

CHAPTER ONE

THE NATURE OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

AIMS AND FOCUS OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to examine the introduction of a curriculum-based change into a traditional independent secondary boys' school¹. Such a change represents a significant reconceptualising and reorganisation of the existing structures and educational practices of the School. The change process was studied from its inception, when it was mooted by the teaching staff at the School in August 1992, through the next three years until July 1995. The focus will not be on the merits or otherwise of the proposed educational changes but rather the culture of change emanating from the change process itself. The issues and problems encountered by those who wished to change the existing curriculum structures of the School to establish new mechanisms to achieve alternative educational objectives will form key components of this theme.

The School in question is an established institution within a community in rural Australia and prides itself on its traditions and historical legacies. Its structure is pyramidal with the Headmaster the central figure of the School with the power to control the decision-making process, particularly on matters relating to the designated curriculum and other educational issues. The chain of command extends downwards through Deputies, Housemasters and Subject Coordinators to the classroom teachers and upwards to the Council to whom the Headmaster is ultimately responsible. Roles within the hierarchy are clearly defined and mirror an understanding of respective positions of authority and responsibility within the structure of the School.

The curriculum-based change advanced by the teaching staff at the School proposes that students' academic progress should not be governed by chronological factors but should

¹The school hereinafter will be called 'the School'

reflect their conceptual levels, particular talents and skills within each discipline at any particular point in time. The teachers wish to dismantle the notions of 'lock-step' progression of the students where advancement is geared to the age of the students and not their abilities.

The changes to the timetable that would result if these ideas were to be implemented would be significant and would require a fundamental reassessment of current practices and routines. Staff during initial meetings had voiced the philosophical concern that they should be aiming at creating a system whereby all students could be given the opportunity of maximising their potential: ideals which are readily voiced but, they felt, rarely executed within the education fraternity.

This study does not simply follow the path taken by the teaching staff at the School in pursuing these ideals but rather analyses the organisational culture of the School and places the change process itself within this cultural framework. The portrayal of the culture of the School is seen to be critical to an understanding of the success, or otherwise, of the teachers' wishes to introduce a system which more closely reflects their aspirations, professional objectives and educational philosophy. Organisational culture is taken in this study to refer to individual's and group's perceptions of those influences which affect why people act, or do not act, as they do in their organisational context. This more inclusive view of culture incorporates such concepts as power structures, hierarchies, traditions and rituals and those sets of meanings that the members of this School attach to the reasons behind people's behaviours. The concept of organisational culture cannot be separated from the human dimension and is not seen in this study as an absolute, definable reality but as a relative phenomenon. The School's culture encapsulates those motivations which both enable and constrain the actions of individuals and groups set within a hierarchical organisational structure. The recognition and importance given to this structure by staff is a significant parameter of the culture of the School and is seen in this study to be integral to its analysis and thus dealt with at length. This structural element of culture is seen to affect crucially the processes of change.

In transforming their dreams into reality the teaching staff encounter what Machiavelli (1958[1513]: 29), the quintessential rationalist, describes so clearly in *The Prince* concerning the perils and traumas that beset those who try to change the existing order:

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.

The change process in any institution involves an understanding and reflection upon a wide range of sociological and philosophical perspectives. Sentiment, personal values, emotion,

political exploitation, competitiveness and power are all features of this process and their effects are integral to the understanding of how and why things do, or do not, change. This study, therefore, focuses on the problems faced by staff as they try to implement their goals and the processes by which their ideas and educational hopes might be cast into reality.

It is the distance between staff's dreams and educational aspirations and their operational reality upon which this thesis hopes to shed light; the shadow between good ideas and their implementation, or as T.S. Eliot (1977) describes poetically:

Between the idea and the reality
Between the motion and the act
Falls the shadow,
Between the concept and the creation
Between the emotion and the response
Falls the shadow.²

This research not only tracks the proposed educational changes but also simultaneously unravels the culture of the School which so affects the change's success. The concept that staff perceive organisational realities differently underpins the data analysis. Their perceptions are generated from personal experiences, witnessing the circumstances and consequences of others' actions and their knowledge of the established normative culture of the School communicated through existing rituals and traditions. The fundamental philosophy upon which conclusions to this particular process of change are drawn stems from the argument that conflict can be generated not only through actual variations between the values and opinions of the parties concerned but also through perceived differences. Problems between certain staff may not exist if each were able to communicate effectively their own thoughts on any issue. However, if individuals or groups perceive contrasting and opposing beliefs then differences to all intents and purposes do indeed exist, either in actuality or perception. It is this concept of perceived reality by individuals or groups which leads to an understanding of the teachers' actions or non-actions and the reasons why change at this School is successfully implemented or otherwise.

Within this conceptual framework the phenomenon of power will be developed and discussed and its effect monitored in relation to the processes of change and the actions of groups or individuals within the School. The use of power is seen as an integral part of the social dynamics of this institution. Power that is either traditionally placed and vested in the hierarchical structure of the School or perpetuated through acts which reinforce the status quo

² From the poem 'The Hollow Men' in: *Eliot, T.S. 1971, Poems, Faber and Faber, London.*

and keep individuals 'in their place' will be analysed. The key concept of power will be discussed extensively in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 and the significance of its effects on the process of change are reflected by the space afforded to it. Power is treated as a temporal phenomenon in order to delineate the established, traditional legacies of hierarchical structure from power in its 'active' and 'passive' present forms. Therefore, power will be analysed from structural and cultural perspectives as well as the causal effects of one person's actions on another's.

It is also proposed that the common reification of the 'system' by organisational theorists divorces the institution from the individuals or groups within it. When the 'system' of any institution is discussed in this study it will not be treated as anything other than routines, traditions and consequence of the actions and decisions of people. The 'system' is a product of people which does not exist outside of people and is not treated here as an entity in itself.

It is proposed that through an understanding of School culture and the use of power the course of educational change within this established and influential boy's private school is more fully and completely understood. The social, educational and political dynamics of this organisation will be uncovered and expounded **before** the change process itself will be discussed. The analysis of the problems that beset those who wish to implement the proposed changes can only be assessed when the organisational culture of the School has been explained and the nuances of action and non-action fathomed. The processes of change are seen to be inextricably interwoven within the School's culture and cannot be rationalised to a simple, separate chronology of events without reference to it.

This chapter will outline the questions that this research seeks to answer, relate a brief history of the School, explain the field setting for the data collection and discuss briefly the research strategies and ethical considerations that were employed to achieve the objectives of this study.

INITIAL, UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

After eleven years of teaching I found myself in the position of having changed educational practices little. The initial zeal and desire to change the education system that I felt on entering the teaching profession, to one which more closely reflected the needs of the students, had waned. This was for a variety of reasons, but mainly due to the fact that I had underestimated the task before me and the moral courage that would be required to activate change. This present study is, to a certain extent, a personal Odyssey: frustration at being unable to effect the processes of change prompted the decision to analyse how schools change, and equally

importantly, how schools do not change. To a large extent teaching methods and timetable structures have remained remarkably similar to those of past decades, students continue to have little ownership over their learning programs and boredom is still rife.

Thus, the questions to which answers are sought relate to the maintenance of traditional routines, the status quo within schools and the continuing dichotomy between educational theory and practice. If it is deemed desirable that, for example, individual students learn at a pace more suited to their abilities and needs why then do the teachers and administrators of schools not make every effort to implement such structures and processes which might achieve these philosophical aspirations? The standpoint taken here is that if a particular educational philosophy were considered necessary for student development and learning, then why are such practices not implemented? If the majority of staff wish to implement change then why are their objectives often thwarted, and if achieved, what strategies are employed to advance or hinder their cause?

If, as Hustler remarks (1986: 7, quoted in Paoletti 1990: 31), 'teachers or teacher educators, HMIs or LEAs advisers, heads of schools or departments ... all regard as the prime task, (to help) teachers to improve the learning experiences of the children in their classes', why is not every effort made by educators to facilitate such ambitions?

In the process of attempting to address these issues and questions, this thesis does not analyse the submitted curriculum changes themselves nor does it seek to answer questions as to the validity of the philosophy behind the proposed educational programs. Rather, through one particular case study it concentrates on the relationship between theory and practice and on the endeavours of the teaching staff at this School who try to change their professional surroundings and attain more effective and rewarding teaching strategies, both for themselves and the students in their care.

The operational nexus between the teaching staff's educational ideals, their ability to implement them and the shadow between dreams and organisational realities and possibilities are thus sought to be more fully understood. How are the processes of change affected by the organisational culture of the School? How does the use of power by the hierarchy limit or enhance the ability of the teaching staff to effect change? Why are innovative educational concepts so rarely fostered or encouraged within schools? These are the questions that this study will address.

THE SCHOOL³

The School, used as a fieldwork setting, is a boarding and day school for boys catering predominantly to a farming and grazing clientele of this state's rural communities. There is presently an increasing proportion of students from the major cities whose parents perceive societal pressures of urban living detrimental to their sons' adolescent development. The provincial location of the School is perceived to provide a more protective, quieter and safer environment than that found in the city. There are a limited number of overseas students but their numbers are restricted to 5% of the total student enrolment. The School appeals to those parents who want a traditional, liberal and private education within a rural setting and where they feel their sons' educational and pastoral needs are best served.

The School has a unique culture, a culture which is emphasised daily in its routines and management. There is a chapel on the School grounds and the boys are encouraged to participate in the frequent services at which, everyday, the name of a past student who was killed in one of the world wars is read out. The School prides itself on being a caring, compassionate institution which focuses on the pastoral side of school life in a boarding environment. Sporting activities are in the tradition of the English Public Schools and seen as character building and are compulsory. Throughout the year there are calendar events which perpetuate the School's traditions; foundation day, Old-Boys' weekend, the cadet passing-out parade, Anzac Day parade and rugby and cricket matches with other schools are examples of these. The culture and traditions of the School permeate daily life and must be understood and appreciated if the contextual nature of the processes of change is to have meaning and validity.

The School has imposing buildings with ivy clad, red and blue brick walls and grey slate roofs. In the autumn the effect is especially marked. The grounds are covered with leaves from the surrounding deciduous poplars and oaks and the air is clear and bright. Looking from the street through the iron railings the immediate impression is one of an established Public School in provincial England. The image of the School that is projected to the casual observer walking passed is of a school which emulates British traditions, stature and substance.

The founders of the School, who saw their vision come to fruition at the end of the last century, wished to create a piece of Britain in Australia and establish a school which would perpetuate, through its tuition, the values and morals of their Christian birthplace. These men, who were predominantly educated through the Public Schools of England and then at the

³ The following information is taken from archival material compiled by the School's archivist and published in 1994. To maintain confidentiality certain facts or names which would identify the School have been omitted or altered. However, every effort has been made to portray the traditional culture of the School in its proper light. For a full understanding of the processes of change it is important that an accurate picture is presented which describes fully the ethos of this institution. To maintain confidentiality no geographical descriptors will be used apart from the fact that the School is inland and not metropolitan.

universities of Oxford or Cambridge, came to Australia as members of the Anglican Clergy with the purpose of joining or establishing schools and churches in the expanding communities of coastal Australia.

The Church of England (now the Anglican Church of Australia) at the turn of the century was the prime mover behind the creation of this proprietary school which was to be built in a part of the country which would be healthy, both spiritually and physically. The original site of the School, near the coast, was considered to be unsuitable as it would have been too near a coal mine and railway. This, it was believed, would 'expose the boys to almost unavoidable intercourse with improper parties' and would hardly improve 'their manners and morals' (Bishop of Sydney 1840, quoted by the School Archivist 1994: 6). Following the British fashion of the time, it was customary to send boys away to school and indeed many of the upper echelons of the fledgling Australian society sent their sons back to Britain for their formal education. Thus the objective was to found a boarding school set in a part of the country which would be healthy and vigorous, somewhere dry and cool away from the humid and oppressive weather of the coastal regions, and would have enough grounds to establish the playing fields where the proper template of future male Australians would be forged in the manner of their British counterparts

It is easy, with hindsight, to judge adversely the motivations, prejudices and values of those early Australians, but their vision precipitated financial backing from the community. The money raised built a School of imposing beauty and architectural creativity. The Old-Boys are, in the main, deeply loyal to the School, as indicated by the money donated to new buildings and their attendance at the social functions during the School calendar. Many of these past students send their own sons to the School and value the education they had received there. Likewise, the Anglican Church, through its Council members, maintains its influence and keeps a watchful eye on the School's direction, moral standards and educational philosophy.

The School is an example of an institution whose main role was, and still is to some degree, to emulate the part played by the Public Schools of Britain in creating, through education, a privileged and select body of men whose destiny would be that of leaders rather than followers. These early educationalists were firmly of the opinion that greater social and political change could be brought about more effectively and quickly with a headmaster of the 'Arnold of Rugby' mould. Education and religion went hand in hand in this society and were considered the bastions of respectability, crucial to the maintenance of an ordered and essentially British culture.

The first headmasters were all 'men of the Cloth' and appointed by a School Council whose

members were also predominantly connected with the Church, the chairman being the local Anglican bishop. The students, the vast majority of whom were boarders, came from the surrounding area and the remainder from the emerging centres of population. The order of any school day would be an early rise, a run followed by a cold shower and breakfast before six hours of academic work. The subjects studied followed the classical tradition of Greek, Latin, Languages and Humanities. The Science-based subjects would not be introduced for many years and vocational topics were not considered important. The School was organised along the lines of the British Public Schools system assisted by the employment of British school masters. However, as the School evolved the imported ideas and philosophy were modified and adjusted to suit the new environment. Bush camps became a feature of school life and the institution began to find its own identity.

A speech day address by one of the more recent headmasters (1960, quoted by the School Archivist 1994: 158) summarises the School's educational philosophy:

... my main purpose has been to combine the best of the English Public Schools from which we stemmed, with our own Australian character and demands. The aim would not be to turn out great scholars or athletes, who generally come through in any case, but solid boys of sound character who are better for having been at the School and who will in their turn do something for others ...

Since its establishment, the School has expanded both in the number of buildings and in student enrolment. The architectural style of the extensions has remained the same although the ratio of boarders to day boys has decreased with the passage of time.

The main corridors of the administrative buildings are lined with portraits of past headmasters and the different buildings are named after illustrious past members of the School community. The assembly hall is walled with the names of students who were killed in past wars and the stained glass windows above the dais depict images from each of the armed services. Tradition and a sense of history are impressed on the School community at every turn in an atmosphere of security and unchanging destiny.

The School is governed by a Council but its current members are no longer so closely aligned with the Anglican Church. Currently the Council is composed of Old-Boy representatives, a member from the Parents & Friends (P & F) Association, the Headmaster, the Bursar and five Diocesan appointments. Few of the members, apart from the Headmaster, have a formal background in education. The Council has overall control of the School and all major policy decisions affecting the School's direction or philosophy are voted upon within the confines of its meetings, the minutes of which are not published or available to members of the School's

community. The history of the School shows that no headmaster has had complete control over this body. Often at short notice and after many years of unstinting effort and loyalty to the School, many luckless headmasters have had their contracts terminated.

Since the first students graduated from the School an Old-Boys union has been established. This has evolved into an influential lobby group which traditionally eschewed change. Numerous financial requests have been made to this body by the headmaster of the day and the fabric of the School has been refurnished or extended from the donations received. The Old-Boys have a significant voice within the Council and, with the Diocesan appointees, represent the majority of its members.

Since the School's inception the School community⁴ has played a dominant role in the School's affairs. The finances to found the School were obtained through private means and initiatives: at each developmental stage the P & F have always had a vocal and influential say in the decisions made and the directions taken. The present P & F association is well-organised and their meetings are well-attended. They have raised many concerns in various areas of School policy and are increasingly acquainted with current educational philosophies, ideas and trends. Historically, as the paying clients of the organisation, their voice has never been underestimated by the Council. Crises of confidence amongst the parents have resulted in the removal of a significant number of students for a variety of economic, educational or social reasons, which has nearly precipitated the School's demise. Such past situations include the occurrence of particularly virulent strains of illness which swept through the School⁵ or when parents voiced a critical lack of confidence in the Headmaster's skills to lead the School. Often costly or drastic measures were taken by the Council to correct the mounting problems and withdrawal of boys. The installation of a hot water system into the Boarding Houses corrected the former problem and the subsequent resignation of a Headmaster, the latter.

The present philosophy of the School has changed little from the early ideals. The aim of the School is still (School's Prospectus⁶ 1992: 1) to:

... provide for boarding and day pupils a general education founded on the Christian faith, enshrining Christian living, and espousing excellence in all areas. The School aims to develop, in a disciplined and caring environment, the spiritual, intellectual, cultural, physical and social capacities of all its students,

⁴The School community is defined as all those who directly or indirectly have a stake in the prosperity and viability of the School. The School community would thus include representatives of the diocese of the Anglican Church, all employees, parents and friends, students and Old-Boys.

⁵During the First World War an epidemic of scarlet fever swept the School which resulted in many boys being sent home. A second outbreak of the illness at the beginning of the following term resulted in the School being closed again. Some boys, however, never returned as their parents decided to enrol them elsewhere.

⁶The School Prospectus cited refers to the document issued to prospective parents during the period of research from 1992 to 1995.

and to encourage and nurture to the full their individual talents and abilities. It aims further to develop a responsibility to the community in demanding high personal standards, and in encouraging constructive citizenship and consideration for others.

Character training through bush camps and other outdoor education programs continues to be a major objective of the curriculum and the School remains 'sensitive to its heritage and traditions, its academic and sporting standards, and its role in preparing students for leadership and service' (the School Prospectus 1992: 2).

However, the enrolment policy has changed and there are no longer social barriers to the recruitment of the boys, nor are there academic benchmarks. A former Council member stated on this point (the School Archivist 1994: 28) that:

... people are not now careful whether they send their sons to a school to associate with boys of the tailor, the baker, and the butcher.

The present prerequisite to secure enrolment at the School is for parents to be able to pay the substantial fees. The policy of the School Council in this regard is only to limit the numbers of students to ensure that:

... the School remains small enough to preserve the Christian values of a caring community, but big enough to provide the range of subjects, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities associated with larger city schools. (School Prospectus 1992: 2)

The curriculum has broadened since the classical subjects were offered at the turn of the century. The approach, however, is still traditional in the sense that it emphasises the acquisition of basic skills and knowledge within a disciplined environment. The core subjects include English, Mathematics, Science and History with electives being offered in Languages (French, Latin and Japanese), Industrial Arts, Music, Art, Social Sciences, Agriculture, Physical and Health Education, Divinity, Careers and Computer Studies. Extension programs are arranged for gifted students and remedial assistance is provided if required.

The School is essentially a male domain, but this is not surprising given the class and gender segmentation which constituted its foundation. The majority of the staff are male, there being only approximately 30% full or part-time female teachers. Of the positions of responsibility, Housemasters, Coordinators and the senior management team, only one is female. At no stage in the School's history has there been a woman in an executive position and in the School's past there was certainly initial resistance to the employment of female teachers. Whatever may

be the present administration's viewpoint, the fact remains that the boys in the secondary School do not have female role models to associate with the School's hierarchy.

The school day has changed very little since the first boarders arrived over a century ago. Although the boarding facilities are more modern and the curriculum evolved to reflect the needs of the present students, the daily round bears a close resemblance to boarding school life at the turn of the century. The morning run is no longer compulsory, but many boys would exercise, train or swim before breakfast. However, these days cold showers are a purely personal pleasure. There are still morning inspections when beds are checked and ill-dressed boys with unpolished shoes upbraided. Subject lessons are divided by a fifteen minute recess with lunch lasting one hour, and at the end of the school day there is compulsory sport on at least two afternoons.

Sport plays an integral part of the extra-curricular activities and all students must participate in at least one of the offerings. The sporting highlights of the school year are the 1st XV rugby matches against other schools. All students are expected to watch these games and many Old-boys are also present to cheer their side. Such competitions develop a sense of belonging and unity amongst the students towards their School and those participating rugby players gladiate fearlessly on their behalf. If students have free time after school they are allowed to go 'down town' but formal uniform must be worn. This is one of the few occasions when the boys can meet socially with the girls from the other schools and the town and are a highlight of many a boy's week.

All staff and students are expected to attend the weekly assembly and at this formal occasion, when academic dress is worn by senior members of staff, prayers are led by the Chaplain, hymns sung, the prefect of the day reads a passage from the Bible, sport and academic reports are given, prizes distributed and musical items played.

Staff, unless they are involved in boarding house duties are expected to arrive at School prior to the daily morning briefing at which all teachers are required to attend. In this meeting notices and changes to the organisational routines are announced by the Deputy Headmaster, comments are made by staff concerning student academic or pastoral problems and the Director of Studies forewarns staff of impending deadlines and curriculum matters. The Headmaster often relays information discussed at Council meetings and, when the need arises, he informs staff of significant events which have happened in the School community. Recent bereavements or illnesses of Old-Boys are examples. The morning recess is a hurried affair with very little time for staff to relax and talk amongst themselves between classes. However, once a week recess is extended and one faculty provides morning tea of cakes and savouries.

The atmosphere is more relaxed, almost all staff attend and conversation is noticeably more light-hearted and animated. The only other time that staff discuss School gossip, on a regular basis, is at the lunch table set on a dais which overlooks the student population assembled in the dining hall. Many staff remain behind and talk at these tables over a cup of coffee whilst the commonroom itself is virtually empty.

The School management structure reflects a 'staff and line' (after Gulick and Urwick, 1937) approach with a chief executive under whom hierarchical levels of management exist with diminishing responsibility. The Headmaster is the senior administrator assisted by a senior management team followed by Housemasters, Coordinators and the rank and file teachers. Committees are established to assist the Headmaster and the Council on a variety of issues, for example curriculum, planning and property matters. Power is traditionally vested within this structure and its use and maintenance will form key themes throughout this study.

AN OUTLINE OF THE CURRICULUM CHANGE

The curriculum-based changes were instigated by a new Director of Studies who was employed in 1991. Through the executive committee he began a review of the School's academic structure with the purpose of outlining proposed future curriculum directions to the Headmaster and the Council. The impetus for this initiative was threefold: firstly, that the academic success of the students needed to be appraised⁷; secondly, that the School would need to respond to and take advantage of the State Education Department's proposed curriculum changes⁸; and, thirdly, a group from the School⁹ had been to an inservice course where curriculum initiatives had been discussed and they were sufficiently enthused to wish to change the School's approach to curriculum issues and structures.

P & F members were briefed and asked, in consultation with other parents, to submit a report documenting their aspirations and ideas concerning academic matters at a staff meeting at the beginning of term 3, 1992.¹⁰ The Director of Studies also discussed his curriculum initiatives at this staff meeting and six groups, based generally along faculty lines, were formed to consider his proposals. These groups submitted constructive mechanisms whereby their ideas and

⁷ There was a perception within the P & F and the local community that the School did not value academic rigour and that the School was more concerned with the results of recent rugby matches than examination achievements.

⁸ See Chapter 8 footnotes 2 and 3, with respect to the State Government initiatives.

⁹ This group comprised the Director of Studies, a Council representative and interested teachers. See also Chapter 8, footnote 4, with respect to the lecturer who was most influential.

¹⁰ There are four terms in the School year as follows: term 1, late January to March (usually nine weeks long); term 2, April to June (10 weeks); term 3 July to September (ten weeks); term 4, October to early December (nine weeks).

suggestions might be implemented. The debate was not to be restricted to curriculum issues and any topic could be submitted.

By term 4 all groups had submitted their ideas and had presented their suggestions at especially arranged after-school briefing sessions. A document summarising the collective outcomes was produced by the Director of Studies and discussed at a subsequent staff meeting.

It was notable that all groups had chosen independently the same topic to head their list of preferred changes. Once it was realised that staff all wished to implement changes to the School's curriculum structure, a vote was immediately taken and decided by 45 votes to 3 to investigate, with a view to its hopeful implementation, the introduction of a system of a timetable which would be more suited to individual student's needs.

The vertical semester system (VSO)¹¹ was one particular mechanism, recognised by staff, which could meet their objectives and might achieve their desire to improve the students' academic or vocational attainments. Such a change would affect all aspects of the School's operation as existing structures would need to be reassessed to make the timetable flexible enough to handle the demands of the new curriculum. This would have repercussions in all quarters of the School, as long established, traditional routines relating to the organisation of the classes and extra curricular activities would require change and revision.

Under the guidance of the Director of Studies volunteers from the teaching staff formed a 'curriculum committee' to research the success or otherwise of VSO, Unitised Curricula and other models, both in Australia and overseas. An initial document to be produced by the committee within six months was to be presented to the Headmaster for his consideration and, pending his approval after consultation with the Council, circulated to staff for further discussion. This initial phase was part of a two year framework for the implementation of curriculum changes at the School. The changes were followed and documented by myself for a period of three years from the beginning of term 3, 1992 to the middle of 1995.

An initial objective of this case study was to follow the unfolding events of the proposed curriculum changes and to outline their chronology and significance. However, as the data were collected it became increasingly apparent that the culture of the School significantly affected the processes of change and such key themes of power and politics could not be

¹¹ Vertical Semester Organisation (VSO) is the name given to a timetabling structure whereby, instead of the students automatically progressing through school with their chronological peers, all students choose a subject package which reflects their needs, talents and conceptual level. In the USA the topic is referred to as a 'Unitised Curriculum'.

ignored. It was realised that organisational change could not be seen as simply a catalogue of parameters and check lists that must be followed to achieve objectives. Rather the change process was analysed with respect to the social and political behaviours, philosophies, goals and perceptions of reality of the individuals and groups of the School community. Change, in this study, is seen as a social construct which cannot be adequately understood unless it is viewed in relation to the operational ethos and culture of an organisation.

Despite the merits or otherwise of the proposed shifts in curriculum policy, I argue that the success of organisational change depends on factors which have more to do with social interaction, the effects of inequitable power and leadership rather than a recipe of what to do or what not to do. The culture of 'no-change' or cultural norms as barriers to change are recognised as significant restrictions to the implementation of new ideas and frameworks. In this regard, the effects of traditional structures, 'ways of doing things', authority and control must also be examined.

THE RESEARCHER

The School discussed in this study offered an exciting opportunity to observe, record and analyse the change process at first hand. I was employed at the School at the beginning of 1992 which coincided both with the commencement of my postgraduate course and the exertion of pressure from the teaching staff for curriculum change. An ideal chance was thus presented to research the processes of change first-hand, to probe the reasons why there is little fundamental organisational change within schools and to analyse the divide between educational practice and theory.

I was initially employed as a classroom teacher but at the beginning of 1994 was promoted to more senior positions which allowed a more immediate access to the decision-making process through attendance at Coordinators' and Housemasters' meetings.¹²

Governed by the rationale that an understanding of the change process is coupled with a knowledge of the culture of the institution, it was considered that a long term project would most suit the objectives of this research. Long term, because to gain a comprehension of the School I needed to be part of the environment, a working member who was party to all the gossip, innuendo, conflict and plethora of scenarios that occurred with rapidity throughout the

¹² I was a member of the Science faculty for two years as a classroom teacher and resided in this department's staffroom. After two years I was promoted to Housemaster and, for one year, acting Head of Science. Thus I was a member of the former committee for two years and the latter for one. This presented me with additional information and enabled unanticipated further triangulation of the data collected.

days and weeks of the school term and so affected individual's and groups' views on organisational reality. It is advanced that only through a long term witnessing and recording of events that a grasp of the School's culture can be realised; it is only through being a member of the School community that an appreciation evolves as to why new ideas fail or succeed in becoming an accepted part of the 'system'. Being an active participant in the change process presented me with an excellent opportunity to be closely involved with the teachers' efforts and to experience with them their frustrations, disappointments, hopes, joys and achievements. I could, therefore, more intimately appreciate the effects of the culture of the School on the processes of change or no-change and thereby understand why things occurred as they did.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As the culture of change provides the focus of this case study, the research methodology is qualitative by design and features an anthropological approach to data collection. It is proposed in this research that quantitative techniques would present only a limited potential to analyse, to any significant depth, the culture and dynamics of change in this institution. Surveys could have been conducted and other statistical strategies undertaken but such information would be of limited significance and detail only a minor part of the complex interaction of the collective and perceived individual realities of the those involved.

As I was present at the School on a regular basis there was every opportunity to observe staff in most aspects of School life and to detail the operational procedures in evidence. There was a chance to unravel the details of the meanings of the daily routines and social interactions and occasions to observe and analyse the effects of politics, power and institutional culture on the change process. Such nuances of everyday life needed to be appreciated, documented and understood if the research were to be successful. Power struggles, scarcity of resources, self-aggrandisement, a lack of definition of personal roles, conflict and stress were concepts which needed to be viewed as they occurred in order to allow the differing segments of the life of the School to develop and form into a complete picture. It was deemed essential to the methodology chosen for this research that a continued presence at the School was maintained throughout the data collection period and paramount for the study's success that efforts were made to attend as many different meetings as possible and to follow as closely as possible the lives of staff. The remarks by Meek (1984: 268) concerning the role and goals of the change agent could equally apply to a researcher in this type of study:

... it behoves anyone who wishes either to manage or to introduce change into an organisation to understand fully its normative base and the meanings which members attach to the organisation.

Participant observation and informal interviewing formed the central mechanisms of data collection which were carried out until term 4, 1994. During this period every opportunity was taken to observe and record the daily life of the School and the events which were part of the collective or social reality of the teachers. The curriculum meetings were taped and wherever possible direct quotes were written at other meetings. Incidents which gave clues to the culture of the School were recorded in diary form on a regular basis with no attempt to judge whether the collected information was relevant or superfluous. At the beginning of term 4, 1994, a series of more formal, private, interviews were arranged and the majority of the staff, in all key areas, were asked to respond, on tape, to a series of questions relating to themes which had evolved during the previous data collection period.¹³ The central themes that emerged over the years formed the basis of the questions asked at the interviews. Such themes focused on power, leadership, traditional roles, the teachers' perceived 'place' within the hierarchy, communication of goals and values and the ability of individuals to control either the decision-making process or their professional destiny.

The timeframe of interviewing was extended into the first term of 1995 in order that a complete spectrum of staff were given the opportunity of expressing their views. It was at this juncture that formal data collection ceased, except, as stated above, incidents specifically pertinent to the events relating to the curriculum changes. Methodological issues are elaborated in greater detail in Chapter 2.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations that an ethnographic case study pose are numerous and every effort has been taken to address these issues. In the first instance all direct references which might name people, places or events are omitted. Historical facts which do not affect the image of the traditional culture of the School have been altered to detach the School from specific locations. The seniority of staff members are given, as this is a significant feature of a person's place within the social dynamics of this institution, but not the faculty in which they teach. Unless otherwise stated, the gender of the staff has not been changed as I felt that this gives clues to interactive social dynamics and the individual's place within the School due to their masculine or feminine roles.

All senior staff, including the Headmaster, at the beginning of the research were informed of

¹³ A more detailed breakdown of those interviewed will be described in Chapter 2. In every case efforts will be taken to ensure the anonymity of those involved. It is important to note, however, that all staff who were asked accepted the invitation to be interviewed and have their comments recorded.

the aims of the researcher and the methods by which data were to be collected. At no stage was there any attempt to cover up what I was doing or hoped to achieve and whenever questions were asked by staff, or members of the Council, information was always freely given. However, it is naive to think that the findings of this type of research will please everyone. Many staff will probably feel exposed and threatened when their fears, qualms, apprehensions and doubts are presented on the written page for all to see. Some staff after their interviews asked for the tapes to be wiped clean and their requests have been strictly adhered to.

However, as Stenhouse (1988: 56) remarks with respect to the ethics of quoting those involved in the research, 'subjects cannot always see clearly the implications of their consent', but it cannot be stressed too often that it is not the intention of this research to present some 'exposé' of this School. Rather the objective is to highlight the consequences, often unappreciated and unintended, of the actions of some staff on other staff. The implications of the use of power and its relationship to their well-being, worth and professionalism, the effectiveness of the communication of values, goals and objectives by those in positions of authority are but some of the topics that will be developed in order to reach an understanding of the processes of change, the aim of this thesis.

Wherever possible it is the thoughts and feelings of staff which are cited in order to portray how they perceive the actions or in-actions of others and the effects they have on their ability to give of their best. The mood, fears and aspirations of the teachers are illustrated to see how they view change and the part they can play within the cycle of events as they unfold. The impression, therefore, that will be created is how staff feel about the School and their place within it and its effect on the processes of change. Their view may be false in the eyes of others, but it is still their view and their interpretation of events. If staff are of an opinion that a person is vindictive, uncommunicative and vengeful then that is their opinion and this, it is proposed, gives this research its inherent validity. Thus, as far as ethical considerations are concerned, people within the community of the School may be offended, personally slighted, disgusted or scandalised by what is portrayed here, but it is the individual's or group's opinions that are presented and, as such, give the data its relevance and legitimacy.

Every effort is made for the teachers themselves to voice their perceptions of reality. However, the interpretation of the data is squarely in the researcher's domain and his responsibility. As Geertz (1973: 15) so rightly points out:

... anthropological writings are themselves interpretations ... They are, thus, fictions; fictions in the sense that they are 'something made', 'something fashioned' - the original meaning of *fictio* - not that they are false, unfactual ...

It is hoped that what follows does justice to the teachers' honesty and integrity. They for one will be disappointed if this is not the case; others will no doubt be disappointed that this document exists at all.

The research is thus a case study of attempted change in one particular school. No comparisons between the findings presented here and other schools are undertaken as part of this thesis, nor is this desirable to do so based on the ontological premises of this research. All organisations are different because the culture of each organisation is different and, importantly, each individual within that organisation perceives that culture differently. It will be left to others to draw their own conclusions as to the transferability of the specific findings into the processes of change and to make correlations between their experiences and what is presented in this research.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

What this research hopes to achieve is to unmask the social dynamics of the institution under scrutiny in such a way as to shed light on problems of change that others in similar circumstances and educational institutions have experienced or are about to experience.

This study differs from Jackson's (1968) and Hayward Metz's (1978) qualitative research in that the focus will be on the teachers who wish to change the curriculum rather than what they are actually doing in classrooms. Unlike Wolcott's (1973) study of the lives of school principals my methodology will centre on active participation rather than observation, from an insider's, not outsider's, perspective. This research is similar to Fullan's (1978) account of curriculum innovation at Thornlea, a Canadian secondary school, but over a greater timeframe to allow a more detailed observation of school activities, a factor which Fullan (*ibid.*) suggests would have benefited his study.

The change process is also not seen, in this study, as simply a series of steps which must be taken, a blueprint to be followed to achieve success but rather a series of strategies and tactics which must reflect the particular culture of the institution. Without an intimate knowledge of this normative culture, its structure, politics, social and power dynamics and the perceptions of the actor's place within it, an appreciation of the complexity of the processes of change cannot be understood by those who wish to implement or research such change.

It is believed that this detailed case study might contribute to the understanding of the dynamic

nature of organisational change and the importance of the institutional culture as either a barrier or facilitator for the implementation of different curriculum ideas and initiatives.

The change process will be interwoven with the key concepts of organisational culture, power and authority, individual and group perceptions of reality, politics and social dynamics. Each of these themes will be defined in the context of the findings of this research juxtaposed against pertinent theory as each chapter unfolds.

The following chapter deals in greater depth with the methodology of this ethnographic study, explains why the qualitative, anthropological approach was chosen and gives details of the data collection procedures as they relate to this particular case study.

CHAPTER TWO

DISCOVERY AND EXPOSITION OF THE METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The major methodological challenge that faced me was to choose appropriate data collection techniques by which to address the fundamental issues that the research set out to study, in this case the processes of change or no-change¹ in a secondary school.

Finding a solution to this initial dilemma was critical to the validity and success of the research. As Fetterman (1989) states, the questions and answers the research hopes to confront precede choice of methodology. The method by which the research is undertaken, he says, is one of the more significant decisions a researcher must confront. This chapter focuses on the directions that were explored in order to produce a methodology which best suited the questions that were asked and one which, importantly, allowed flexibility in uncovering the answers.

The search for a research method began with the need to find a conceptual format that could deal with the cultural dynamics which influence how individuals and groups operate and work within the institution under scrutiny. The structure of this research needed to allow parameter definition but not to a point which limited holistic analysis. The process by which this methodology was achieved was not systematic but rather reflected a more eclectic and catholic approach to the problem and followed the themes described below. The objective was to find a suitable methodology which would be able to grapple with the known and unknown variables that might present themselves during the course of the data collection. The research techniques needed to be flexible and extend defined boundaries rather than limit them if they were to cope with the variables that formed the base of the culture which guided and underscored the change process at this School.

¹No-change is hereinafter used to refer to the antonym descriptor of the change process.

The conclusions reached from the following discussion form the structure of the research methodology adopted in this research. The key research processes and discovery strategies of anthropology are the central tenets of this research and constitute the foundation to the methods by which the data in this case study are investigated, collected and appraised. The anthropological research strategies will be outlined later in this chapter, but it is first necessary to discuss an ontological and necessarily personal perspective of how reality in this research will be viewed - how truth is perceived and the problems relating to researcher objectivity. What follows is an appraisal of the relativity of truth and the nature of 'being'.

AN ONTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

This section outlines the philosophical base from both personal and theoretical perspectives that form the ontological philosophy of this research. The boundaries of the research will be defined and personal perspectives given in order to facilitate the reader's understanding of the directions taken. Also a synopsis will be given of how the study has been conceptualised and why a particular methodology or philosophical stance has been used.

The actions of everyone are in some way influenced by the structural characteristics of the society in which they are raised and its values, ideals and culture. The following comment of Marx (1951[1867]: 225) could equally be applied to the cultural domain:

... men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.

This thesis, which is based on the premise that human perception, by ontological definition, is unique, would be incomplete unless the ideas that evolved in my former years are briefly espoused in order to make plain my philosophical stance and cultural perspective. The research methodology that is adopted here depends heavily on my dispassionate objectivity within a very subjective environment. I might quote as equitably as possible from the data of the individual's or group's perceptions of organisational reality and observed events but their interpretation and selection is my responsibility. To achieve reflexivity my philosophical reasoning and cultural heritage will also be plainly stated. The stance that will be taken in this thesis is that my cultural knowledge **assists** the research process and such 'cultural baggage' is not viewed as a hindrance to successful analysis but as a **positive** factor in the interpretation

and understanding of the organisational culture of this School.

In The Beginning

My personal values and beliefs reflect to a high degree the influences of my formative environmental experiences at home, school and university. Why I became a teacher, how I appraise the learning environment of schools and the sources of my personal philosophy affect how I view the problems associated with this study. Arguments that have been documented between Greenfield (1975) and other theorists, notably Hills (1980), concerning the premises that under-pin their respective views on organisational theory, are essentially disagreements on how each person conceptualises reality and human intention and interaction. These arguments have no absolute answer. Each author is left essentially to agree or to disagree with the other.

As it is proposed that my cultural heritage will facilitate the interpretation of the teachers' perceptions of organisational reality, it is important that my views on reality and existentialism are outlined.

My experience has been in the area of quantitative science and mathematical analysis. Statistics, regression analyses are the tools of this trade, with clearly defined parameters and boundary conditions. I feel more at home and comfortable in this quantitative arena, being fully conversant with most of its techniques. Such a research strategy would have been the easier option but I found it difficult to envisage how a statistical analysis, or analyses, would help unravel anything other than that contained within the constricting boundaries and parameters the numbers defined. For example, previous personal studies on the relationship of class size to 'effective' teaching (see Chapter 3, Footnote 3) revealed that statistical methodologies invariably uncovered more questions than they revealed answers. However, those books which researched the topic from a qualitative perspective seemed to strike nearer to the truth.² Such studies were often teacher and student centred. Therefore, quite early in the process of seeking a suitable methodology the idea of a quantitative approach was dismissed. This style of analysis was considered too linear, too specific and would unnecessarily limit the range of possibilities and variables of the organisational culture. The validity and usefulness of quantitative research in making any meaningful conclusions as to the nature of the social interactions of an organisation, except within the confines of its predetermined conditions, was questioned and subsequently rejected.

I left my high school vowing never to return there, and never did. The thought that some day I

² See L. Berg's book on Risinghill Comprehensive School in England.

would have the urge to return and be part of a system that in my teenage years I had come to loathe was totally anathema. During those adolescent years books were never read, except those made compulsory in English lessons. The memorable highlight of the study of English literature was found in the first chapter of Steinbeck's 'Grapes of Wrath' when the hero comes down to breakfast scratching his testicles. My appreciation of books began and ended there. As a true philistine, classical music was a foreign noise; the sounds heard were those of Bob Dylan, The Moody Blues, Led Zeppelin and Procul Harum, with not a counterpoint in sight.

At university Applied Sciences, specifically Geophysics, were studied. The academic love of Mathematics, Latin, Geography and, later, Geology (a reflection of a quantitative, analytical and rational intellectual heritage) began to fade as university life broadened those early, limited horizons. Books began to mean something and Flaubert, Gide, Sholokhov, Orwell, Huxley and many, many others were read in a hasty desire to make up for the lost time. The music changed to Bach, Ravel and Debussy: life just did not seem to be so simple or rational any more.

After graduation came work on seismic ships in the North Sea looking for oil and exploration for uranium ores in Southern Ireland, then travelling through Europe and the Middle East. But something always seemed to be missing and then, by chance (by chance? - there are no psychic accidents or random events says Freud) books by C.G.Jung and then A.S.Neill (1915,1962,1973) were read. My days as a geophysicist were numbered and a career in teaching was about to begin.

My views on education are those echoed by the Iranian scholar Majid Rahnema (1985, quoted in Feyerabend 1987: 298):

... the school system served as a rather efficient channel of sieving out, into the power Establishment, the most ambitious, and sometimes the brightest, aiming at personal and professional fame. It also, paradoxically, did serve as a 'cultural medium' to some outstanding individuals, among them radical thinkers and revolutionaries who used some of its unique learning resources for their own liberating purposes. Yet, on the whole, it soon became an 'infernal machine' which distinguished itself in the systematic organisation of excluding processes against the poorest and the powerless ... The old days when every adult was a teacher were over. Now, only those certified by the school system according to its devised criteria, could have the right to teach. Education had become a scarcity.

I thought, however, that I was different and agreed with Feyerabend (ibid.: 305) when he comments that 'one must live the life that one wants to change'. I wanted to be the person who

was 'someone inside or outside a system who had the motive to make something happen' (Schein 1985: 299). Changing the system which had bored my formative years was the driving force behind enrolment in a postgraduate course in education. The teaching of Mathematics, Physics and Geology was chosen, subjects which presented more of a challenge in their teaching than in a mastery of their content. However, in the first years of a career in education the words of Jackson's (1968: vii) thoughts on life in the classroom were beginning to make sense in that teaching is 'too complex an affair to be viewed or talked about from any single perspective'. I learnt to teach heuristically as the year's postgraduate course certainly gave very little guidance as to the social dynamics of schools and the effect they had on the learning process. The theories the lecturers pronounced did not reflect their victims' opinions, but rather the corridors of their own institutions and academic heritages, their cultural settings and not the learning processes and motivations of those on the receiving end of their apathy, enthusiasm or zeal.

Through experience I understood that the teaching 'game' was not so straightforward as I anticipated. After four years of educational angst and frustration in a British high school, I obtained a position as Head of Mathematics and Science at an international school in Rome. The students there were cosmopolitan, enthusiastic, highly motivated and a joy to teach. It was this break from traditional schools that restored my flagging will to change the educational world and rejuvenated my waning energies. After two years an appointment as Deputy Headmaster at another international school, this time in the hinterland of the Gold Coast of Queensland, enabled me to be in a position to influence more directly the learning environment of students. However, 'trial and error' was not an easy or effective way to try and organise the day-to-day life of a school and as the years passed it became increasingly clear that to have any real impact in instigating change a more theoretical perspective was needed. A return to university was thus precipitated with the aim of understanding more fully how school organisational cultures develop, how they change or stagnate and how people really communicate so that it might be possible to create a school environment where learning was the primary goal. The motivation to make the decision to resign and undertake another postgraduate course is echoed in Isabella Paoletti's (1990: 7) aspirations and expectations when, in her introduction to her thesis on social structure, she states that:

... teaching has no value, or better has a negative value; only learning is important and the process of helping others to learn. I think there are a lot of people who would agree with that sentence, but they, in the meantime, keep teaching.

Similarly, I sympathise with Paoletti's (op.cit.: 9) views and frustration when she expresses her feelings that:

... [I am] powerless, imprisoned in my condition, unable to adapt myself to the situation or to modify it according to my expectations.

My present study and role as a change agent have allowed time to focus on educational objectives and to explore and experience the avenues that open as ideas were clarified and unearthed as the operations of the School were researched. An opportunity was presented to document the interaction of the staff at the School at the centre of this study, to understand their aspirations, thoughts and motivations and to monitor the effects of institutionalised power and tradition on the processes of change from their standpoint. This opportunity was thus seized readily.

A qualitative study allows the broad canvas to be painted from the observations, conversations and interviews that form the ingredients of the collage. Observation prompts the pursuit of the theory and stimulates ideas, concepts and new ways of analysing what is being recorded and observed on a daily basis. The researcher is a 'participant observer' in the daily lives of those with whom he or she works, argues and socialises. There are no easy solutions or given parameters or boundaries to explain the initial confusion, paradoxes and contradictions that are part of such a complex, but stimulating environment as a school.

Progress is slow. I am reminded of my efforts trying to learn German during a past summer spent working on an Austrian farm. In a high Alpine village near Innsbruck, cleaning out the *mist*³ from the cow stalls and cropping the hay on a farm, my German was too limited to allow effective communication between myself and the farmer and his wife. They spoke absolutely no English so any conversation had to be in their local *plat deutsch*. At every available break in the work routine I would sit outside the hay barn, pick up my German grammar book that I had left there, and study new words and phrases. After the ten minute break the newly acquired insights, skills and theory would immediately be put into practice. It was a quick and fast way to learn the language and by the end of the summer season I was able to communicate with reasonable fluency.

Likewise, during this study the pursuit of pertinent theory has played an integral role in understanding the social dynamics of this School. The reading required is naturally very eclectic but gradually patterns emerge and ideas become more focused. A process of natural, theoretical selection occurs where some concepts which do not make sense in the light of what has been observed are dismissed and other more pertinent theories begin to play a more dominant role in the conceptual understanding of how the School 'speaks' and the parts played

³ Austrians colloquialism for cow manure.

by the individuals and groups within its culture.

The conceptual constructs which form the foundation to the methodology of this research mirror my learning process on that Alpine farm. Theory is conceptualised through observation which in turn feeds from new theory to form a language which can be used to communicate with the 'natives' of this School. The research methodology has to be flexible and fluid to allow the symbiosis of theory and practice to create a unique picture of daily life. It must be understood that the social dynamics of this School are unique and even if there are distinct similarities with other institutions the methodology must accommodate this originality.

Wolcott (1988: 203) rather pessimistically suggests that he does not believe that:

... educational research of any type has yet had an impact on educational practice.

This may or may not be the case but he is perhaps underestimating the significance and impact of a school's culture on the 'shadow' between theory and practice. The research methodology that is chosen in this study adequately gives me the ability and flexibility to understand this dichotomy.

I played, and continue to play, an active role in the life of this School both as an agent of change and as a teacher. My actual role as a researcher will be discussed later but it is essential to state quite clearly that my cultural heritage is considered a key facilitating factor in this research. It enables a fuller understanding of the culture simply because I am in the position of comprehending the subtleties of action and, particularly non-action⁴, of the teachers because of this cultural linkage.

Ontology: A Necessarily Personal Perspective

The methodology of this thesis is structured and designed to examine the perceived realities of the individual and the group towards the management and organisational culture of this School, and to discover why people do what they do and the context in which these actions take place. The methodology is focused on the notion that organisations are multiple realities, that an absolute truth concerning the interactions of the persons involved is an illusory goal and that a subjective examination by me of the unfolding events is simply unavoidable. 'Men

⁴The word '**non-action**' is used to describe the actions of the teachers who do **not** act for certain reasons. The descriptor covers those events when the teacher decides not to talk, not to become involved, not to participate in arguments or disagreements or not to speak out about something.

must know', says Francis Bacon (1944[1605], quoted in Greenfield 1980: 26):

... that in this theatre of man's life, it is reserved only for God and angels to be lookers-on.

The thoughts of Greenfield (1980) are echoed in the methodology of this study when he states that organisations cannot be studied 'scientifically' (using the term in its conventional sense, that is reflecting a quantitative approach). There is a basic failure of this approach to grapple with the complexities that face the researcher both on an existential and practical level. The methodology, which is chosen and outlined below, allows a freedom to explore the change process without the hindrance of the limitations of statistical analysis or quantitative dogma. The problems that need to be addressed follow no predestined path nor will their resolution benefit from the constrictions of an 'a priori' ideology. Organisations are manifestations of human existence and reflect the processes of the mind and its will. The research methodology must reflect such complexities.

Greenfield (1980: 35-37) divides the task of uncovering organisational realities into two approaches:

... we can reason logically about what lies behind the wall of reality and infer from 'facts' in this world what ultimate reality is,

or

... seek elements of truth also from insight, image, art and all the ways of knowing that rely upon intuitive, self-oriented, and non-rational perception.

This research begins without such dichotomies or alternative methodologies. The methods are not believed to be mutually exclusive and both have an important place in this research as long as the context of each analysis is clearly defined and inferences that are drawn relate to the data produced.

The problem of any research relates to the assumption that in some way the observed phenomena can reflect reality. Puligandla (1988: 185) distinguishes between the perceived and actual reality, citing that phenomena are essentially relative, interconnected and conditioned, whereas reality is absolute, unconditioned and supramundane:

... reality and appearances are not two numerically different ontological realms, the relation ... is a one-many relation.

Levi-Strauss (1978: 16) approaches the problem from a different, cultural perspective when he

comments that:

... the primitive mind tries to understand the totality of the universe, whereas the modern mind tries to divide the difficulty into as many parts as were necessary in order to solve it.

However, the objectives of the 'primitive' or 'modern' approach are essentially the same, that is, to reconstruct the events of the past and present in order to predict the future - to comprehend and understand the replicability of phenomena in order to find meaning in our environment and daily lives in order to change what needs to be changed. As Mikol (1980: 225) states:

... the phenomenological inquiry ... has drawn the reader's attention to the contrasts existing between the different approaches to reality ... Data are selected on the basis of a person's purposes and expectations and on the meaning one attributes to one's philosophical commitments.

This duality between reality and appearances does not, however, hinder the search for meaning but reduces it to a realistic perspective and allows the discovery of deeper levels of meaning and, in essence, multiple realities. From either side of the debate, whether from scientists of quantum physics or believers of Indian Vedanta philosophy, there is a realisation that a complete understanding of reality is illusory and that, as Stephen Hawking (1988: 174) comments in his book on time:

... even if there is only one possible unified theory, it is just a set of rules and equations. What is it that breathes fire into the equations and makes a universe for them to describe?

Whatever the basis of personal belief, be it Sartre's (1948) existentialism, solipsism, Heisenberg's (1958) uncertainties on the nature of matter or Feyerabend's (1989) practical relativism, the answer to the dilemma of our perception of reality and our ability to uncover any fundamental truths cannot be achieved merely from the abstract manipulation of words and concepts. Descartes' (1668[1637]) practical realism, a quest for certainties, or the proposal that human statements can be objective are flawed as they beg the question 'who is totally objective?' My presumption to that answer is no one.

Schein (1985: 91) attempts to delineate reality by classifying it in terms of:

- i. external physical reality; empirically determinable by objective tests.

- ii. social reality; matter of consensus not externally testable.
- iii. individual reality; learned from experience, having a quality of absolute truth for that person.

In the world of Science 'it' is becoming increasingly difficult to justify. Questions about space and time, which seem entirely reasonable, comprehensible and spoken of daily, cannot now always be meaningfully answered, which as Heisenberg (op.cit.) states has profound implications for the nature of reality and our view of the world. However, without pushing the philosophical boundaries too far, for practical purposes this research's methodology needs to reflect this multiplicity of realities. Even though each of Schein's divisions are culturally simplistic, and reflect more Western ideas and perceptions than acceptable generalities, his classifications are a starting point for this research.

Puligandla (1988: 193-4) puts the matter succinctly and his thoughts mirror the philosophical threads through this research and methodology:

... reality in itself has no nature or structure; only appearances of reality can have natures and structures, and appearances are always in relation to a perceiver, or inquirer ... the observer and the observed form an indivisible whole.

Duigan (1981: 290) paraphrases a sobering line from Nietzsche, saying there is no 'dogma of immaculate perception'. This simple truth is an essential premise of this research. I will not perceive everything 'as it is', an absolute reality, but one which is bound within my own cultural blinkers and interpretations. The 'reality' which is portrayed in this research is that of staff of the School and even though their reality is ontologically relative and not absolute, it is still their reality and they act in accordance with their perceptions of it. A composite picture of reality, therefore, will be created from the views and perspectives of the teachers at this School.

Wherever possible, bearing in mind Geertz's (1973) caution that it is the researcher who is interpreting these multiple images, the teaching staff's reality will be portrayed. It will be left to me to try and make some sense of this imagery and allow themes to emerge which will form the framework for the eventual analysis on organisational change. When the data have been collected it is my analysis that will tie the threads together.

Knowledge and Truth

My objective is to try to view this School as Barley (1983) views his anthropological study of West African tribes-people and Laurens van der Post (1955,1964,1968) the Bushmen of the Kalahari; that is, with a non-judgemental and open mind with an intrinsic respect for the community involved. However, unlike Barley, the cultural dimension of this School is not markedly different between the researcher and the researched; the research takes place in a familiar society. The research, it will be proposed, is aided and not hampered by this cultural similarity.

Notions of human objectivity and subjectivity will arise whenever humanity is viewed as every knowledge claim will, by its very nature, be a relative truth, or relative falsehood. Each statement will be made relative to a particular cultural framework and, even in a purely quantitative study, there are no absolute claims that can be made with absolute certainty.⁵ A statistical approach is not automatically more objective, as numbers themselves have no intrinsic meaning and must be seen as simply a reflection of the boundaries in which they operate; their interpretation is, again, a human affair.

The type of flexible research methodology required in this study must recognise the potential for differing and varied perceptions and conceptions of truth and knowledge and as such are only limited by the researcher's and researched's imagination, or lack of. The emphasis of analysis in this research falls equally on me and on those who are studied. It is not only the teachers' perceptions of the organisation that are the focus but also their interpretation by me.

Puligandla (1988: 184) attempts to explain the dilemma between absolute knowledge and the validity of human perception. He expresses the problem in terms of Vedanta mysticism and the concept of 'superimposition', that is:

... the activity on the part of the knower of imposing names and forms, concepts and precepts, on the non-dual reality which in itself is nameless and formless.

The researcher's and the researched's claims and observations necessarily stem from their superimpositional framework, in other words their own psychological patterns. Puligandla (op.cit.: 195) deals with the idea of absolute truth by calling it 'Brahman' but recognises that:

... every phenomenon is an appearance and hence sublatable by other

⁵ It could also be stated that even in a highly specific and defined piece of quantitative research the results are only as good as the accuracy of the boundary conditions and complete identification of the variables.

phenomena, no phenomena can be thought of as ultimate, and no judgement about it can be regarded as absolute truth or descriptive of ultimate reality.

This implies that knowledge cannot represent a reality independent of the inquiry and that truth is valid to all those who conduct their research within similar conceptual, psychological and cultural frameworks.

Scruton (1981: 84) recognises this distinction between absolute and relative truth when he comments that:

... we value Shakespeare not because he voiced his own sentiments sincerely but because he represented the reality of human nature. That is like being true to the facts.

Whatever the process or methodology, be it phenomenological or analytical, the validity of any research is reflected in these glimpses of reality which those reading can recognise as being 'true to the facts'. The knowledge of the world that we recognise as being true inevitably bears the hallmark of those who are perceiving it. The two cannot be separated and will remain a reflection of the inquirer's mental condition. However, as Puligandla (1988: 185) goes on to say:

... it is a common affliction to think that 'relative truth' means falsehood. 'Relative truth' means truth certifiable by all inquirers who are constituted alike and conduct their inquiry with a given framework.

What is it that allows us to recognise the genius of the writings of Shakespeare which command our respect and appreciation as to the valid portrayal of the world around us? Lutz and Ramsey (1974), Mikol (1980), Feyerabend (1987) and Puligandla (1988), amongst many others, try to explain and comprehend the link that binds the observation of events with their interpretation; that is the connection between the realities of those researched and the interpretations made by the researcher. Feyerabend (op.cit.: 212) describes this as 'instinctive knowledge', a consequence of powerful analytical processes which draw from the coalescence of ideas and concepts which have 'passed tests by a great variety of qualitatively different experiences'.

The analytical processes of this research are therefore inductive rather than deductive. As Mikol (1980: 4) suggests an attempt must be made to subdivide:

... an invisible mass of reality in order to look at it theoretically piece by piece

and then ... to creatively extract its meaning through the process of reconstruction.

This process requires observation and inductive reasoning to secure the foundations from which knowledge can be derived. In terms of research methodology the approach reflects Glaser and Strauss' (1967) grounded theory and Polya's (1954: 55) comments that:

Induction results in adapting our minds to the facts. When we compare our ideas to the observations there may be agreement or disagreement. If there is agreement we feel more confident of our ideas; if there is disagreement, we modify our ideas. After repeated modifications our ideas may fit the facts somewhat better. Our first ideas about any new subject are almost bound to be wrong, at least in part; the inductive process gives us a chance to correct them, adapt them to reality.

This research essentially agrees with these sentiments but with the qualification that subliminal understanding and instinctive knowledge should not be over-looked. Instinctive knowledge can be achieved through extensive involvement with the culture itself, to live the teaching staff's lives as one's own.

The researcher is the conduit between the data and the theory, how he or she imagines, explores and thinks is part of the creative leap. The researcher's creativity distinguishes the simple reporting of events from the conceptualisation and generation of theory. The methodology of research must be versatile enough to allow inductive and plausible reasoning and the development of instinctive knowledge.

It is within these conceptual boundaries that this research's methodology will be defined. This community cannot be portrayed or analysed with Aristotelian logic but must reflect an interconnection of cultural phenomena, ruled and dominated by those who exist within its boundaries. The methodology that is chosen for this research must reflect these boundaries and perspectives of reality. The researcher, it is suggested here, cannot stand outside the community, viewing it 'objectively', or likewise simply proceed along the path of his or her own 'subjectivity', but must voice personal sentiments and interpretations in relation to the data observed. This data must reflect the realities of those who live and work within this School's community. It is their opinion that portrays the culture of the institution because it is the teachers who understand and portray their community best not me, even though I may be fully involved as an active participant. It is philosophical conceit to assume the outsider understands the culture better than those who live within it. As Geertz (1973: 15) reminds the researcher, 'anthropological writings are themselves interpretations, and second and third order to boot'.

AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH

The work of the anthropologist embedded in 'foreign' communities is a fundamentally human affair which highlights the limitations of language. Barley's (1983) venture to the jungles of West Africa and his story of an innocent anthropologist taking notes in a mud hut perhaps typify the visions of the ethnographer finding out about different cultures, far from the maddening crowds, working in a remote tropical paradise. The study of similar works - Malinowski's (1922) journey to the Trobriand Islands, Oscar Lewis' (1964) research of an impoverished Mexican household and Laurens van der Post's (1955, 1964 and 1968) travels through south-west Africa to live with the Bushmen of the Kalahari - all highlight the importance of words in describing the environment in which they find themselves. Their works give a feel for the places they have visited, the people that they have grown to love or hate, and a degree of understanding of the cultures they have visited.

However, the position of the anthropologist who is on the outside, detached from those observed, is not the proposed stance in this study. I do not subscribe to Barley's (1983: 25) notion that:

At least all one can say of the Anthropologist is that he is a harmless drudge, it being one of the professed ethics of the trade to interfere as little as possible in what one observes.

One can sympathise with the motives of Barley, not trying to sully the undisturbed waters with his own cultural prejudices, but it is conjectured here that much cultural understanding is missed because he is uninvolved emotionally and physically with the daily round and ceremony of the locals. He is an insider whose physical presence belies his cultural and emotional detachment. Mutual conflict and passion are missing from the relationship which so often reveal far more about the motives, designs, thoughts and fears of the people and their culture than just passive observation.

How is it possible, therefore, to 'grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realise his vision of his world' (Malinowski 1922: 25)? The researcher, says Malinowski (op.cit.: 19), can observe:

... the subtle yet unmistakable manner in which personal vanities and ambitions are reflected in the behaviour of the individual and the emotional reaction of those who surround him.

The portrayal of events must strike a chord with those on the inside as well as those on the outside. Geertz (1973: 20) puts the matter succinctly when he suggests that human behaviour is too complex and that:

Cultural analysis is (or should be) guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses, not discovering the Continent of Meaning and mapping out its bodiless landscape.

The descriptive approach of the anthropologist is used in this research but a greater emphasis is placed on the actors' portrayal of the dynamics and culture of the institution to explain the processes of change and no-change. Also, there is no researcher detachment from the daily ceremony and ritual but full involvement as an active member of the School community to a point where I am seen as a bona-fide member of the staff, not just an interloper 'doing research'.

But how can this help the researcher to explore and understand the motives and reasons for the actions of those in the community? Is it possible for a researcher to understand culturally another person unless they are of the same culture themselves or have remained with the community over an extended period of time, learning their language myths and rituals and involving themselves fully in the life of the people? Anthropological research is not short of descriptions, narrations and 'facts' but is faced with the problem of deciding what to intelligently do with them. Wolcott (1988: 190) suggests that if answers are to be forthcoming then an appropriate timeframe must be chosen.

The anthropologist is there to stay, to become, for a while part of the village scenery ... to remain at least long enough to see a full cycle of activity, a set of events usually played out in the course of a calendar year.

With these sentiments I agree. If the jungle, so close to home, in the local secondary school is to be interpreted (in this case, the dynamics of attempted curriculum change) a case study methodology using anthropological research strategies needs to be applied over an extended period of time. A long term study is mandatory in this research if the culture of this particular School is to be understood sufficiently to discern not only the nuances of body language and speech of the teachers but also to appreciate the hidden meanings behind not just the actions of staff but importantly their in-actions. It is much more difficult to notice the importance of missing actions than those which are demonstrable and yet often it is what the teachers do not do that is just as significant as what they do do.

This point is critical in establishing the case for a culturally connected researcher as opposed to an outsider who might bring a keener, unfamiliar eye to another's culture. Not only must a long term study be undertaken but also the data need to be collected by a researcher who understands these cultural nuances through past personal experiences.

It is this approach where the research methodology adopted in this study parts company with some anthropologists. My cultural baggage is used to advantage to understand more fully the subtleties of daily life and to comprehend the realities of the teachers involved in this process of curriculum change. I have a greater chance of understanding the culture of this School and the actions and perceptions of staff owing to this cultural nexus.

As Lutz and Ramsey (1974:6) remark in this respect, it is not necessary to review the natives' culture with an uncluttered and unfettered mind neglecting the researcher's own 'cultural baggage':

It is recommended to those who are so burdened, to use this baggage to their advantage and make their readers aware of the pitfalls of the biases taken into the field with the researchers.

The anthropological methodology adopted here centres on the need to experience, first-hand, the organisation; to get into 'the field' not for a brief duration but long enough to allow me to become part of the landscape and not just a fly on the wall or part of a 'blitzkrieg' assault (Rist 1990: 9). This process cannot happen through questionnaires or through surveys (unless they themselves are seen as a behavioural device) and as Mintzberg (1979: 586) rightly remarks in this respect:

It is their (organisations) inherent complexity and dynamic nature that characterises phenomena .. Simplification squeezes out the very thing on which the research should focus.

This research's methodology attempts to analyse the symbolic side of an organisation and the nature of multiple realities within or e environment. Or as Harman (1988: 5) suggests:

Those who study purportedly rational organisations have in the main ignored intangible and seemingly unformed culture in order to be hard-headed about such problems of management ... that could most readily be quantified or concretely depicted.

'Doing ethnography', remarks Geertz (1973: 10), 'is like trying to read a manuscript - foreign,

faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventional graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behaviour'. The ethnographic approach maintains its roots firmly in the source of its data, 'grounded' (after Glaser and Strauss 1967) in the 'imponderabilia of actual life' (Malinowski 1922: 18) and focusing on behaviour and culture in an attempt to uncover what is happening, or has happened, and why, within a social framework. There is a constant interplay between the observed realities and their conceptualisation. If there is convergence between the two there is greater confidence in the emerging ideas and thoughts. However, if there is disagreement it is not a disaster but a chance to change impressions and rethink conclusions.

It is necessary to comprehend the lives of the people, their values, rituals, actions and perceptions before one can make any meaningful conclusions or predictions. The real world is not atomistic but holistic, phenomena cannot be separated from the actual events.

The anthropological methodology suits the requirements of this study whereby the culture of the School can be seen as a dynamic force. Normative conflict is accounted for and the subjective nature of reality is accommodated. This methodology facilitates a flexible approach to the study of this culture rather than limiting the variables of the problem which this work seeks to resolve.

Strategies are incorporated in this research which facilitate the development of theory from the data, ground up, and which allow me to enter the field not with an empty mind but an open one which recognises new ideas and solutions.

CASE STUDY AS A METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This research seeks to understand one particular case of curriculum-based change in a secondary private school, its complexities and idiosyncrasies as a dynamic bounded system which portrays educational problems in their personal and social setting. As Stenhouse (1988: 49) remarks with respect to the case study approach:

In ethnography, a single case is studied in depth by participant observation supported by interview, after the manner of cultural or social anthropology, which concentrates on the understanding of human societies and cultures, particularly through the observation and interpretation of inter-personal relations in the context of an emphasis on custom and institutions.

This methodological framework requires a close, contemplative and responsible observation of

others in the search for 'sweet water' (Stake 1988: 259), 'sustaining, refreshing - patterns of meaning'. This case study does not aim to depict the whole story but details vignettes which are interpretatively used to characterise the culture of the community studied.

The research strategy is dependent on the 'natives' and my perspectives of cultural reality and from our insights understanding and answers emerge which address the questions posed by the case study. Power, conflict, politics, organisational culture and educational values and goals are some of the elements which constitute the unfolding dynamics in this research. By observing and interacting with the teachers involved I can note the nuances of the changing situations as they unfold, identify the key players within the School's community, notice who the power brokers actually are, record the effects of the institutional culture and investigate new areas of interest as they arise. As Becker and Geer (1982: 240) comment, 'the participant observer constantly redesigns his study as he uncovers new data'.

The following summary (adapted from Feyerabend 1987: 304) encapsulates the framework and methods of this case study more than any other.

1. The way in which problems are attacked and solved depends on the circumstances in which they arise, the (formal, experimental, ideological) means available at the time and the wishes and demands of the researcher. There are no lasting boundary conditions of research.
2. The way in which problems of society and the interaction of cultures are attacked and solved also depend on the circumstances in which they arise, the means available at the time and the wishes of those dealing with them. There are no lasting boundary conditions of human action.
3. Humanity must conform to conditions that can be determined independently of personal wishes and cultural circumstances.
4. There must be a rejection of the assumption that it is possible to solve cultural issues without close participation in and observation of the activities of the people concerned.

The frameworks and chronologies of change have been well documented by Rogers (1983), Bennis (1966,69,79), Baldrige (1979), Havelock (1973) and many others, but the aim of this research is not simply to monitor events as they unfold. Rather, it is to note what actually happens, to relate the forces and counter-forces of change in their social context, to outline

both the humble and dominant personalities which create the total picture and not just pieces of the jigsaw. The objective, therefore, is to place the changes to the curriculum in their organisational context, a cultural framework which gives meaning to the adjustments that are made by staff within the institution. A case study methodology allows the flexibility and freedom to follow no predestined path nor be constrained by 'a priori' ideology. Organisations are not only manifestations of human existence which reflect the processes of the mind and its will but also purveyors of pre-existing structures, routines and rituals, through the perpetuation and acceptance by staff of the normative culture. The research methodology must reflect such complexities and hence its adoption.

DATA COLLECTION

Field research depends upon the researcher as well as the researched, the methods that have been used to collect the data and the explanations and conclusions as to their significance.

Throughout the three year period of data collection daily observations and recordings were made not simply relating to the framework of the processes of change itself but also of the daily routines and individual and group interactions. Three years is not an arbitrary length - long enough to allow an understanding of the periodicity and cyclic nature of the institution but not so long that the initial freshness and focus are lost.⁶

The main research techniques and data collection strategies employed in this study were participant observation and key informant interviewing.

Research Boundaries

As stated in the introduction to this research, this thesis centres on the processes of change themselves, not on the validity or otherwise of the curriculum and restructuring issues that are the focus of the staff. Initially a comparison was to be made with other institutions which had undertaken similar changes to see how their new structures were implemented and to assess their successes and failures in order to broaden the outcomes of this inquiry.⁷ However, it became clear from the first stages of this research that the nature of the culture of the institution, outlined by examples in Chapter 4, would be a deciding factor in the mechanisms behind the change processes. No other similar case studies analysed gave sufficient

⁶ It should be noted, in this regard though, that it became increasingly difficult towards the end of this period of time, to remain independent of the daily politicking and to resist the temptation of allowing my values and goals to distort the image of the institution.

⁷ See, for example, Laird's (1990) studies on Vertical Semester Organisation and curriculum change at Uralla Central School, Walcha Central School, Bowrowa Central School, Quirindi Central School, Sarah Redfern S.H.S. and Toormina High School. Also Cohen and Maxwell's (1985) study of The Entrance School.

information from which to draw valid parallels with the data observed here. Unless there was more detailed information on the culture of a particular school such comparisons could only be of limited value.

The research, therefore, focuses on the teaching staff of this School, from the Headmaster down to the 'first-year-out' teacher. It will be left to others more attuned to their own experiences to decide whether parallels can be drawn from the conclusions made in this case study.

No interviews were actively sought with the secretarial staff unless their responsibilities extended into the academic side of the running of the School. Many conversations, however, were recorded with these staff, as they had useful and perceptive insights into how the teaching staff operated, but the responses were unsolicited. The P & F were also not officially approached but, again, information continued to flow on an informal basis when members heard of the research being undertaken. Their input as a collective body into the change process was, after initial approaches by the Headmaster, minimal. However their impact on a cultural and political level could not be ignored for, as the paying clients of the organisation, their voices and concerns are often mirrored and recognised within the staff.

Former teaching and non-teaching members of the School were interviewed as their views aided the setting of the stage on which the actions of the staff were played. Students were not interviewed as they were given no part to play in the design of the curriculum by the teaching staff, but again their informal opinions and thoughts were documented and assimilated to create a fuller picture.

Council members' opinions were likewise not sought as their involvement in curriculum matters was minimal. The Council's approval of such significant issues would naturally need to be forthcoming but only at a much later stage of the change process and once the Headmaster had felt comfortable with the submitted curriculum proposals.

The boundaries of this research were thus focused almost entirely from the standpoint of the academic staff at the School who were the key players and informants. It is their realities that are analysed, their visions of the frameworks of power and authority that are probed. The research is essentially their story, their pictures and perceptions of how they perceive this School because, simply, it is they who are asked or made to implement change, it is they who initiate, push or reject its acceptance.

The Researcher's Status

My role is that of an insider, a member of the School teaching staff who is treated as a professional equal and part of the organisation. This approach limits the effects of my presence, capitalises on my knowledge of educational environments, and allows a continual, day by day, observation and analysis of the organisation.

However, the above scenario needs to be qualified with the realisation that unless the community is completely unaware that organisational research is taking place I cannot be an 'insider' in the strict definition of the word. Although not 'shouting it from the rooftops', I did not keep the processes of the research hidden and information on its goals was freely given. Many of the staff knew of the research and questioned closely its objectives and methodology. I was in the position of being inside the School and part of its functioning but, as Filstead (1970: 128) remarks:

... the investigator is never able to shake off entirely his role of outsider and I am in accord with those who maintain that it is not advisable for him to do so. Some exceedingly valuable information comes to the outsider simply because he is one.

It was not the intention, on ethical grounds more than anything else, to be the perfect spy, the 'fifth columnist', to blend completely into the landscape. That the position of a true insider was never attained was highlighted during the course of many discussions when the respondent or informant often began, for example, by saying, 'you will need to put this in your book'. Or during a meeting when a particularly revealing piece of information had surfaced or been expressed more astute members of staff would turn round and look at me as if to say, 'have you noted that'?

I did not, however, wear my role on my sleeve. Unlike Wolcott (1975: 122) I did not:

... carry my notebook everywhere and to write in it constantly, even intrusively, while people talking to me or in my presence.

However, like Wolcott (loc.cit.), it was my experience that:

... teachers are usually quite willing to respond to a personal invitation for an interview.

However, even though my position as a true insider was flawed, and the inherent weaknesses

and pitfalls of this stance appreciated (notably an awareness of the dangers of 'going native') this status was certainly preferable to the position that van Maanen (1979: 542) experienced during his ethnographic study of American police patrolling the city streets, when he writes that:

... the meaning of 'call-jumping' to an informant was self-evident and in no need of explanation while to me its meaning was almost totally obscured by my (initial) ignorance of police work.

Van Maanen (loc.cit.) goes on to say that:

... in the final analysis, fieldworkers can never fully apprehend the world of their informants in its 'natural' form. Even though ethnographers may sense the situated meanings various informants attach to the objects of their concern, such meanings will remain largely exhibits of how informants think rather than the 'true' meanings such objects have to informants.

As I had an intimate knowledge of 'teacher-speak' and educational cultures I almost never found myself in the position, like van Maanen, of being unable to decipher the cultural jargon. The language and its idioms were known and familiar to me and thus understanding the nuances of what was said was much more likely. This reduced the probability of semantic or semiotic misunderstanding and it was indeed possible to come closer to the 'natural form', that is, staff's perceptions of cultural realities. There was also less likelihood of not observing those cultural routines and symbols which were often left unsaid and only implicitly stated by the teachers.

Conflicting Roles and Ethical Dilemmas of the Researcher's Status

There were issues which had to be addressed regarding my status. This rapprochement was a double-edged sword, the closer one got this 'natural form' the harder it was to discriminate and contextualise this 'form'.

I faced the problem, outlined by Wolcott (1988: 190) that familiarity with the cultural context and setting of schools presents objectivity problems:

... trying to conduct observations as though we were in a strange new setting, one with which we actually have been in more or less continuous contact since the age of six.

This was very difficult to achieve. C.Wright Mills' (1970) 'social imagination' is a fine sentiment, but to be able to think oneself away from the daily round needed constant effort and reflection. It required that nothing was taken for granted, everything was questioned with a rejection of initial impressions and judgements. Even though the educational culture was familiar, little information was initially filtered by me as all behaviour, traditions and rituals were considered important enough to be recorded. An avalanche of data and thoughts resulted, but until general themes emerged it was considered wise to accept that everything was significant until proven to the contrary.

It might also be said that there was conflict between the dual role I played as a professional employee and researcher. As a paid employee of the School, I owed loyalty to the community and its aims and objectives. However, as a researcher, I could not make compromises which would prejudice the collection of data or the pursuit of certain courses of action. However, the essential difference between myself and other staff was that I was not beholden to the School. If I were to be sacked tomorrow there might be some initial financial difficulties but my personal career or livelihood were not at stake. There was professional involvement but not an emotional or financial one. In other words the cultural constraints with respect to the power vested in the hierarchical structures did not necessarily influence me directly.

An 'ethics list', however, was made which stated boundaries which would not be crossed. There would be:

- (a) no 'field stimulation' (Salancik 1979) - a manipulation of the system to respond when it might not have done so normally.
- (b) no breach of confidentiality.
- (c) no value judgements to be made and the respondents' points of view were to be **actively** sought.
- (d) professional duties were, at no time, to be compromised or neglected.

The first matter, which Salancik (1979,638) calls 'field stimulation', is a method which requires 'the investigator to interact with an organisation in order to stimulate it to act and to infer the organisation's nature from its responses'. There can be advantages within the framework that Salancik proposes, that is as an outsider to the organisation. However, for this research the observations were too delicately balanced to 'poke a stick at the ant hill'. I indeed had be careful not to gossip too much in order not to provoke or precipitate responses and create

replies to questions which reflected a sympathetic as opposed to personal rejoinders. In other words, respect was called for, both to the institution and to those who worked there.

At no time was confidentiality breached and approval was given to include all cited documents and letters written or received either by individuals or the curriculum committee. All recorded interviews were voluntary, however no one asked refused to be interviewed. Some of these tapes, however, were destroyed at the request of some teachers who feared that their comments might be prejudicial to their careers if the material was to be made public. Any matters which related to personal issues were excluded. Likewise, I made every effort not to make value judgements concerning the professionalism of the teachers. All opinions and points of view were thus actively sought and all data treated with respect even if it appeared not to be strictly relevant.

Spencer (1982: 28) recognises that the insider role gives one the greatest access to data', but as Burgess (1982:46) points out this ease of access is qualified by the ethical issues involved. He says:

... there are still unanswered questions about the ethics of reporting and publishing data that are gathered covertly.

There may be a conflict of interest between the fieldworker who desires to seek out the truth of the organisation as it appears to be, and the researched who may not want this perception of the truth to go beyond the boundaries of the institution. Fetterman's (1989: 120) comments that the researcher must 'take only pictures - leave only footprints' is a cosy ideal which lacks the reality of practice. If Fetterman's guidelines are to be followed sensitive issues and organisations would never be explored and their purpose exposed. One has to see only the number of theses on private schools which have a time-bar or embargo placed upon them to realise that not all schools would wish to be observed, analysed and results published. However, having created 'footsteps' I acknowledge that I am limiting the opportunity for other researchers to tread my path - this will probably be the case in this particular study owing to its controversial elements.

But the problem still remains that the finished research could contain material which many are likely to find offensive, either personally or as a slight to the institution. Such offence is not an intended objective but simply a probable outcome of this type of cultural research. Respondents may feel personally wronged and unjustly exposed and to this there can be no response except that efforts are made to report all viewpoints and expectations fairly and, mindful of ethical considerations, to protect their anonymity and confidentiality as much as

possible. However, the agony of perceived betrayal of confidences still exists.

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Wolcott (1988: 194) suggests that there is, in the role of a participant observer, a continuum from an 'active participant' or a 'privileged observer' to a position at the other end of the spectrum where the researcher is a 'limited observer'. Burgess (1982: 48) proposes that the role should be as an inside outsider, a position which:

... gives the participant observer greater opportunity of being able to step in and out of the setting under study: to participate and to reflect on the data that are gathered.

However, from a purely epistemological point of view, Jarvie (1982: 71) suggests that:

... if we think Science is served by entering into a full and equal relationship with the subjects of study, then both human and scientific integrity require that we do not artificially exclude from those relationships the tensions and clashes which enrich normal relationships.

The majority of the data were collected as an active participant, within the life of the School, rarely by a privileged observer (as this was not the role that was being played, or even sought) and a limited observer only in the sense that there were aspects of the larger community where the collection of the data was minimal, infrequent and unstructured. Burgess' (op.cit.) 'insider/outsider' perspective is only applicable here in its emotional rather than physical sense. My stance is more empathetic to Jarvie's (op.cit.) position.

An active participant opened many more doors than a passive observer could ever anticipate, in an intellectual and physical sense. To be a working member of the School, as well as a researcher and not an outsider, created opportunities for discovery both expected and unexpected. As a member of the Housemasters', Coordinators' and Curriculum Committee's meetings different aspects and profiles of individuals could be obtained. Triangulation was possible and differing perspectives gained as the participants' personalities mirrored or changed according to the setting and occasion. I was, therefore, able to be a member of the studied group and, over the period of three years, to become an accepted member of the community. I was able to gather data by participating in the daily life of the groups involved, watch the staff in the course of their teaching routines, informal and formal meetings and listen to their gossip and outpourings of frustration or joy, their values, goals and aspirations and the

highs and lows of their working lives.

However, there were key areas, such as the executive meetings, in which because of my professional position I could not participate. Other methods, namely the use of key informants, were used to gain data and insights. This information was useful but not essential to the main data collection target group, the teachers.

It was hard to stop collecting data and begin the process of writing and concluding when there was still more to learn, discover and research. McCall and Simmons' (1969) concept of 'efficiency' was foreign in this arena. What was a wasted conversation, an unproductive chat or any observation that could be ignored? It was often when surveying seemingly inefficient and marginal land that differing ideas and cultural divergences were unearthed. There was a point in rationalising one's time and limiting tangential forays but to sit down and work out an initial cost rationale and structure was too limiting and unnecessarily constricting. Many areas of the research were found to be unproductive but they could not be seen in advance and only with hindsight could they be acted upon accordingly to change the focus and centring of the data collection process.

As R. Metraux (1979: 1) remarks, commenting on Margaret Mead's methods of collecting field data, 'looking and listening, asking and answering questions - these are the indispensable tools of the anthropologist'. Fieldworkers, as Sanday (1979: 527) also comments:

... learn to use themselves as the principal and the most reliable instrument of observation, selection, coordination, and interpretation.

Emotional Responses of the Researcher

A negative aspect of case study methodology is the danger of the researcher getting too involved in the lives of those observed with the result that observations and interpretations might simply reflect personal cultural characteristics, structures and philosophies rather than those of whom one is trying to study.

In theory, participant observation requires an intellectual involvement on the part of the researcher, but an emotional detachment. This capacity for an empathetic, yet detached relationship with the researched is an oft stated prerequisite but sparingly explained. It was difficult **not** to become involved in perceived inadequacies and failures of the system of which one had become a member, especially as people were affected by the organisational outcomes.

However, emotional uninvolvedness was the key to my participant observation, a constant pulling back from the formation of value judgements, based essentially on personal prejudices and bias. Any emotional responses, reactions, negativity and anger at deemed professional incompetence had to be used by me and analysed themselves if progress was to be made in understanding the motivations and objectives of others.

As Gans (1982: 59) states, the researcher is:

... involved in personal situations in which he is, emotionally speaking, always taking and never giving... he pretends to participate emotionally when he does not.

I needed constantly to remember that there were motives for every action, be they conscious or subconscious, and that these motives tended to indicate alternative goals and objectives on the part of both myself and the researched.

This emotional uninvolvedness, the 'living-out' and understanding of other people's aspirations and intentions was a critical aspect of my 'objectivity' and required patience and a dispassionate emotional response. If 'objectivity' is to have any meaning in this case study it is in the ability to be aware of the domination of the researcher's own psyche in the interpretation of both one's own and others' motivations.

This emotional objectivity was laid at the table of my conscience to 'do the right thing' by those researched. Sanday (1979: 527) appreciates this commitment of the observer to the task of understanding by commenting that:

... in addition to the time required, participant observation saps one's emotional energy. The ethnographer who becomes immersed in other people's realities is never quite the same afterwards. The total immersion creates a kind of disorientation - culture shock - arising from the need to identify with and at the same time to remain distant from the process being studied.

The culture shock experienced here was my own culture shock, perhaps the most jolting shock of all as it questions the basis of my own beliefs, heritage, traditions and cultural values. George Spindler's (1973: 16) assessment is that cross-cultural experiences help with the interpretation of one's own culture. His says that:

... no anthropologist-of-education-to-be should start with his or her first significant piece of empirical research in a school in our own society.

Such a statement has merit for those who have never lived beyond their own cultural shores. Or to put this in a broader context the frustration and misunderstandings that are a part of everyday living in a foreign land, help one to recognise one's own cultural framework and to question all previously held, axiomatic beliefs. The variances, seemingly chaotic behaviours, foolishnesses and paradoxes which beset foreign daily life reflect the gulf between the two cultural paradigms. If a differing culture is to be analysed it is through these reactionary responses that understanding is born. All the more difficult, as Clyde Kluckhohn (1949: 16, quoted in Wolcott 1975: 115) suggests, if it is to be the fish who has to discover the existence of its own cultural waters; not impossible, just more difficult.

What is being observed?

If the organisation is to be observed in order to collect data, what is it that is actually being observed? All data collection (if it is to be manageable), requires continual selection and filtering. But this process itself needs clarification if the methodology of this thesis is to be critically analysed. The core of the data was actively centred and sought in the following areas,

- a. ritual, myth and traditional practices.
- b. paradoxical and illogical behaviour or routines.
- c. gossip.
- d. semiotic systems.
- e. variance, chaos and foolishness or seemingly irrational behaviour.
- f. structural, bureaucratic or institutionalised practices.
- g. power.
- h. normative conflict.
- i. belief, values and opinion.

Concentrating on these areas precluded that mass of data which pertained to a more mechanistic outlook. For example, no analyses were attempted of the quantitative interactions of staff, how often they interacted with others and for how long. No study was undertaken of how 'efficiently' staff managed their time or how competent they were in the classroom. These studies could have been undertaken but they themselves would not reflect the cultural aspects of the organisation and its impact on the change process, nor were they particularly relevant to the central focus of this study.

The information that was sought focused on those who made the decisions and those who had

input to the decision-making process with respect to curriculum issues. Who had the power, how it was used and the reaction of the teachers to these decisions and actions or non-actions were targeted. Those actions or non-actions which caused puzzlement and confusion were analysed and questioned. The routine and the non-routine were examined equally to generate ideas as to the characteristic behaviours of the individuals or groups. As the workings of the organisation began to unfold certain themes began to emerge and which generated a new source of questions and theories.

Areas or avenues could not all be pre-selected, rather, some were provoked from the data. The clues, therefore, as to their working stem from the topics listed above rather than from other areas.

The foci of the observations, therefore, were not just on the constant characteristics and regularities which often reflected the ritualistic, traditional practices of the School, but also, and perhaps more importantly, on the differences, conflicts and contradictions which became evident in the social settings. This was an epistemological decision, a planned part of the methodology to develop themes, over time, from the observations and discrepancies of the teachers' behaviours - to examine 'non sequiturs' those actions which did not appear to make sense, until upon further probing, conversations and observations led to a multitude of differing facets of the organisation and individual motivations. This human condition, this infinite source of social, internal conflict has profound implications for the processes of change, undercurrents which need to be mapped if the dynamics of change are to be understood.

Isabella Paoletti (1990: 158) notes on this matter that:

... to notice the regularities is seen to freeze the setting in its present image, while to notice the differences allows us to look at the instances of permanence and change within a setting. Noticing the regularities can be an obstacle to change, while noticing the differences can foster change.

Thus, the research strategy and goals that emerged relied upon observation and notice taken of the discrepancies and contradictions in the actions of those involved in the daily life of the School, as well as the routine. The differences and incoherent aspects of the participants' accounts, actions and behaviours were noted. The observations served many purposes besides the simple collection of data. The seemingly illogical actions stimulated new courses of reading and the search for ways to conceptualise what was actually happening with this School. It, in itself, generated new avenues to explore and ideas to contemplate, a never-ending wealth of information, a fractal imagery which seemed to multiply the more it was probed and dissected.

Historical Documents

The historical documents that were used in this research came exclusively from the published documents of the School, referred to in this research as, 'The School Prospectus', and the research completed by the School historian, named in this study as, 'The School Archivist'. This material was used in Chapter 1 to give a sense of the history and traditions of the School, the ideals which prompted the School's foundation and the changes that have been made over the years. The current published documents are cited to give the official goals and philosophical direction of the School.

Questioning and Key Informant Interviewing

This aspect of research was considered a primary source of data and the formation and generation of the concepts described in the following chapter relied heavily on the conversations and discussions with staff. Organised interviews did not commence until the later stages of the research from the beginning of Year 3, Term 4, to the end of Year 4, Term 1.⁸

Questioning and Informal Interviewing

From the commencement of the research in Year 1, Term 2, I observed staff discussing their daily lives, fears, hopes, values, goals and recorded their disgruntled murmurings and frustrations with the 'system'. Their opinions were noted and I indiscriminately asked questions on a variety of pertinent topics. I asked about their perceptions of other people, how they thought decisions were made and significant episodes which they believed had affected their judgement of how successfully the School was being run and their ability to implement change and control or voice their professional goals. These informal sessions occurred in the commonroom, in the corridors before lessons, over lunch, after school, at the 'pub' in social gatherings, in any place and at any time. These conversations could last two seconds or two hours, a throw away line or an in-depth discussion, the former often being remarkably illuminating as to the teacher's opinions. For example, one particular member of staff whom I thought felt secure in his tenure of employment, on hearing that he had won an award for teacher excellence remarked, 'at least the boss cannot sack me now'.

⁸ To give the reader a greater understanding of the timeframe of the process of change the events are dated according to the year and term after the commencement of the discussions to change the curriculum structures. The dating sequence was: 1992, Year 1; 1993 Year 2; 1994 Year 3; 1995 Year 4. See Chapter 1, footnote 13 for details of the terms.

Incidents which affected staff behaviour were routinely noted and the telling of these events in future chapters is used to convey a feel of the dynamics of the School and the emotions and feelings of staff. The culture of the School is more easily described through relating these 'stories', these cultural vignettes, than any other mechanism as they evoke the spirit and essence of this institution and the behaviour of the individuals and groups involved through their own phraseology and choice of words.

In all the above situations I made every effort to behave as I would have done if I were a 'normal' teacher at the School. On y one hat was seen to be worn, that of the professional teacher. Nevertheless the actions and observations of staff were obviously noted at the same time. If at a particular meeting it was inappropriate to make notes then I left the note-taking until afterwards. This was particularly the case when the conversations were either confidential or related to personal matters of staff. Such notes that were taken afterwards reflected this privacy. If it was inappropriate to ask questions at one particular point in time then they were not asked and I waited for another more suitable occasion.

I aimed not to find necessarily consensus of thought from staff, but more importantly how they themselves perceived the dynamics of the institution and their place within it; how their perceptions affected their thoughts, actions and non-actions. Central themes emerged as the months unfolded and these ideas were examined more closely in conjunction with a review of the relevant literature. These themes formed the central part of the thesis and became the source of the questions used in the organised interviewing sessions (see Appendix 11). The topics that evolved relate to power, politics, perceptions of reality (in other words one person may view the actions and words of others very differently), leadership and communication, expediency and truth and conflict. These basic concepts formed the cultural environment of the School, an understanding of which became the main focus of inquiry as the processes of change were recognised to be inexorably linked with how staff viewed the operation of this school and the possibility that they themselves could activate curriculum change.

It was only after a period of about two years that I began to see the connections between the actions and goals of the individuals and groups that constituted the School community. It took time for me to begin to understand why conflict arose, to appreciate the importance of the differing interpretation of words and actions by differing members of staff and the fact that some staff viewed the same situation and event in completely contrasting ways and the effect this had on the way they thought and operated. Only then was it possible for me to understand the subtleties of the actions and non-actions of people and learn to interpret what staff did not do as well as what they did do. To find the links which bound this community and which created what can be called the 'organisational culture'.

Private Interviews

The reasons for the decision to organise private interviews with key and representative staff⁹ at the end of the research period was for the following rationales. Firstly, it became increasingly clear at the beginning of the research that an understanding of what was happening at the School - the central themes, motivations and theoretical concepts as to how staff in the organisation actually operated - would require long, careful deliberation and probing by me. I simply did not know what questions to ask until I had a greater understanding of the problems and issues that dominated the teachers' decisions and actions. I realised that the initial answers to questions would have little meaning until the cultural context had been more fully understood. Until I understood the School culture it was not possible to ask the 'right' questions let alone understand what the answers might be saying.

Secondly, even though the research and its aims had been discussed with the hierarchy, I considered it doubtful that the leaders of the School would tolerate a series of probing interviews with staff, especially if the outcomes were controversial and taken only from the teachers' perspectives. I was not sufficiently secure in my employment to be able to guarantee that a period of inquisitive questioning would not result in the quiet removal of my employment contract. If I were 'sacked' from the School all hopes of inquiring into the processes of change or no-change would have been lost and the research would have had to be terminated. In other words a circumspect approach was taken. I arranged the interviewing period to cause minimal interruption to the daily lives of the teachers and only a few ripples were generated and no consequences were observed or noted.

Lastly, private interviewing sessions would have immediately labelled me not as fellow teacher in a similar position as the rest of the staff but as someone who had a different agenda and focus. It was important, for the role that I had taken in this case study, that right from the start, even though the teachers knew of the research, I would not be regarded as an intrusive outsider. I wanted to be able to assimilate into the School community with relative ease and become a non-threatening participant observer whose study was more or less forgotten. Indeed many of the interviewed staff had forgotten what I was doing and the subject of the study had to be reiterated.

The formal interviewing was organised in spare time, not school time. No teachers were coerced into giving information or being interviewed, however, all staff seemed keen to air their views. The majority of the interviews took place at my house over a cup of coffee away from the hurley-burley of school life. If the interviews were not here, for whatever reason

⁹ See Appendix 12 for details on those interviewed.

(usually time related, the staff member felt he or she was too busy to afford more than an one hour session), a secluded and private part of the School was used, not normally frequented by either staff or students.

The interviews usually lasted for three-quarters of an hour, although in some cases it was up to two hours. Often the interviews were repeated if there were still topics to be discussed. However, this was unusual as the conversations were perceived, in hindsight by the teachers, to be rather too frank. Often, a day or two afterwards, I was approached and asked to delete the material from the tapes or asked about their security. Such was the paranoia of some staff that after the first few interviews the tapes were kept in my safe.

The themes to the questions are itemised in Appendix 11, but it must be stressed that even though the themes were consistently used, the questions themselves were not pre-written and thus the interviews were only loosely structured. This was purposefully done to ensure that the conversation was kept flowing and as relaxed as possible, bearing in mind that the conversations were being taped with the recorder close-by and visible. This data collection procedure ensured uniformity of theme response whilst allowing the interviewee to feel that he or she had some control over the proceedings. Thus the order of the topics was not pre-set but all were eventually asked. This methodology also facilitated the discussions to move to other avenues.

Presentation and Analysis of the Data

To give a flavour of the daily life of the School the words of the teachers themselves are used, wherever possible. All quotes are verbatim unless otherwise noted. In the following chapters stories of the teachers' experiences are related with minimal editing.¹⁰ It will be noticed that these stories relate negative rather than positive events. It was a fact that these episodes featured more prominently than those which had happier outcomes and thus predominate this research. One member of staff (staff 16: 3/95) suggested in this respect that, 'it is nice to be unhappy with someone', but the answer is not that simple. Negative incidents, notably conflict, fights and arguments between staff were regular occurrences and, as will be seen from the data, their emotional effects on those concerned were etched on their memories. There were very few happy, relaxed, whole-staff occasions with which they could balance the situation. Indeed many of the private interviews were seen by the teachers to be therapeutic and an

¹⁰ Often, I add additional words to aid meaning or correct a few words to portray more accurately the substance of what has been said. These have been highlighted using ellipses [...]. Direct speech is rarely coherent, grammatical or logically ordered and thus minor, and it must be stressed it is minor, changes are made by me to aid the readers and allow them to understand what has been said more clearly. No alterations are made to what was actually said.

opportunity to voice concerns and frustrations.

The themes of power, authority, leadership, educational and professional goals and values, politics and the 'system' all emerge as this saga of change unfolds because they were the common topics of conversation and the main concerns of the staff. Three of the following chapters deal with the theme of power because its use was a central topic of concern, gossip, and innuendo and its effects revealed constantly in conversations with the teachers.

If the topic of political manoeuvring comes through with clarity from the teachers' quotes it is because, again, this was what the staff talked about and it affected their actions and non-actions.

Analyses of the running of the School and the progress of the implementation of their changes were also discussed by the teachers themselves; they were a perceptive group of people who assessed and analysed the situation endlessly. They were great talkers, by profession and inclination.

My main role is, therefore, not to portray perspectives equally but in proportion to their frequency. Stories of events at this School are constantly cited and can be replicated by many of the staff. If an opinion seems to be in a minority then that is representative of the number of times this point was discussed.

Intuitive knowledge, evaluated in Appendix 13, contributed to the analysis of the data. This 'intuition' developed with time, immersion and with my proximity to the researched. As discussed above, it was only after approximately two years that themes began to meld into a recognisable whole and organisational structures seen to have meaning with respect to the institutional culture of this School. It was only once an appreciation of this culture was grasped that I could make meaningful conclusions as to the processes of change at this School.

SUMMARY

The methodological strategies allowed not only the concepts of power and culture to be explored but incorporated the ontological necessity of outlining the varying realities of the individuals concerned. No complete and absolute picture of the School can be portrayed but a composite representation of the multitude of individual and group perceptions that formed the reality that governed the actions of staff at the School.

The guiding methodological principles that have been used to collect data in the case study centre on my role as an active participant observer. My cultural knowledge of schools is used to advantage through a greater understanding of the nuances of staff behaviour and actions. It is proposed that the combination of working teacher and culturally-attuned researcher complement each other and generate greater understanding of the School's social dynamics. It is through an awareness of the operations of the School that knowledge of the change process itself is born.

The following chapters outline how staff at this School acquired knowledge of its structure, system of management and the effects this had on their ability to change curriculum strategies. The concept of power in organisational hierarchies will be investigated as its potency manifested itself in a variety of forms and means and significantly affected the ability of the teachers to implement change. Through the examination and portrayal of events that have influenced staff the reader becomes aware of the human dynamics and the controlling forces that operated and influenced the behaviour of the teachers. The change process itself will be outlined when the culture of the School has been explained and explored. Without this knowledge and its appreciation the success or failure of the implementation of the curriculum strategies will lose its context and significance.