then present material for discussion at subsequent general meetings. Each group submits and presents a report (see Appendices 2a and 2b for examples) of findings and objectives at designated meetings during the term. The final report is given on the first day of Year 1, Term 4. Afterwards staff 27 issues a summary document (Appendix 3), plus additional material,⁶ which outlines the main thrusts of these reports and at a subsequent staff meeting the groups vote on their preferred options (see Appendices 4 and 5). The result of the term's work, a product of many hours of staff input, is that the staff unanimously rank 'organisational changes' as the immediate priority. The mood and feelings of staff are that the best opportunity of developing the School's educational goals and achieving the objectives of Appendix 3 is through alternative timetable structures.

The mood of staff at this time is one of optimism and purpose, a recognition that much work would need to be undertaken but that both philosophically and professionally the effort would be rewarding with the result that a more productive learning environment might be established for the students.

Even at this early stage a few clouds appear on the horizon. One relates to the P & F body which has been approached by the Director of Studies and asked to submit its ideas on future curriculum initiatives after consultation with the wider parent community. The P & F

⁵ The outline and happenings of the change process will be labelled in terms of the year and term from the commencement of these first staff meetings. The meetings were held in the third term of the first year and hence will be denoted by Year 1, Term 3.

⁶ See articles by Hutton & Krajenski (1974), Harper (1993) and Soucek (1993).

chairperson collates the material and submits a document. However, the Headmaster views this report as too negative and a litany of gripes rather than something which can usefully be incorporated into staff's ideas. The Headmaster thinks the suggestions that have been made are ill-informed and occasionally offensive. The P & F document is not published and remains confidential. The second problem is aired by staff 34 (10/1992) who remarks that:

... staff are stressed and over-worked and therefore not performing to their best capacities. There is a need from staff to have more time to themselves during the day ... the existing system of filling up rest breaks with meetings is quite debilitating.

It is also considered by staff that student suggestions should not be lobbied at this stage until a more concrete proposal could be instituted. It is also not thought necessary to approach the Council until something more substantive can be tabled although the Headmaster would naturally inform them of staff's efforts and enthusiasm for the project.

At a meeting early in Year 1, Term 4 volunteers are called to form a committee to research and draw-up proposals for submission to the Headmaster and staff. A sub-committee (under the guidance of the Coordinators' committee) is formed which meets and quickly produces a paper to outline the way forward which is circulated to staff (see Appendix 6). So begins the process of change by this sub-committee to explore and summarise alternative organisational structures and present to staff suggestions and models that might improve the existing timetable and meet their educational requirements.

THE CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

The first term's efforts and hours of labour by staff produce general euphoria and a sense of educational direction. A committee has been established with a brief from staff to explore alternative organisational structures and to produce as quickly as possible a time frame for implementation coupled with selected models which reflect the philosophical goals outlined in Appendix 3. However, as Sarason (1977: 213) astutely remarks:

... good ideas and missionary zeal are sometimes enough to change the thinking and actions of individuals; they are rarely, if ever, effective in changing complicated organisations with traditions, dynamics and goals of their own.

This early stage of the proposed structural changes is the 'honeymoon' period for the teachers. They have unwittingly (and by unwittingly it is meant that there are no change agents to guide

staff through the most advantageous procedures) followed the 'Havelock book' (1973) of change - that is staff have diagnosed the educational problems, set their goals and are about to assess the School's capacity to achieve these goals. External and internal catalysts in the form of visiting speakers, State Department documents, Board of Secondary Education circulars and the School's key internal curriculum staff have generated the impetus for change. Staff have 'ownership' of the proposals and all teaching staff including the Headmaster are party to the discussions. There is unanimous agreement as to the way forward. Dialogue between differing groups has been functional and constructive, the teachers are acting in a unified and positive fashion and no significant voices of future concern are raised to dampen the fervour. However, no thoughts are openly given to contextual factors which might affect the momentum of change and likelihood of success. The teachers, as MacDonald (1991: 3) maintains in his introduction to Rudlock's (1991) book on innovation and change, 'must play a generative role in the development of better curricula'; and so they do. However, as MacDonald (loc.cit.) also says:

It is the quality of the teachers themselves and the nature of their commitment to change that determines the quality of teaching and the quality of school improvement. Teachers are, on the whole, poor implementers of other people's ideas.

However, at this point in time the way forward has been clearly defined, goals set, tasks delegated and no tangible obstacles highlighted. The committee is aware of the difficulty of the task ahead but they are optimistic of success.

The 'Honeymoon' Stage

The formation of the curriculum committee

Staff 27 is sufficiently aware of the problems that might be encountered on the road to implementation to constitute a committee which he feels might be able to deal with the task. He sees the need to:

- i. Co-opt someone with computer skills. The logistics which would need to be addressed in re-organising the timetable would be greatly facilitated with new computer software and technology. It is felt that past failures to institute curriculum-based change might be overcome using computer technology.
- ii. Obtain energetic and enthusiastic staff who have the vitality and expertise to research the topics and generate ideas and alternative models.

- iii. Recruit members of staff who are passionate about curriculum change and would spend more time than most in its pursuit.
- iv. Build a small, dynamic group who could work well together and be representative of staff as a whole.
- v. Elect a chairperson who could liaise effectively with the hierarchy and staff.

A committee of five people is chosen from the volunteers⁷ plus myself. I am seen as someone who might be able to advise the committee on areas of concern, pitfalls in the change process to be avoided and use university libraries to aid research. The committee's first document (Appendix 6) outlines concerns, a possible timeframe and plan of action.

It could not be said of this committee that 'the time perspective of those who initiate or oversee the change processes ... is as ill-considered as their understanding of the school culture is incomplete' (Sarason 1977: 49). Appendix 6 is a realistic document which outlines educational and philosophical goals, areas of concern, factors that might affect organisational change and recognises that 'the implementation stage is only the beginning of the organisational change process' (Appendix 6: 2). A two year timeframe is considered the minimum time to develop the structural changes needed and yet maintain to a certain degree the enthusiasm and commitment of staff. This document expresses clearly and succinctly the major obstacles outlined by Havelock (1973) and Holt (1987) and in particular an appreciation that:

What is not so easy to achieve, but will constitute the deemed success or failure of the change, is the long term commitment of the entire School community, particularly a majority of the staff. (Appendix 6: 2)

The committee identifies key areas of staff commitment and the Headmaster's support as being crucial to the success of the task ahead. What is perhaps not so well understood is a comprehensive understanding of how these objectives might be achieved within the cultural dynamics of the School. As Rudduck (1991: 89) rightly points out the committee needs first to 'understand the school and, then, to change it. You cannot do much of the second without the first'. The committee has made its first strategic, political decision; it has understood and defined the obstacles and is now thinking about ways of securing the support of the

⁷ The committee members will be given pseudonyms to allow the dialogue to flow more easily. They are as follows: Matthew, a Coordinator with extensive computer skills; Mark, a Coordinator; Simon, a classroom teacher with academic research experience; Luke, a teacher who is enthusiastic and keen to see the changes implemented; John, an administration representative. One of the above is female.

Headmaster and developing suitable curriculum models.

Building the 'Nest'

The committee's plan of action

During Year 1, Term 4 the central goals and priorities are set and resources are organised to allow the primary task of investigative research to be undertaken within the stated timeframe. Specific tasks are allocated according to the respective skills of the members of the committee with the objective of:

- i. Collecting information from other schools which have implemented similar schemes within NSW or are about to change their timetable structures.
- ii. Seeking help and guidance from educational consultants who are experts in this field.
- iii. Networking colleagues or associates who have knowledge about the processes of change, innovative curriculum ideas or timetable models which might be useful.
- iv. Researching educational journals for theoretical and practical material from experiences overseas or other Australian states.
- v. Liaising with state educational bodies in order to ascertain practical suggestions as to how specific subject requirements might be changed or modified to accommodate the desired philosophical, educational goals.

During Year 1, Term 4, John, the chairperson, is finding it difficult to generate the time that the inquiry demands to proceed according to the timeframe outlined in Appendix 6. It is thus decided by the committee, at the commencement of Year 2, Term 1, that a new chairperson be appointed and Luke is chosen as someone who has the time and commitment necessary to accomplish the demanding schedule. Under Luke's guidance momentum returns and he introduces the concept of two working parties. One to collate and summarise research on the experiences of other schools in Australia and overseas, to be convened by Simon and the other to build a working model from the 'wish list' which has been generated by staff (see Appendix 6: 1). It is also agreed that regular meetings must be scheduled if the impetus for change is not to be lost and to provide reassurance to staff that the committee is doing everything possible

to keep the debate alive. The schedule set in Year 1, Term 4 is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain and as Luke (Year 2, Term 1) laments at the time:

It is with some alarm that I look back at [John]'s action program [Appendix 6] to see where we intend to be at the beginning of Term 1. We clearly must put our heads down over the next few weeks in order to reach the targets that have been set for the end of term.

Other committee members are also beginning to be concerned at the rate at which time in Year 2, Term 1 is slipping away. The need to visit other schools is becoming pressing if relevant data are to be collected before the deadlines expire. At the second meeting of the term (Year 2, Term 1) it is agreed:

... to establish the goal of having all necessary information assembled by the end of Year 2, Term 1, plus a well-fleshed out draft curriculum model so that the task from the beginning of Year 2, Term 2 is to write the report for the Headmaster, to be presented to him no later than week 4 of Year 2, Term 2.

Chairperson Luke schedules weekly meetings for this term and clearly defines the objectives for each meeting. By week six of that term the first working party is to present to the committee a summary of their research and the other group is to unveil a draft model of the School's curriculum structure coupled with a critical evaluation.

A few political issues at this juncture begin to surface. There is concern amongst some members of the committee of the suitability of the new chairperson. In the past he has had many disagreements with the Headmaster and is known to be vocal in his opposition to certain policy matters. The committee perceives that a less confrontational front might be more appropriate if personality clashes are to be avoided. The committee recognises that the support of the Headmaster is crucial and that it is politically unwise to have as their representative a teacher with whom the Headmaster has philosophical disagreements and sees as a troublemaker.⁸ It is also interesting to note that at no stage does the committee consider co-opting the Headmaster and thereby increase his involvement and support. Such a politically astute move is not pursued for a variety of reasons based on the perception by the committee that the Headmaster either does not have the time, is not particularly interested or would cramp free discussion and the voicing of innovative, perhaps controversial, ideas.

The committee is also caught in the dilemma of informing staff of the progress by means of

⁸ Luke is also the Union representative of the staff. Some staff perceive that the Headmaster does not have a great sympathy for the trade union movement.

weekly bulletins posted on the staffroom noticeboard and yet not being seen by the Headmaster as instigating policy matters relating to the curriculum changes prior to his approval. It is decided by the committee to keep all progress within the confines of the committee meetings and not to 'go against the Headmaster's wishes' (Luke: Year 2, Term 1). The committee is thus trying to keep to the culturally acceptable practice of communicating through formal channels, that is via the Headmaster. However, the committee also realises that by doing so they lose sanctioned contact with the staff and the threat of waning collegial support is very real. The committee has implicitly though made the expedient decision of risking the loss of teacher support for that of the Headmaster's.

The committee members are becoming increasingly aware that the negative effects of the Headmaster, either deliberately or otherwise, in stalling, actively nurturing or blocking their initiatives, are significant. The members of the committee are sufficiently culturally and politically aware of this issue, but are now faced with the stark reality of dealing with it as no fall-back position has been planned. The committee is experiencing the problem detailed by Sarason (1979: 235) that:

... any effort to change any of the aspects of the classroom that does not deal directly with the problem of change in the principal, is unlikely to be other than minimally successful.

This predicament, which relates to the active support of the Headmaster for success is also recognised by McLaughlin and Marsh (1978: 81) who comment that:

... principal support positively affected project implementation ... few projects in which the principal was perceived to be unfavourably inclined toward the project scored well on any of the study's outcome measures.

Six months after the initial meetings the members of the committee realise that areas of concern and obstacles to progress are multiplying. The plight that they are now facing can be summarised as follows:

- i. How to produce quickly an effective curriculum model which could be presented to the Headmaster for his consideration prior to its presentation to the staff and still keep to the schedule.
- ii. How to play the political balancing act of gaining the Headmaster's support without being seen by staff to be ignoring their concerns and right to information on the progress of the committee.

- iii. How forcefully should the committee present their case to the Headmaster and to what extent should they compromise their projected model of change?

Reality Bites

The committee considers compromise and attainable goals

The surfeit of data that comes to light during Year 2, Term 1 paints a bleak picture as to the ability of the committee to utilise other pre-existing models of curriculum change. Appendices 7a and 7b outline the results of the research by this working party which indicate that nowhere, either within Australia or overseas, is there a suitable model which could form the foundation to the School's organisational changes.⁹ The committee could learn from the mistakes of other schools and get suggestions as to attainable goals but adaptation is limited. The working party which is examining the model itself is encountering complex logistical obstacles as to how to structure a workable, flexible timetable which could accommodate every student's needs. It is becoming apparent that compromises will have to be made and that new educational ground will have to be explored. This would take time, resources, imagination and determination. Determination they have, but resources are not limitless and time is in short supply as all committee members have full work loads and extra-curricular commitments. In addition, however determined they might be, the committee members realise that they will have to chart a careful course through the political minefield of contrasting opinion within the traditions of the organisational culture, particularly with respect to the opinions of the Headmaster. The horary moon is well and truly over.

At the second meeting of Year 2, Term 1, it is decided by the committee that John should after all retain his position as chairperson but in a titular capacity only. The dynamism that Luke's leadership gives to the committee will be retained but his authority over the change process will be known only to the committee members. John, because of his senior position, will continue to liaise with the teachers, the administration and the Headmaster but will retain his less dominant role in the proceedings. The committee appreciates the political naivety of Luke chairing the proceedings and as he himself (Year 2, Term 1) comments in this respect:

... the committee lacks credibility if I have the chair. John [should be] the mouth of the committee. This way the process roles on.

⁹ Particularly significant information came from the research of David Laird, lecturer at the University of New England, in 1990, into Vertical Semester Organisation case studies at the following High Schools: Uralia Central School, Walcha Central School, Boorowa Central School, Quirindi Central School, Sarah Redfern S.H.S. and Toormina High School.

The committee members also begin to realise that if they are to take advantage of other schools' strategies and learn by their mistakes, simple documentation of their implementation procedures would not be enough. The significance of the institutional culture of any school is implicitly understood by the committee to be important and as Simon (Year 2, Term 1) explains, concerning the importance of the organisational culture:

... what you miss in those things [the documents from other schools] are the realities and the sub-texts of what is actually happening.

It is decided therefore to send for the appropriate documentation and draw up a list of questions prior to the arrangement of visits to selected schools in order to gain a greater appreciation of their curriculum changes. However, concerns are still raised about the published timeframe and the delays that could result from the processing of information and the visits themselves. Members of the committee are alert to the need of balancing the accumulation of information against the growing perception that events must be completed expeditiously in order for staff to see that something is happening. To add to the committee members' headaches, notice is given to the chairperson by the Headmaster that he wants to see all draft documents with 'nothing [going] public until he has seen it' (John: Year 2, Term 1). Problems on several fronts are beginning to develop. The curriculum committee members are increasingly aware of the following four looming difficulties:

- i. The need to inform staff of the progress which has been made and not to sow the seeds of failure by allowing distance to form between the committee and the teachers. The resulting lack of ownership by staff of the developments is seen to be detrimental to the future 'model' being readily accepted. However, the Headmaster wishes to vet material prior to its dissemination and the committee does not want to present to the Headmaster any material which might be prejudicial or incomplete. The catch-cry becomes, 'dammed if we publish, damned if we do not'.
- ii. The Headmaster has had previous negative experiences of a VSO. It is agreed that the committee would publicly reject this organisational structure, based on researched information, and try to develop a similar system under a different title to prevent any presumptive prejudice by the Headmaster. The committee sees the Headmaster as the key 'gatekeeper' to the successful float of the proposed organisational changes and are politically astute enough to manipulate information and conclusions to meet the desired objectives.

- iii. The two year published time frame is now considered optimistic if all preparations are to be completed on time and to a satisfactory standard. Delays are becoming frequent as the committee members try to complete all their allotted tasks as well as their professional responsibilities. The other teaching staff are becoming concerned that the momentum for change is rapidly dissipating and that their efforts from last year are being squandered.
- iv. The committee is aware that initial ideals might have to be compromised if the 'gate' is to be opened by the Headmaster. However, for their new timetable to work there can only be minimal revision of the concept. The ideas behind the unitised, semester curriculum, which breaks the 'lock step' progression of students through their schooling, require a complete break from the traditional system and cannot be easily modified to ease its acceptance by the Headmaster.

Thus the committee finds itself in a position of trading options to advantage best their progress. A key objective is to develop strategies and devise schemes whereby the Headmaster is more likely to aid their proposals. The committee staff realise that even though the Headmaster is enthusiastic about the principle of assessing present curriculum structures, and what Headmaster would say that he is not, the organisational structure and culture are such that he is the one and only gatekeeper for change. Staff may be initially enthusiastic but divisions of power and their experiences dictate to the committee that the teachers are unlikely to unify under a banner of reform unless indications are given by the Headmaster that this is a politically correct action.

Growing Pains

The committee grapples with organisational culture

Towards the end of Year 2, Term 1 the letters to those schools which operate differing timetable structures are still not sent. As an official approach is being made to the schools the introductory letters, as a matter of courtesy, have to be through the respective Headmasters and drafting suitable letters to appropriate schools is taking time. John, even though a senior member of management, does not have the authority to make these decisions himself and this inability to act is causing delays. The timetabled deadlines are falling further behind.

To compound the committee's problems, two of its members (Mark and Luke) are becoming increasingly disenchanted with other senior members of staff in their handling of separate

School issues and this is producing friction, conflict and a negative effect on their morale and motivation. Luke is also increasingly frustrated with the politically calculating strategy of having to 'keep on trying to pre-guess the boss'. Luke in the presentation of the draft report is therefore urging the committee to present a workable solution which reflects their ideals and not a politically acceptable compromise of 'nebulous stuff' to the Headmaster for his consideration. However, the other committee members are concerned that the proposals that they think would meet the aims of the teachers would be met with opposition from the Headmaster. They might be considered by him to be too radical in design as they require alteration and significant adjustment to certain traditional practices.¹⁰

The committee is trying to think creatively as to the benefits of the organisational changes that the Headmaster would agree with and thus win his support. However, the consensus of the committee is that the present timetable mould would have to be broken 'to get the philosophy right' (Luke: Year 2, Term 1), but that other schools have tried to do this and have failed. The committee is acutely aware that any model presented to the Headmaster is by its very nature not definitive in its structure, impossible to pre-plan and would therefore probably be unacceptable.

The concept that the committee thinks would work is based on the premise that the teachers, of students in grades 8 to 10, offer a choice of subjects at differing levels and the students pick courses which most suit their ability level and skills. A timetable matrix could then be produced and staffed accordingly. However, there are inherent, unstable variables in this system notably that some classes would rapidly fill whilst others would contain too few students. The members of the committee come to the conclusion that the only way to solve the problem is to trial the system and see what happens. However, they know this approach would be met with incredulity by some staff and the Headmaster and it would be impossible to answer criticisms in a theoretical fashion as the timetable would be by its very nature intangible and lack definition until the students actually chose subjects. The committee is in a 'catch 22' dilemma; the system cannot be shown to work unless it is trialed and they feel it would not be trialed unless it could be shown to work.

By the end of Year 2, Term 1 the committee members' workloads are taking their toll. The meeting scheduled three weeks prior to the end of term has only half the committee present, one member has withdrawn (he has applied for a promotional position in another school) and the other two are too busy. The subject of the meeting is a discussion of the timetable matrix

¹⁰ In order to create a more flexible timetable the School day would have to be lengthened which would affect the after-school sporting fixtures. It is not known, at this stage, how the longer school day would alter the existing arrangements, but it is recognised that there would need to some adjustments made. The committee is concerned that this change in routine might be received unfavourably by the Headmaster.

but without a variety of suggestions and input the committee's recommendations are subsequently postponed. The committee members still feel that they need more information and guidance if they are to present a program of organisational changes which are, 'concrete', and could 'have all the answers to as many questions as are posed' (minutes of meeting 7: Year 2, Term 1). Two schools, one in Canada (Thornlea)¹¹ and the other in the Northern Territory (Sanderson High School), seem to have workable structures and the committee proposes to investigate these schools' programs more fully.

By the end of Year 2, Term 1 some of the committee members' energies are waning and key personnel's efforts, like Luke's, become more important during this period of disappointment and setback. Simon suggests that a 'hand-in-glove' approach is needed to convince the Headmaster of the benefits of the committee's proposals. In the report to the Headmaster emphasis would centre on the positive aspects of the new 'pathways' directives, national profiles, and the changes to the Higher School Certificate (HSC) programs of assessment which 'develops a system that responds to the NSW and Federal policies and the needs of the School as a traditional institution' (minutes of meeting 7: Year 2, Term 1). At the end of the meeting it is decided to ask the Headmaster to allow the committee to hold an all-day workshop on Athletics Day in the last week of Year 2, Term 1 in order to frame a proposal for his consideration. Simon sees this as 'a litmus test of the Headmaster's support' and if this 'time' is not forthcoming then 'we might as well pack our bags and leave' (minutes of meeting 7: Year 2, Term 1).

However, the committee's political decision of changing the title of the proposal to a less controversial one has reaped its reward. It is reported by John (minutes meeting 7: Year 2, Term 1) that:

... the Headmaster has liked the idea that we have gone away from the vertical timetabling and is now happy with the curriculum committee's direction. I have decided to call the new initiatives by a different name like the in-vogue word of 'pathways'.

Simon is also beginning to doubt the worth of his contribution to the committee. As a teacher he does not 'rock the boat' but still feels that he has few allies in the hierarchy. He is depressed and considers his professional position threatened if he is party to too much confrontation with the powers to be.

The mood of the members of the committee is summarised in a personal letter from Luke to

¹¹ See Fullan, M., Eastabrook, G., Spinner, D. and Loubser, J.J. 1978, *Thornlea; A Case Study of an Innovative Secondary School*, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Toronto.

the other members of the committee, written after meeting 7, Year 2, Term 1:

We seem to have moved fairly quickly from a state of incipient euphoria, when it seemed as though we were on the brink of a workable model that incorporated all the flexibility we had hoped for, to a state of frustration where the way through seems to have closed, or be closing up.

The letter goes on to say that:

It is important to be able to report as soon as possible and I agree that we have made worthwhile progress but would it not be nice to say that we have a model that will work. I am not certain of the way forward but it is important to be in a position to make the best use of our full day on the first day of term [Athletics Day], assuming that we get it.

The time off is achieved but with reservations and grudging acceptance of its need by the Headmaster because the Athletics Day is seen as one of the more important events on the School's calendar. The last meeting of the term is perceived as a turning point in the progress of the curriculum initiatives and pivotal to the change program's success. As the concluding paragraph of Luke's letter comments:

... next Wednesday's meeting might best be used in brainstorming on strategies to enable us to find time and staff to insert additional units into the school week. Basically, if we cannot run more units [of work and thus broaden the curriculum] than we have now we cannot produce a curriculum that is much different from the current one.

The prime objective of the committee at this stage of the change progress is to find a workable model which can be presented to the Headmaster as soon as possible. There is also perceived a need to convince the Headmaster of the importance of running a trial model for a period of one term (as outlined in Appendix 6), highlighting the advantages of this and outlining the minimal interruption this will have on the academic program.¹²

¹² Term 4 is considered an ideal time for a trial model. The Year 12 students are doing their H.S.C. exams and therefore no longer attend class. The Year 10(s) have finished their leaving certificate and have an altered timetable, anyway, which introduces the senior program of subjects.

Coup de Maître or Coup de Grâce?

The committee at the crossroads in the processes of change

At the beginning of last meeting of the term, John reiterates his thoughts on implementing new ideas, 'if you have a plan in writing that looks workable then the opposition must have an alternative that is better'. The objective of the day is to finalise a model, watertight enough to withstand criticism, workable and feasible. If the committee fails to deliver then it is implicitly understood by them that the chances of future success will be limited and the moment of change lost for a long time.

The first hours of the meeting centre on the need to present staff with a discussion document and to 'lay before the School an open model to get their input' (Luke: Year 2, Term 1). The members of the committee also see the importance of introducing to the teachers at least two models to give them 'something that they can throw out' (Mark). As John agrees:

I would rather see them tear one apart. [It is] human nature, if you give them one thing to look at they will tear bits out of it. Give them two models then they will pick the one they prefer.

The committee thinks that even though they have encountered a myriad of problems they are still ahead of other schools and that 'if we are fair-dinkum about it we want to stay ahead of the competition, they are like headless chooks¹³ at the 'Mike Middleton' stage [where the School was one year ago] (John). The members of the committee see an innovative curriculum structure as being both an economic and educational benefit to the School if the parents are informed of the advantages of the new system. However, as Matthew points out, 'our parents are paying for their sons to come to school for a traditional education', and the problem of 'how the new curriculum is going to be sold to the parents' is an added worry. Mark voices concerns as to the real enthusiasm of staff and what their attitude might be when asked to find extra hours for its implementation:

Staff often go with the flow. They vote for change because they do not like what is happening now [but they] may be reluctant to take the change when they see it on-board.

The teachers are stretched to capacity now and the proposed changes require extra hours of planning new course units. To sell the envisaged concepts of curriculum restructuring would require careful negotiations on the part of the committee. As Simon remarks:

¹³Australian for chickens!

... everyone is chock-a-block here. All the extra work, they may be keen for change but they may not physically be able to come to the party. I cannot even teach my class properly because of everything else I have to do.

The meeting lasts all day with a break at lunchtime so that the committee members could go and support their respective Houses in the carnival. By the end of the day the following issues still remain unresolved:

- i. How to present the curriculum changes in an accommodating light that would make them accessible and non-threatening to both staff and the Headmaster. The committee sees the changes as not revolutionary and 'basically an internal curricular change' (Matthew). However, they know they would have a hard task selling the model and that the Headmaster's perceptions of their plans might be quite different.
- ii. How to sell the proposals to the Headmaster in such a way that he would appreciate the benefits of the introduction of the new structure. As Luke remarks, 'he can move mountains round here or he can make sure the mountains stay where they are'. The Headmaster is 'worried that if he lets us "have a go at" [say] sport [to accommodate the necessary changes to the timetable] we will do something to it (John).
- iii. How to keep the momentum of the change process going. The teachers' concerns are that 'they fear it is not going to happen, [a] lack of faith in the system' (Luke) unless the committee produces something which reflects their previous efforts.
- iv. A growing awareness that the reason that the committee is unable to create a workable model, let alone two models for the staff to choose, is that it simply does not exist and what they as a body, have achieved is in fact all that they can achieve. It is now simply a process of selling the system as it presently stands and trialing it.
- v. The Headmaster has remarked that the solution to broadening the curriculum which gives a greater choice to the students must be costed within existing budgets. This the curriculum team feels could be achieved through creative planning. The solutions discussed relate to changing teacher contact time to each class, combining classes to present a more lecture-style teaching

methodology, extending the School day, combining overlapping curriculum topics into one unit, and so on. However, the teachers would have to spend many hours re-working existing syllabi into the new framework. Would staff be able to cope or even be willing to cooperate if they feel that the system might be doomed to failure on a whim of the Headmaster?

The committee members start to leave by four o'clock and the meeting draws to an inconclusive close. This is to be the last full day's workshop, no future dates are planned although a final paper is drafted by John outlining how the committee perceives the way forward (see Appendix 8). The committee members are at a loss as to the way forward. The political manoeuvring has not achieved the desired results and the position is one of stalemate - the Headmaster not wishing to move unless a workable model can be framed and discussed, and the committee unable to produce a plan of action without the necessary trial to iron out the difficulties. It is not discussed at this last and crucial meeting whether a more proactive stance should be taken or whether to inform the staff of the present feelings and position of the committee. Such is the power and authority of the Headmaster that open discussions with staff at a curriculum meeting are not even considered.

Paralysis

The committee members accept partial, some of them total, defeat

There are no formal curriculum committee meetings during Year 2, Term 2 and the concept of a unitised subject semester organisation is effectively shelved. Luke, however, is still keen to see the curriculum initiatives pushed and will not accept defeat. He constantly tries to push his vision for the future and discusses with whomever will listen the advantages and logistics of the new curriculum models.

However, certain ideas that have developed from the curriculum committee discussions are pursued by the Director of Studies, as it is felt that even though the original aims of the committee remain unfulfilled it is too important an issue to reject completely. Thus, over the following year parts of the curriculum initiatives are resurrected. These include:

- i. Lengthening the School day to incorporate before and after School classes in marginal subjects. This also allows joint classes with other schools to operate.
- ii. Up-grade and 'accelerate' some students who are gifted in a particular field. This is achieved by alterations to the existing timetable structure.

- iii. Enrolling students at the local TAFE colleges and TRAC¹⁴ courses, operating through Federal Government programs. This gives opportunities for those students with skills in disciplines not offered by the School a chance to further their talents.
- iv. Changing the timetable to a ten day cycle rather than the existing six to allow increased flexibility and the possibility of offering extra subjects.

When the subject of after-hours teaching is mooted to staff (Year 2, Term 3), one of many aspects of the curriculum committee's proposals (and considered a non-controversial one), the recommendations are greeted negatively by the staff. The mood for conciliation and change has passed and staff at the meeting voice many concerns to staff 27's propositions. Staff 27 (John) who is under pressure from many quarters at this stage is immediately defensive and shakes his head in frustration. Staff 27 is obviously rattled and baffled at the dissenting response from staff to even these limited motions for change. He leaves the room flustered and frustrated.

The following day the Headmaster speaks at the morning's meeting to calm staff's apprehensions and says that the proposals are 'at the exploratory stage' and that there would be full consultation at every phase of the restructuring. The mood of staff has changed from optimism and cohesion at the advent of the curriculum proposals to one of negativity and suspicion. Not understanding the reasons for the failure of the curriculum committee to produce a draft document from all their previous work has left them feeling disappointed, frustrated and disillusioned as to the prospect for curriculum advancement.

The level of disenchantment can be related to the following incident during April of Year 3, Term 2 when there is a discussion at the Coordinators' meeting on the desirability of sending staff to a 'quality in teaching' seminar at a local educational conference. It is proposed that five staff should be sent to what is considered to be an important occasion. However, it is stated that staff have been sent before (at a cost of \$150/person in Year 1, Term 1) and even though reports had been subsequently written and teachers addressed at following staff meetings, very little of a concrete nature had happened. It is felt that unless there is sufficient 'back-up from the executive' (personal minutes of meeting, Year 3, Term 2) and a structure in place whereby the knowledge and skills gained could be disseminated then it is pointless going and would be a waste of money.

¹⁴TAFE: Technical and Further Education colleges. TRAC: Training for Retail and Commerce.

The discussion then turns to the topic of how arrangements are to be planned so that staff who have learnt new ideas from inservice lectures can disseminate the acquired knowledge effectively. Firstly, it is considered that after School meetings are impossible as there are too many staff involved with sport. Any interruptions to this schedule are unlikely to be countenanced by the hierarchy. Secondly, it is suggested that the staff day at the beginning of each term could be reorganised and greater time given to changing existing practices. Lastly, it is considered that meetings should be held during the holidays. No final decision is made but all staff present are in agreement that curriculum development is vital for the academic success of the School. Six conclusions for the change process were noted by me during the meeting.

- * The importance of gatekeepers (the hierarchy) in controlling the academic agenda.
- * A realisation by Coordinators that back-up meetings are essential for disseminating ideas.
- * The initial enthusiasm of the inserviced staff will rapidly wane unless harnessed early, effectively and repeatedly.
- * Cross faculty fertilisation and collegiality is essential.
- * Vested interests pose problems to changing existing processes.
- * The priority agenda as to what should change dictates implementation and whose goals are to be sacrificed as a result.

A further staff meeting during Year 3, Term 2 to discuss 'gifted and talented' and accelerative educational programs at the School is poorly attended as another meeting has been scheduled at the same time by a senior member of staff (staff 32). This conflict of meetings only further frustrates the progress of the curriculum changes. The teachers present at the 'official' staff meeting naturally draw the conclusions that curriculum issues are not seen by the administration as being particularly important. If this is not the case then the other meeting (concerning the program for Activities Day) should have been re-scheduled with the result that the supposedly compulsory staff meeting would have been better attended.

At a Coordinators' meeting the following week the issue of student accelerated learning is again on the agenda and staff 27 battles to resurrect some of the objectives raised at previous curriculum committee meetings. As staff 27 remarks at the commencement of the meeting,

'this goes back to what the curriculum committee wants', but again little progress is made. The reasons for this are that:

- * There are too many constraints on staff 27's time and he is unable to give sufficient attention to the problem.
- * Day-to-day problems have to be solved and there is no time to sit back and to survey objectively the curriculum scene.
- * Other curriculum issues, like a gifted and talented program, are easy and suitable compromises which could be implemented to achieve at least some of the original objectives.
- * Lack of real encouragement, time and financial assistance from senior staff.
- * Staff 27 is working on a different scholastic agenda and his main goals are decidedly different from those of the Headmaster.

After discussions between Luke and John at the time a list of difficulties and axioms that these change agents contemplate and face almost on a daily basis is made. These difficulties are summarised as follows:

- * It takes time and effort, emotionally and physically, to explain your point of view.
- * Persistence and perseverance are the key attributes, the change process is not for the faint hearted.
- * It is difficult not to become emotionally involved if other staff members do not go your way and agree to your ideas.
- * Unless you are charismatic not many teachers are going to bow at your feet and thank you for changing their way of life.
- * It is difficult for others to conceptualise the process of implementation of new ideas if they have never seen before a new practice put into effect and function.
- * Change always means more work which can crush an existing overloaded staff.

- * There is a need to create more time in the existing structure to promote change.
- * Expect a lot of discussion, brow-beating, hesitation, frustration and other emotional responses from staff.
- * Expect the statement, 'we have tried this before and we never seem to get anywhere'.
- * If progress is to be made 'we need to totally re-conceptualise the existing system'. Metacognition is not a universally accepted practice.
- * The thought processes of all staff are different. Do not expect one's own way of thinking, albeit analytic or whatever, to be the same for everyone. Teachers have radically different ways of conceptualising and exercising logical forms and processes. One human's logic is another's confusion.
- * If the change agents have been studying the topic of curriculum change their frames of reference are much broader than those in the group who have not.
- * Conflict between staff on other issues reduces morale, energy and the ability to cope with change. Staff will not be able to contemplate future change if they find it impossible to deal with the present.

At one of the School's calendar social events on the weekend following this meeting, a visiting Bishop addresses the School community and his comments on change are particularly relevant and opportune. His remarks perhaps pertinently summarise the issue of change (not verbatim, Year 3, Term 2):

... change is not, by and large, effected by large amorphous groups but by individuals and small minorities with purpose, courage and for the right cause - small, courageous and alert groups, not the flabby crowd.

During Year 3, Term 3, Luke, despite all that has happened, or perhaps did not happen, still pursues the original proposals for change. During one holiday, he collates and writes a summary document which is submitted to the Coordinators' body at the first meeting of Year 3, Term 4 (see Appendix 9). Staff 27 (John) feels that he has 'let the staff down' by not pursuing the original aims of the curriculum committee with more vigour and welcomes the

efforts of Luke to keep the debate alive.

The change process has been momentarily resurrected again and motions are discussed and approved to approach the Headmaster to start another round of meetings. The Coordinators agree at the next meeting that Luke's document should be recommended without alteration to the Headmaster for his consideration. The Coordinator's note Luke's role as the 'enthusiastic driver' of the curriculum change but are aware that it is not a particularly good time to reintroduce the initiatives. Staff morale is low due to conflict and disagreements surfacing about the School on other issues. However, the mood of the Coordinators, a group which contains three of the original members of the curriculum committee, is more realistic and less idealistic than before. The differences in focus that were recorded at the time (Year 3, Term 3) were:

- * The need to have an initiator, prime-mover or enthusiastic driver to keep the momentum of the push for change alive.
- * To stop second-guessing the Headmaster and to present ideas to him, open and honestly, for him to mull over.
- * The recognition that staff morale and organisational culture are key factors in the processes of change.
- * The imperative of presenting a plan for discussion however imperfect.
- * Not to involve staff unless they have something concrete to offer.
- * The need to put in place a realistic time frame and structure of change.

The members of the curriculum committee having seen the problems and pitfalls of their first attempts at change are wiser now to the realities of the processes and cycles of change.

By Year 4, Term 2 the Headmaster has responded in writing to Luke's curriculum proposal. It is perhaps fitting that this chapter should conclude with the first few paragraphs of this response.

(Luke)'s submission is undated and while I did receive a copy at the end of last year I did not assume it was the final Coordinator's submission to me. It is not a finished submission in my view and still carries the first person pronoun as a personal submission and I am unsure of the extent to which it is endorsed by all

the Coordinators.

I am responding formally to what I assume is a working or preliminary document in order to assist in the next stage of development. I appreciate firstly the enormous amount of work and thinking that has gone into the preparation of this document. I appreciate especially the motive of the staff involved to try to enhance the quality of education at [the School] and make lessons and courses meaningful and vital to the students. I laud this and am encouraged by it. It is, however, necessary to be critical of the submission; it proposes some fairly major policy and practice changes and we will need to demonstrate to our community that these changes have sound ideological bases, and that we are very clear about what we want to achieve or how we are going to achieve it. My comments will not be viewed as negative, I hope, but rather a matter of pointing out perceived weaknesses, or raising questions that should be answered before we can proceed further. I hope they will lead to further positive discussion.

I am aware that in some of the early discussion there was dissatisfaction from staff about the strictures of our present curriculum and a genuine desire for more flexibility. Dissatisfaction alone is not sufficient cause for change; we need to have a strong philosophical starting point. Perhaps we have, and it is unstated in the submission - a real concern to do the very best for each individual?

What are the assumptions about learning, about the nature of learning and about the nature of the adolescent that underpin this document?

A basic weakness of the document to me is that there is no demonstrated link between the curriculum structure proposed and the goals supposedly to be achieved. It is simply assumed that the structure will produce these results. That has to be shown much more convincingly. More, it must be shown why this Unit Curriculum will produce these results more so, or better than any other curriculum model or structure.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The above response is greeted with a sigh from Luke. The Headmaster is obviously not convinced of the merits of Luke's proposals and naturally feels justified in raising concerns about the efficacy of the new structures. However, what Luke is looking for are some words of encouragement and support for the work that has been attempted so far. Luke is looking to the Headmaster for direction and recognition that the curriculum innovations are attempts to improve the academic performance of the students and he perceives the Headmaster's response as unnecessarily negative.

Luke and John are still keen to pursue their original dreams, but after the hours of meetings, the lengthy research and the production of detailed documents the committee realises that it has made little significant progress. They are at a loss as to how to continue. The curriculum committee's original apprehensions were justified in that the Headmaster would take a lot of convincing, especially as now even the basic philosophy is also being questioned. The curriculum committee is not dead but in a state of dormancy waiting for the next opportunity to arise. The committee has not been able to present its case for change in a manner likely to convince the Headmaster of its merits, even though they recognise it is he that needs to be convinced.

In the following chapter the events of the past three years will be more closely assessed from the perspective of the culture of change or no-change at this School. The change process itself will be analysed, together with the tactics of the committee, and an examination made of why it was that the proposed curriculum changes failed to materialise.