

**THY ROD AND THY STAFF**

**A Study of Organisational Culture and Curriculum Change  
in a Secondary Boys' School**

**A thesis submitted in total fulfilment  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
of the University of New England**

**by  
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## DECLARATION

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in the thesis.



Signature

Date

25/1/10

## ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the processes of change within a private boys' school in rural Australia. The thesis explores the divide between educational theory and practice and why it is so difficult to change the established order of things. The research centres on staff's attempts to implement innovative timetable structures and why they fail to achieve their objectives.

Strategies employed by a curriculum committee, whose task it is to suggest suitable models for change, are analysed with respect to the normative culture and found wanting. Even though the committee is culturally aware it does not have the expertise nor political guile to develop tactics which recognise the impact of the School's culture, notably the power of the Headmaster, on the processes of change.

The School's hierarchical structures are seen as both enabling and constraining aspects of this organisation which sanction maintenance or revision of the status quo. Power is seen as a central feature of the culture of this School and is treated as a temporal phenomenon to incorporate power's traditional, active and passive dimensions. The acceptance of staff of the established management practices perpetuates the culture of no-change rather than change.

Findings indicate that the development of change strategies must take place after an assessment has been made of the organisation's cultural parameters. The style of leadership, means of communication, the degree of empowerment of staff and other issues must first be assessed before appropriate plans can be made. It is argued that change agents must possess not only cultural awareness and planning skills but also moral courage, tenacity and power if the cycle of no-change is to be broken.

It is concluded that change strategies are inextricably linked to the culture of the organisation. They cannot be pre-planned but need to be tailored to the social dynamics of the organisation. Once the culture has been gauged accurately and its subtleties understood then alternative tactics might be considered and schemes conceived.

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