



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS AS LEARNING ORGANISATIONS
AND THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN DEVELOPING
A LEARNING CULTURE**

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by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was threefold:

1. To determine the key concepts of the Learning Organisation philosophy that is developing increasing prominence in recent literature, particularly in the business world.
2. To examine the extent to which Independent Schools in the greater Sydney region fit the Learning Organisation model.
3. To examine the role that leadership can play in the development and implementation of a Learning Culture in Independent Schools.

Document analysis was the methodology used to address the first problem. A Learning Organisation Survey was developed, tailored more specifically to educational institutions, to address the second and third problems identified above. Nineteen randomly selected schools participated in the study, with twelve surveys being sent to each of these schools (thirty were invited to participate). There was a relatively even spread amongst boys', girls', and coeducational schools for the study. Fifteen of the schools returned seventy five percent or more of the individual survey responses. A number of Learning Organisation categories were developed for the study: Vision, Positive Thinking, Risk Taking / Openness to Change, The Importance of People, Resources, Professional Development / Learning Power, and Leadership. These categories, along with the Cumulative Totals for the survey, were then analysed and discussed within the context of

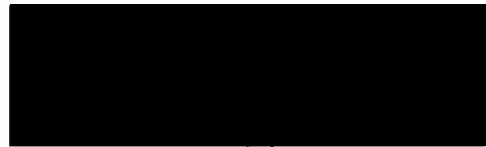
school types (boys', girls', and coeducational). Statistical analysis took the form of 't' tests for two samples assuming unequal variances.

The results that were gleaned from the survey are best considered from two viewpoints. Of the Learning Organisation categories, Vision and Leadership fared most strongly, whilst Resources and Professional Development / Learning Power were the weakest (the other categories were in the intermediate range). The girls' and coeducational schools involved in the study significantly outperformed the boys' schools in every Learning Organisation category. Five of the six highest scoring schools were girls' schools – these schools could certainly be described as fitting the proposed Learning Organisation.

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 degrees.

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

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the author.

Signature

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This thesis was produced as a result of the cooperation of a number of people. I should particularly like to thank the Principals of the Independent schools who agreed to participate in the study, and allowed twelve of their staff members to fill in a survey anonymously. These respondents should also be thanked for their time and honest opinions. I would like to thank Eileen Rigney, Michelle Bradley and Mark McCrossin for their assistance in proof reading the thesis. Many staff members at the researcher's school assisted with the extensive pilot testing of the Learning Organisation Survey. I would like to thank my mother for her assistance with the typing of the drafts of the thesis. My supervisor, Dr Narottam Bhindi, deserves special mention for his patience and understanding and most helpful guidance. He helped to make this an almost pleasurable learning experience. Dr Brendan Nolan also deserves commendation for stepping in as my temporary supervisor just as I became ready to hand in the final draft of the thesis. Finally I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my wife Belinda, without whose support, tolerance, assistance and love I doubt that I would have made it this far.

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