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Complexities of Organisational Change: The Case of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDE)

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Graduate School of Public and Development Management,

in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Supervisors: Prof. Pam Christie
Prof. Anne McLennan

May 2007

DECLARATION

I declare that the Thesis

Complexities of Organisational Change: The Case of the Eastern Cape Provincial Department of Education (ECDE)

hereby submitted to the University of the Witwatersrand for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university, that it is my own work in design and in execution, and that all material contained has been duly acknowledged.

.....

Signed
W Y Ngoma (Ms)
May 2007

ABSTRACT

For rational theories of organisational change, organisational dysfunctionalities are nothing more than the inadequacy of organisations to maximise on their goals or lack of co-ordination of different types of inputs and processes. Usually, such observations are made in exclusion of the analysis of organisational realities and the experiences that are part of their daily realities. This thesis explores the experiences of organisational change in a single case of the provincial department of education, namely the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDE). Using the qualitative and exploratory methods of interviews and document analysis, it asks how and why the department was perceived to be in a state of crisis in terms of service delivery, eight years after its initial transformation. To explore these questions, the thesis looked at the interplay between context, organisational design and internal skills and capacities, as the triad of processes that influenced the patterns for organisational change in this context.

Broadly, the findings revealed that issues of organisational efficiency and service delivery cannot be debated and analysed outside of the political processes that influence them. The ECDE revealed that it was caught in endless politics of networks of coalition which influenced the pattern of service delivery. As a result this thesis concluded that organisational change and service delivery debates have to extend beyond the rational inputs and outputs paradigms to look at the complexities of networks that were a coincidence of transitional politics. It therefore proposes a focus on relational and network analysis of organisations to unravel their politics and pattern of influence on service delivery.

Key Words: organisational change, power, politics, social antagonism, networks, context, organisational design, skills and capacity, inefficiency, service delivery.

DEDICATION

To my precious daughters, Tumelo, Lebogang Luyanda and Tebogo Thabisa; and my mother Zolekwa Vivienne.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
AG	Auditor General
BPR	Business Process Re-engineering
CODESA	Convention of Democratic South Africa
CPA	Cape Province Administration
DDG	Deputy Director General
DEC	Department of Education Culture
DET	Department of Education and Training
DG	Director General
DOE	National Department of Education
DPSA	Department of Public Service of South Africa
DTU	Departmental Transformation Unit
EC	Eastern Cape
ECDE	Eastern Cape Department of Education
ECSECC	Eastern Cape Socio-Economic Consultative Council
EDOs	Education Development Officers
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ETTT	Educational Transformation Task Team
GDE	Gauteng Department Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEAR	Macro-Economic Strategy for Growth, Employment and Redistribution
GNU	Government of National Unity
GTRS	Get The Record Straight
HOA	House of Assembly
HoD	Head of Department
HOD	House of Delegates
HOR	House of Representatives
HR	Human Resources
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMT	Interim Management Team
MEC	Member of the Executive Council (i.e. provincial level minister)

MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
NEHAWU	National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union
NPM	New Public Management
NPR	National Performance Review
NRF	National Research Foundation
OD	Organisational Development
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
P&DM	Graduate School of Public and Development Management
PERSAL	Personnel and Salaries
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
PRC	Presidential Review Commission
PRR	Provincial Review Report
PSC	Public Service Commission
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SAIRR	South African Institute of Race Relations
SAYB	South African Year Book
SMS	Senior Management
SMT	Strategic Management Team
TBVC	Transkei, Bophutatswana, Venda and Ciskei
TDF	Transkei Defence Force
TO	Theory of Organisations
TQM	Total Quality Management
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VSP	Voluntary Severance Packages
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand
WB	World Bank
WPTPS	White Paper on Transforming of the Public Service

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

The interest in this research came as a result of many influences. Firstly, issues of public service delivery in South Africa have become points of contestation in the past five years as government is criticised on poor performance and made to account more regarding its bureaucracies. Most of the criticism tends to come from the media, which highlights mismanagement, corruption and poor service delivery in general criticisms which intensify with every national and local election. The elections appear to have created a new culture where a lot of noise is made about all the problems that exist. This is usually met with the ruling party's campaigns advocating new approaches and plans to change the system. At the conclusion of elections, however, things return to normal as the hype of electioneering disappears. In the process, organisations are forgotten until the next cycle starts two years later. It is this type of drama that makes one curious to find out what is really happening in public organisations outside of election periods, and to what extent the problems depicted reflect reality.

Secondly, between 2002 and 2004 a range of departments in the Eastern Cape, Free State and KwaZulu-Natal were subjected to a national intervention programme (Daily Dispatch, June 19 2003). In the Eastern Cape, which is the area of interest for this thesis, such departments included the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDE). This department had attracted a lot of media attention around its maladministration and poor service delivery (Daily Dispatch *Online*, 12 September 1997; Human Science Research Council Media Briefs 1998; Daily Dispatch *Online,* 20 April 2001; The Herald *Online*, 15 July 2004; The Herald *Online*, 12 August 2004 and The Herald *Online,* 11 March 2007). The intervention programme therefore had to address the perceived crisis of poor management and inefficiency. For instance, Radebe, Matomela, Moloi,

Schoonraad and Sekwati (2004) report refers to the intervention in the Eastern Cape (EC) by stating that:

> With the persistent problems in the Eastern Cape regardless of the numerous interventions and programmes, the President and the Premier agreed to deploy a multi-sectoral team to the province. As a result, the Interim Management Team (IMT) was deployed in the Eastern Cape with an urgent mandate to assist the Provincial Government to deal with the challenges of service delivery, back-office support and poor discipline and ethics. The overall goal of the IMT was to ensure that any service delivery backlogs are addressed and to establish sound management (financial, human resource performance) and leadership throughout the provincial government and the four line-departments, i.e. Education, Health, Roads and Public Works and Social Development departments (Radebe et al, 2004:18).

Of course, this intervention was to identify what was going on and act on it, but it remained a point of curiosity to identify why this department was perceived to be in crisis. For instance, some of the questions asked were: what contributed to the crisis and what were its possible explanations? Juxtaposed with this was an interest in the concept of effecting turnarounds in huge bureaucracies. Turnarounds were an unfamiliar phenomenon in South African public organisations. The questions that came about then were: what was the nature of the turnaround and how was it going to be implemented? As explained in Chapter Three, it became impossible to study the turnaround itself because of the politics that were attached to it, although other questions remained open for investigation.

Thirdly, one of the challenges of teaching a post-graduate course on Organisation Theory at the Graduate School of Public and Development and Management (P&DM) at Wits University, is the glaring lack of literature that analyse African organisations, especially public organisations. This has been a contentious issue in the classes taught by the writer, as students regularly called for African interpretations of African bureaucracies. The students' frustrations usually emanated from three sources. Firstly, there was an issue of identity where it was assumed that the post-colonial context should demonstrate a clear separation from western discourse, and if this is not possible there should at least be a dominant application of African scholarship to African problems. To

some extent, one could interpret this as part of the broad symbolism of South Africa's broad change and social transformation that saw the first black government in power. To some of the students this symbolic shift had to be accompanied by the scholarship that understands African contexts as the previous apartheid system had relied on western models of public administration.

Secondly, there was frustration with the transformation process itself, which seemed unending and required new ways of doing things. The point is that while at times one could argue that the transformation was gradual in some areas, in others it required a clean slate. This put many organisations in a state of flux where it became difficult to see the direction of the transformation and its end. Thirdly, the pressure to enhance service delivery in all public organisations compounded the complexity to understand and manage change. This meant that most bureaucracies had to balance their own learning with service outputs. At times this was driven more by trial and error rather than concrete plans. The point is that such demands were made where other contexts lacked the capacity to conceptualise and interprete the reform agenda. With such increased pressures to perform, commonsense seemed unreliable in providing answers to the inherited apartheid complexities. Hence, the western conceptualised models were perceived to be of little or no help in solving the complex apartheid organisational problems. The questions that arose from this were: what was unique, if anything, about South African public organisations? Did they warrant different theories for analysis? It is these types of questions that stimulated the interest in studying South African public organisations, and specifically how they were handling the transformation process initiated in 1994.

1.2 The context for public sector change

Since the first democratic elections in 1994, all public sector organisations in South Africa have gone through radical changes as a result of the broader public sector reform programme. The reform programme set out to democratise

the public service through different values of access, equity, equality and redress. These values were meant to eradicate the apartheid practices and ideology that had initially permeated all public organisations. Prior to 1994, the public service served mainly the apartheid interests. This saw state departments acting racist and exclusive based on nationalist party politics and policies that propagated segregation. The 1994 change was meant to shift such apartheid ideologies and practices to create a civil service that served all South Africans, irrespective of their race and background.

Amongst many things, the new democratic state adopted several policies that were central to the transformation process. To cite a few examples, these included the new Constitution of 1996, the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (1997); the White Paper on Affirmative Action (1997) and the White Paper on the Transformation of Public Service Delivery (1997). At the centre of these strategies was the view that public organisations had to reflect the vision of a new democratic society characterised by inclusivity and a respect for human rights. Hence there was a lot of emphasis to change all the systems to be representative of South Africa demographics.

Of course, South Africa's transformation was not happening in isolation. If anything, the 1990s had been characterised by different global economic, political and cultural shifts under the umbrella of globalisation. Without getting into debates about globalisation, which is a huge area of research on its own, one point to pick up on is that in public management this came with some questioning of the role of the state and its bureaucracies. Such questioning saw the conceptualisation and adoption of different types of state reform in different countries. One form of reform that dominated the debates is that of New Public Management (NPM). Comments on NPM are made in Chapter Two. Briefly, the goal of NPM is to maximise state efficiency. Driven largely by economic imperatives, it is associated with the reduction of the state through restructuring, downsizing and cuts in expenditure. While NPM has successfully introduced the three Es of Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness into public

reform debates, it is interesting that this discourse has little or no recognition of issues such as equity, access and inclusion, which are fundamental to the South African context. It would therefore be interesting to find out how various public organisations in South Africa are responding to the different calls for service delivery, while having to contend with global tendencies of less government, cost effectiveness and efficiency. Unfortunately, this is beyond the scope of this thesis.

The issue is that with these global thoughts on public sector reform in place, it became logical for South Africa to participate. Furthermore, it had just de-legitimised the apartheid government and its systems through the adoption of a new Constitution and the national elections. It therefore required an alternative governance template to legitimise the new transformation. Amongst the many options available to do this, there is much evidence that points to international benchmarking and borrowing. One of the areas of such borrowing includes some aspects of NPM used in many developed countries like Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Examples include the adoption of programmes like the Citizens' Charter, which has been modified as *Batho Pele* in South Africa, the introduction of performance contracts, the appraisal of senior managers through the Senior Executive Management programme, a concept initiated in the United States and Australia (Ingraham, 1997). The basis is to create a new public service with a different orientation away from its apartheid history.

However, twelve years has passed since the initial policy reforms were initiated in 1994 and the question is: how far have the South African public sector and its bureaucracies transformed? This is, of course, a broad question with a number of possible responses. Taking its cue from the national intervention programme, this thesis remains with issues of organisational change and efficiency. It explores the conditions that render public organisations inefficient and ineffective using the ECDE as a unit of analysis. The key questions of interests then are: to what extent has the post-1994 transformational agenda

managed to create a sense of common citizenship amongst those that work within the ECDE? What cultural practices exist? and how do they influence service delivery? Unless there is clarity on these questions, the ECDE remains a puzzle to those that wish to maximise its administrative efficiency, something that is seemingly elusive already.

1. 3 The research questions

The central questions asked by this thesis are *how* and *why* the ECDE continues to be perceived as an inefficient organisation. To support this question, it asks:

- *What was the context for change?* This question frames where the change started and its key drivers. Generally the literature points to the importance of context in organisational change. It is thus important to establish the role that context played in shaping the agenda for change.
- *How did the organisation respond?* The assumption is that every change brings about some level of response. It is important to establish the nature of responses that the ECDE undertook and their perceived consequences.
- *What organisational challenges emerged with the change?* Already it is stated that the organisation has struggled in many ways with the process of change, as it is seen to be in a continuous cycle of inefficiency and maladministration. It is important therefore to establish the nature of the levers that existed which could not support the change.

1.4 Theoretical stance adopted in the study

Organisational change research is generally the domain of modernist approaches. Similarly, this thesis is predominantly influenced by such approaches as it looks at how issues of context and internal organisational dynamics influence organisational change and efficiency. While there is no particular theory that claims dominance in interpreting these issues, one recognise the work of institutional theorists like DiMaggio and Powell (1991) which identifies the influence of external pressures on organisational change. In this case, such pressures are identified as emanating from government policies and regulatory frameworks, which shaped the different organisational design logic that the

ECDE adopted at different times. Greenwood and Hinings (1996) highlighted the significance of inter-organisational dynamics, where one looks at micro issues that influence the change. In this case, this informed the understanding about the availability and use of capacity and skills to effect change. In public administration, this thesis drew inspiration from the work of Frederick Riggs (1964) and his theorisation of bureaucracies in developing contexts. His conception of the *sala* type of bureaucracy explains that there are different types of bureaucracies. The sala is, of course, not the only type of bureaucracy found in developing contexts; rather, it is one of the many types depending on the levels of development.

Beyond the mainstream modernist approaches, the thesis extends to include an analysis of power, politics and conflict, drawing mainly from postmodernist and poststructuralist theories. In the postmodernist approaches, power is seen in a relational way. Even this thesis refrains to see power as a unidirectional authority-based exercise and rather uses it to explore the type of relations that exist and their consequences. The key issue communicated here is that, while both contexts and internal factors are useful to explain the tangible and observable patterns of organisational change, they are insufficient to explain the informal processes that organisations experience. This thesis perceives these informal processes as very strong ingredients of change in conflictual and interest-driven environments, as is the case with the ECDE. Hence it adds the concept of social antagonism, which is borrowed from Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) conflict theory. The concept of social antagonism helps to explore the nature of relations that exist as a result of the integration of the previous fragmented education systems, created by the apartheid system.

1.5 Aims of the study

The aims of this thesis are to explore the nature of processes and conditions of organisational change in the ECDE. It sets out to shed light on why this department continues to be riddled with inefficiency and poor service delivery eight years after its inception. To unravel this, the thesis specifically:

- Explores the theories of organisational change and efficiency with the intention of developing a conceptual framework for the study.
- Identifies the nature of context that informs public sector reform and organisational functioning in South Africa, including the ECDE. This is partly in recognition of the fact that organisations, especially public organisations, are politically driven and thus rely on their context for direction.
- Explores the process of change through different organisational design types that emerged with the change and their consequences in shaping the organisation. The issue here is that inherent in different design logics are particular cultures and practices that inform and influence both individual and organisational behaviour.
- Examines the nature of internal dynamics that exist and their consequences for efficiency, with the intention of unravelling both the formal and the informal processes of change.
- Offers insights based on empirical research about organisational change in less stable and developing environments.

1.6 Statement of the problem

Generally, organisational change research has been the domain of developed countries and is in its infancy in South Africa. Common to many studies of organisational change in developed contexts is the study of the stabilising factors of change. There is always the intention of making organisations more manageable, predictable and controllable. As a result, the literature tends to be highly dominated by managerial conceptions of change, which rely on providing frameworks and models of change (Mintzberg and Westley (1992)). Usually this is accompanied by the emphasis on *what* and *how* to change organisations, with very little interrogation of *why* organisations change in particular ways and not others. While *what* and *how* questions give a sense that change is manageable and controllable, they also reduce its conceptions to a toolkit type of approach. This limits the broader understanding of organisational change as a social reality phenomenon that is contested and conflictual. Specifically, it hides the

complexities, contestations, interests and the politics that are inherent in it. More importantly, organisational research rarely ventures outside stable environments to look at organisations that are unstable, conflictual and inefficient. As a result, there is limited theoretical analysis of such contexts to draw from (Riggs, 1964). This lack of study of inefficient organisations, as such, creates the impression that organisations are generic entities whose change processes can be predictable and controlled, hence similar types of interventions and models are applied in a generic way in all organisations, irrespective of context. Because of this gap in the organisational change research, this study pursues issues of organisational inefficiency. Its purpose is to uncover how inefficient organisations attain such status. In the process, it seeks to understand the conditions and processes that drive them and why.

Debates on inefficiency are not new in South Africa. They started with the Presidential Review Commission Report (PRC) (1998) and Provincial Review Reports (PRR) (1997), which examined the performances of the public sector. Both reports confirmed serious maladministration and inefficiencies in general. Understandably, this was three to four years after the first reforms. The issue, though, is that this situation has hardly changed for some departments, including the ECDE. Ten years after its inception, the department is still struggling with issues of organisational change and inefficiency. Interestingly, over this period the department has implemented about 28 different types of systems and process interventions including human resource systems, financial, filing and personnel systems. The Radebe et al (2004) report, however, stated that:

> If the findings of the IMT are anything to go by, the Department of Education had scarcely benefited from the numerous interventions that it was subjected to over the years. The IMT scarcely differed with other previous interventions in terms of its findings, chief of which was deep-seated mismanagement within the department in general and corporate services in particular (Radebe et al 2004:22).

This state of affairs clearly calls for an interrogation that goes beyond the technical exercise. It has to ask: why does the department continue to be

characterised by inefficiencies and poor service delivery? Part of this means exploring both the external and internal dynamics that are evident in the organisation. While institutional theory and other management research talks to contextual issues, the general trend is to describe its significance rather than provide analysis. It is important, therefore, to explore the nature of context and the way it functions, in part to understand the politics that drive it.

Why this is important is based on the argument raised by the thesis itself, which posits that organisational change is a complex phenomenon which is complicated by the inherited historical and structural arrangements. Similarly, the ECDE is seen as embedded in a particular historical context that is riddled with different homeland and apartheid politics. Such politics have influenced how power relations and decision-making systems and processes occur, and they in turn have led to perceived inefficiencies. To study such an organisation is to unravel the complexities as they are experienced and lived by the people that work with this department. This thesis is therefore an exploration that hopes to lift the layer of obfuscation around the department. It is therefore necessary to pose the following questions: What is the ECDE's topography? Is it made up of plains and valleys or is it the rough mountain ridges that can never be conquered? It is this metaphor that the study carries through its journey to discover the complexities of organisational change.

1.7 Thesis statement

This thesis explores how the ECDE became the embodiment of poor organisational performance and inefficiency. To do this, it first looks at the contextual interplays that influenced the trajectory of change in South Africa. Secondly, it explores the different organisational design logics that the ECDE adopted between 1994 and 2002, as a response to the external pressures. Thirdly, it looks at issues of capacity and how they function in the ECDE context. It is believed that there is an interactive correspondence between context, organisational design and human agency in organisations that subsequently influence organisational outcomes or efficiency. Efficiency studies tend to focus

on quantifiable rather than qualitative factors. This study thus adds value in the sense that it looks at the qualitative process of change as experienced in an organisational context.

The key argument raised by the thesis is that organisational inefficiencies in the ECDE cannot be solely explained by the inputs-outputs type of analysis as the linear approaches tend to suggest, nor by theory of development alone, as Riggs (1964) proposed. Rather, while all these factors matter in the ECDE, the thesis reveals that organisations are by nature politically contested spaces. The key issue is that, with the South African transition of 1994, there was an emphasis on integrating all members of the society into a unified South Africa. The transition put stress on assimilation, compromise and negotiation. This in turn brought in a different democratic approach and politics to public sector reform. While the thesis does not comment on the significance of this, it explores how the ECDE conceptualised and managed its own changes as part of the broader public sector reform. To do this, it builds on existing modernist analysis of organisations by adopting the analytical lenses of power to capture the external and internal interplays of change. Through such a lens, it reveals that change and inefficiency are a consequence of a complex network of factors. Inherent in such complexity is contested issues of continuity, discontinuity and survival in a highly resource-deprived environment.

1.8 Significance of the study

The exploration of organisational change and inefficiency adds to the debates and questions on why certain organisations in South Africa perform more poorly when compared to others. It informs practice by identifying *what matters* in other bureaucracies in the broad impetus around improved service delivery. Theoretically, it also improves on the assumptions about the nature and type of bureaucracies that exist in South Africa as it identifies the complex nature of the ECDE. The study should also be of particular value to professionals including researchers, lecturers and management consultants working in the field of public sector reform, organisational change and change management. This is due to the

fact that while public sector reform has been the feature of South African transformation for the past twelve years, there is very little qualitative research that addresses its progress. As a result, there is still a high reliance on research derived from developed countries to inform progress in the local context.

Organisational change tends to be seen as a practice-oriented exercise applied by Organisational Development (OD) practitioners. While this may be so, the theoretical review has shown that there is still scope for theorisation of organisations, especially in developing contexts. The lack of theory based on the study of local organisations is seen to impede the development of OD practices. As it is, private sector terminology and models currently dominate OD work in South Africa. This study thus provides insights that may be useful to those wishing to consult in the public sector, as it points to issues that drive the sector. Equally, its emphasis on organisational uniqueness challenges the practitioners to broaden their tools of intervention to accommodate the different conditions that exist. It is presumed that the findings will facilitate their planning and decision-making when dealing with unique, conflictual and politically-oriented organisations, as the study highlights conditions that influence such organisations and their experiences of change.

Beyond the practitioners, the findings of this research may provide useful insights into various policy departments like the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA), the National Department of Education, the ECDE and other provincial departments undergoing similar experiences on how to manage change in diverse contexts. To date, insights of organisational change and transformation are largely derived from policy documents. Unfortunately, such policy tends to be generic and does not accommodate contextual differences. This study therefore brings to the fore issues of provincial and departmental uniqueness with the hope that it will help to facilitate better policy implementation and change management strategies.

1.9 Definition of key concepts

Organisational Change

The concept of organisational change is used in this thesis to identify a process of change by which an organisation has been able to transform itself conceptually and in practical terms from one state of functioning to another newly conceptualised way of doing things.

Service Delivery

The use of the term service delivery is derived from the South African public sector debates that look at the organisational capacity to ensure that it delivers the required services to the correct constituents within the stipulated time cycles.

Organisational Inefficiency

Organisational inefficiency is seen as the organisation's inability to service its clientele and constituency as expected.

Context

Context refers to both the external (national and regional) and internal (organisational) contexts.

Organisational Design

The concept of organisational design is used to encompass both the structural and conceptual side of organisational change. It represents more what other organisational researchers call a configuration than an organogram type of analysis.

Capacity and Skills

This refers to the knowledge and ability of personnel to contribute effectively to the goals of the organisation. Such contribution is seen to be driven by information, attitudes and knowledge that may be both tacit and skills-based.

1.10 Structure of the thesis

Chapter One serves as background to the thesis. It provides direction on the aims and the rationale for the thesis, and situates the reasons for conducting this study. In the process it highlights the key arguments and the questions that drive the study. Chapter Two examines existing theoretical underpinnings of organisational change in management theories and research. It identifies a three layer type of analysis of organisational change that includes context, internal organisational dynamics and the individual or group dynamics. Chapter Three narrates the methodology that influenced the study, and reflects on the process of conducting research in sensitive sites. Chapter Four looks at the role that context played in shaping the organisational dynamics of the ECDE. By context is meant both the macro provincial and national conditions that directed change after 1994. The argument raised is that context as interplay of various forces of power and influence has had an influence on the existing conditions of inefficiency and dysfunctionality in the ECDE. Chapter Five focuses on a micro-exploration of the processes of organisation design as a consequence of the external pressures of transformation and reform. It traces how different logics of reorganisation and redesign influenced the ECDE in its efficiency and effectiveness. It argues that while reorganisation and its side tools of restructuring are championed as good managerial strategy for organisational change, they are neither a neutral nor a politically free exercise. Rather, they are value-laden and highly political tools that can be variously used by different interests to achieve different goals that may well exclude efficiency. Chapter Six looks at the internal organisational dynamics that perpetuate organisational change inefficiency. It argues that unless the ECDE addresses its politics of leadership fragmentation, its leadership instability and lack of capacity and skills, it cannot experience any significant cultural shift and change nor improve its service delivery to the required levels. The ECDE is found to be a complex network of fragmented leadership and fragmented spaces of influence. This means that any change in such an environment has to consider the nature of these fragmentations – how they are organised, how they function, and how they affect skills organisation and co-ordination for use in the organisation. Chapter Seven provides concluding thoughts on the empirical findings made. It

first provides the summary of the key findings and subsequently draws some implications for theory and practice.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the literature on organisational change in management and organisational research. Management research covers both the public and private sector domains. However, it is important to note that due to the extensive literature on organisations, only that considered relevant for this study was selected. Most of the literature reviewed is drawn from western countries, as organisational theory is a relatively new discipline in management schools, especially in developing contexts like South Africa. To cover reasonable ground in a highly disjointed field, this review firstly looks at the broad emergence of efficiency paradigms in management research covering the early classics to contemporary debates. It identifies the key theoretical constructs that emerged within the paradigm, its strengths and weaknesses. Secondly, it looks at the progress made in the public administration field, including the New Public Management. Thirdly, it draws a conceptual framework for this study.

2.2 The management research and efficiency paradigms

Classical approaches

The genesis of modern organisational research on change starts with the classical approaches of the early twentieth century. This is the period where modernism was synonymous with the development of knowledge and the advancement of science and technology. Science and technology were the key tools in the discovery of 'neutral' knowledge, which was largely seen as the 'truth'. In retrospect, this led to the development of positivism, rationalism, reason and logic as the basis of scientific inquiry. Such tradition continued even in the study of organisations, where 'maximising efficiency' became the focus of many researchers. As Silverman (1970:2) states, 'the twentieth century took 'efficiency' as its problem and concentrated on explaining why organisations were or were not satisfying their goals'. Early influential organisationally-related studies at the time

included Frederick Taylor's scientific management in the United States, Henri Fayol's principles of management in France and Max Weber's analysis of the bureaucracy in Germany. For Taylor and Fayol, there was an emphasis on identifying specific variables that maximise organisational performance. Some of these identifiable variables included:

> the structure and activities of formal, or official, organisation. Issues such as the division of work, the establishment of a hierarchy of authority, and the span of control were seen to be of the utmost importance in the achievement of an effective organisation (Cole, 1996:2).

Using such variables, they would use organisational experiments and scientific rationality to determine what worked. This to some extent led to codified principles that were seen as generic and applicable to all organisations, hence the development of scientific management principles. Similarly, when working on change, change is seen as a definable goal-oriented process with clear stages of operation. As Felkins et al (1993:60) explain:

> The focus is on change as an external reality – a measurable, directed process with clear causal relationships that can be quantified and analysed in a logical, objective way. The function most often is prediction, control, and improved efficiency within carefully defined limits and focus. Change comes through the manipulation of specific variables and conditions in order to achieve a verifiable effect or result. In most of the rational and behavioural models of change and development, consistency, conformity and order are emphasized more than innovation and creativity. There is a strong focus on efficiency and effectiveness in the internal organization, precise measurement of results, and coordinated stability and growth over time (Felkins, Chakiris & Chakiris 1993:60).

Inherently the idea is to always create stability and order in organisations. With this in mind, change becomes a 'thing' that is a problem and needs to be solved. Usually this would follow familiar techniques of isolating specific variables that create instability and work on those. These could be leadership, culture, resources or any other factor that could be manipulated for efficiency.

While scientific management is still a popular knowledge base and method of studying organisational change, it has limitations because of its diagnostic

techniques that focus on identifying symptoms to be isolated and treated to make the organisational functional. Cole articulates this better:

> Scientific management theories took a purely 'rational' approach to job design and pursued technical efficiency single-mindedly. The result was highly simplified, short-cycle jobs that consisted of performing the same activity over and over again. The worker in this was relegated to little more than a cog in the machine: he or she was studied and analyzed, and prodded in a manner that many found increasingly demeaning and unacceptable (Cole 1996:256).

Despite this, scientific management continues to influence organisations and their conceptions of change and efficiency. Public administration is but one of the many discourses that strongly subscribe to scientific management and its rationality.

Systems theory

Over time, and with the obvious limitations of scientific management theory, organisational theory saw the emergence of systems and contingency theories in the 1960s. Technical efficiency was now not only seen as a subject of specific internal organisational factors but also inclusive of environmental factors. As Clegg (1990:51) explains:

> In the systems framework the organisation is conceptualised as having a definite boundary through which flow environmental inputs and outputs. It strives to maintain this boundary in order to ensure its own distinctive survival as an entity. The entity is composed of a number of system components which exist together in a state of dynamic interdependency, processing throughputs and reflexively monitoring their environment through the re-entry of outputs as new inputs, a process known as feedback (Clegg 1990:51).

By this time, organisations were being viewed as dynamic entities that functioned in a fluid environment. The chain of integration between the inputs, throughputs, outputs and the environment thus became fundamental to organisational efficiency. Some of the cited research using systems and contingency theories include that of the Tavistock and Aston group in the United Kingdom, who work with technology and people; Katz and Khan's study of social systems (1978); Harvard researchers Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) in the United States and Burns

and Stalker (1961) in the United Kingdom who work on structure and the environment respectively. These are cited in Cole (1996) and Clegg (1990). One person that has popularised systems theory in the last two decades is Peter Senge in his work on Learning Organisations. The basis of systems theory is to test the relationships between structural, technological and environmental factors. In short, one could say that their contribution was the recognition of the environment and the acknowledgement of the interconnection between various elements inside and outside the organisation.

Contrary to scientific management, which had studied organisations as closed and self-sufficient entities whose survival was dependent on their internal arrangement, systems theory identified the complexity of relationships that are internal and external to the organisations. Organisations were now studied on the basis of how well they could adjust and adapt to their environments. Internally, such adjustment could be seen through a process of gaining equilibrium. Organisations had to strive for equilibrium. This reductionism of the equilibrium indirectly promoted order and stability, limiting organisational analysis to rationalistic tendencies. There could, of course, be arguments that chaos and complexity theory have been improvements to the traditional systems theory. For instance, these theories advance path dependency and multi-finality (Warren et al, 1998). However, one contends that they still operate within the rationalistic modes of interpretation of social reality. Organisations are still expected to achieve specific identifiable goals and equilibrium but with greater emphasis on alignment of systems, structures, personnel and the environment.

Critique of the efficiency paradigms

Generally, while efficiency paradigms are useful in highlighting specific variables that are identifiable and can be changed in an intervention exercise, this limits the understanding of the organisation to what is recognisable, thus excluding complexity. Their technicist approach to organisations as such forces the application of generic, unitary, apolitical, value-free principles in complex and differentiated environments, thus eliminating agency, difference and contextual

uniqueness. Equally, their reliance on positivist quantitative methods of enquiry and the pursuance of absolute truths makes them biased towards certain forms of knowledge that discount other organisational realities like interplays of power, class, race and gender in organisations.

This applies to systems theory as well, with its adaptational logic and reliance on static conceptions of organisations. Silverman's book on *Theory of Organisations* (TO) (1970) provides a critical departure from systems theory as the discourse of organisational analysis in the United Kingdom. Parker and Hassard (1994:xi) summarise Silverman's intention of the book well:

> [Silverman] charts the move from Parsonian functionalism and abstracted empiricism to a theory of organizing that was informed by the notion of social action. Rather than seeing action as an epi-phenomenon of system needs, Silverman saw social actors as reflexive about their strategies to achieve their own goals within the context of a formal organization.

Silverman explains his thinking at the time :

> I was trying to develop a theoretical, non-functionalist basis for research. In particular, what I wanted to argue was that we could look at organizations analytically without assuming that what happened in social life arose from some supposed needs of the social system. What I tried to do in TO was to develop a version of organizations, not as some version of clear, fixed reality, but as a set of legitimated rhetorics. For instance, there seemed little doubt that people often talk about the goals of the organisation when they are pursuing their own sectional interests. One clever thing to do, when you want to achieve something politically, is to pretend that it is in the general interest: and one way to do that is to say 'what I'm doing serves the goal of the organisation (Silverman 1994:3).

His interest was to look at 'the kinds of political strategies used in organisations and the ends that people were actually pursuing rather than the officially defined ends' (Silverman 1994:3). He acknowledges the weaknesses of his work at the time which he attributes to the lack of a clear theory and lack of clear methodology; the dangers of romanticising subjectivism at the expense of structural constraints; and his limited view of power. At the time, he conceived

power as coercive rather than enabling and only located within the structural arrangements of an organisation.

In spite of these limitations Silverman's work had influenced many other writers as evidenced by the Keel conference papers of 1991. The conference was in celebration of Silverman's work and it is this conference that led to the production of an additional text called *Towards a New Theory of Organizations*. The theme of the papers largely centres on critique of theory, through the use of sociological approaches. What is fundamental is that Silverman's work is characteristic of the 1970s where 'the problematics order' was challenged and replaced by the 'problematics of domination' where social and political processes are seen as the sources through which power is mobilised and legitimated. As Reed (1992:11) states:

> Instead of concentrating theoretical and methodological strategies around the establishment of causal relationships between environmental contingencies and formal organisational designs, the focus of the attention shifted to unearthing of the political and ideological manipulations which operated behind the public façade of stability and order. The power of non-decision-making and institutional bias became the orienting themes in organisational analysis (Reed, 1992:11).

The research on power and politics in organisations has since expanded and is largely located in the post-modernism genre, and will be further examined as the review progresses. For now, one has to ask: how did such critiques further the debates on organisational change? Undoubtedly, the challenge to systems theory and other rational approaches broadened the theoretical field in the United Kingdom as Marxist labour process theory and post-structuralism began to dominate organisational analysis. This cannot be said of the United States, where the literature on change is still dominated by rationalist interpretations of organisations.

2.3 Theoretical debates of change and efficiency after the 1980s

The challenge to systems theory of the 1960s saw an emergence of varied theoretical dispositions ranging from adaptational theories such as the ecological

approach (Hannan and Freeman, 1984); the cultural approach (Schein, 1985); the institutional approach (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991; Scott and Meyer, 1991, Zucker 1991); resource dependency theory to radical critiques of labour process theory (Braverman, 1974) and post-modernism (Clegg, 1990). All these theories provide different lenses to understanding organisations. Between these there are even different frameworks proposed on how to study organisational change. Examples of these come from Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) in the United States. They provide a useful summation of the state of the field by the millennium. While they do not provide a comprehensive listing of all publications in the field, they at least put order in a highly disjointed field. They have organised the literature into three themes as in (i) content research (ii) context research (iii) process research and (iv) criterion variables as defined by outcomes. Within each theme they focus on new propositions on methodology, models, and other variables that provide new insights on change.

In summary, content research tends to focus on 'alternative strategic orientations, organizational structures, and performance-incentive systems' and targets for change and their contribution to organizational effectiveness (Armenakis and Bedeian, 1999:295). Some of the researchers in this area include Burke-Litwin (1992) and Vollman (1996). Context on the other hand focuses on forces and conditions that exist in an organization's external and internal environments. These include governmental regulations, technological advances, competition, and employees' experiences with change Barnet and Carroll (1995) and Pettigrew (1990). With regard to process research, the fundamental issue is looking at 'actions taken to implement changes within organisations and the nature of employee responses to such efforts' (Armenakis and Bedeian, 1999:295). Such work would include (Lewin, 1947; Judson, 1991; Kotter, 1995). On outcome variables, such research targets workers' commitments, attitudes and reactions to change. Some of work in this area includes Kanter (1991). All these classifications are indicative of the existing points of focus in a highly diverse field. After reviewing the state of organisational change at the millennium, they concluded that future research on change should:

(a) evaluate content, contextual and process issues to make predictions about how and why organisations change;
(b) include longitudinal studies;
(c) study behavioural and attitudinal reactions to change;
(d) Tap into other cognate areas, especially research that looks at readiness for change in other fields;
(e) Extend the use of qualitative methods.

Similarly Pettigrew, Woodman and Cameron (2001) in the United Kingdom advocate for the use of the contextualist approach to organisational change. They state that:

> One variant of this contextualist approach was the view that theoretically sound and practically useful research on change should explore the contexts, content, and process of a change together with their interconnections over time (Pettigrew et al, 2001:698).

In the process they suggest a framework that should include the:

(a) examination of multiple contexts and levels of analysis in studying organisational change;
(b) inclusion of time, history, process, and action;
(c) link between change processes and organisational performance outcomes;
(d) investigation of international and cross-cultural comparisons in research on organisational change;
(e) study of receptivity, customisation, sequencing, pace, and episodic versus continuous change processes, and
(f) partnership between scholars and practitioners in studying organisational change (Pettigrew et al, 2001:697-698).

While such frameworks are interesting, they rely on long-term research, which may not always be possible, particularly in developing countries where sponsorship for such studies is limited. Mintzberg and Westley (1992) cited in Weick and Quinn (1999:362) are cautious of framework-work heavy environments as they state that the 'sheer sprawl of the change literature is a continuing challenge to investigators who thrive on frameworks'. But for a study

like this the issue lies with the applicability of such frameworks in transitional environments. For instance, one could ask: how useful are they in capturing complexity in rapid and sometimes chaotic change, although the answer to this lies in empirical work beyond the scope of this study.

Nonetheless, amongst the many theories cited earlier, this thesis finds both the institutional theory and process research interesting due to their focus on employees responses to change and the significance of the internal and the external environment. However, the following paragraphs comment on the institutional theory due to its current dominance of the field.

Institutional theory and change

The pioneers of this theory in the United States include people like Meyer and Rowan (1991); Powell (1991); DiMaggio and Powell (1991a); DiMaggio and Powell (1991b); Scott (1991) and Zucker (1991). Other writers include Friedland and Alford (1991); Brint and Karabel (1991); Goddin (1996); Offe (1996) and Silverman (1970) in the United Kingdom. However, with the diversity that exists in this field, it is important to take heed of Scott's (1987:493) view as quoted by Greenwood and Hinings (1996) that 'the beginning of wisdom in approaching institutional theory is to recognize that there is not one but several variants'. These variations include old institutionalism, neo-institutionalism and new institutionalism where old and neo-institutionalism predominantly look at internal and external organisational processes respectively, while new institutionalism claims to combine both levels of analysis (Greenwood and Hinings, 1996). Because of these theoretical variations, this thesis extrapolates the most accessible interpretations of change across different points of analysis.

The environment and change

Pertinent to institutional theory is the exploration of what stimulates change in organisations and what drives organisational configurations and behaviours. For most of the researchers, the answer lies in the exogenous consequences of the

environment, which is believed to sanction organisational behaviour through instruments like legislation and market forces. As Greenwood and Hinings state:

> Institutional theorists declare that regularized organizational behaviours are a product of ideas, values, and beliefs that originate in the institutional context. To survive, organizations must accommodate institutional expectations, even though these expectations may have little to do with technical notions of performance accomplishment (Greenwood and Hinings, 1996:1023).

What becomes important in the study of organisations and change, therefore, is the exploration of the relationship between contexts and organisational sectors or fields. Through context, the emphasis is put on levels of convergence demonstrated by organisations as a response to the institutional context's pressures or demands for change. Convergence is seen as a way in which organisations seek legitimacy and 'increase their probability of survival' (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996:1025) by adopting templates of configurations, values and belief systems that are presented by the institutional context. Hence organisations are seen to have similar cognitive and structural arrangements.

Underpinning most investigations, however, is the establishment of relations between homogenisation, variation and legitimacy that exist; of which earlier studies have focused on homogenising factors rather than variation. As DiMaggio and Powell state:

> … we ask instead why there is such startling homogeneity of organizational forms and practices, and we seek to explain homogeneity not variation (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991:64).

Essentially, the researchers using this approach would argue that the structural change in organisations is neither driven by competition and the market nor by the need for efficiency; instead they advance that

> Bureaucratization and other forms of organizational change occur as the result of processes that make organisations more similar without necessarily making them more efficient. Bureaucratization and other forms of homogenisation emerge, we argue, out of the structuration (Giddens, 1979) of organizational fields (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991:64).

How do they see this structuration happening? The same authors see this as possible in four ways, namely through (a) an increase in interaction among organisations in the field; (b) the emergence of inter-organizational structures of domination and patterns of coalition; (c) increased information load and (iv) awareness of the common enterprise. For them, it is these forms of structuration that lead to homogenisation of the organisational field. The processes of homogenisation are seen to be a result of:

(a) Coercive isomorphism: this is where organisations are seen to change due to external pressure that may come from other organisations in the field or due to broader societal expectations. These may include government regulations or new technologies that are available in the environment.

(b) Mimetic Processes: in this instance organisations model themselves on other successful or legitimate institutions. Modelling may be due to uncertainty and in order to seek legitimacy 'to demonstrate that they are at least trying to improve working conditions'.

(c) Normative pressures: this refers to the degree of professionalisation in the organisation. This will come through formal training and education and other cognitive bases and it may also be a result of the influence of the broader elite on the discourse and trends in the field (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991:69).

The point with the external focus is to identify the logics that facilitate legitimacy. The essential point is that organisations constantly seek legitimacy from their context whether they do this through either benchmarking and modelling or professionalisation. The consequence of this is that any subsequent organisational change though will be conditional on how tightly coupled the organisation is to an adopted template. As Greenwood and Hinings explain; 'the greater the embeddeness, the more problematic is the attainment of radical change' (Greenwood and Hinings, 1996:1028).

Change and internal organisational dynamics

Beyond the external or exogenous concentration, Greenwood and Hinings (1996) advocate for a framework that includes the analysis of intra-organisational or

endogenous organisational dynamics, which had been the focus of old institutionalists like Selznick (1949). By endogenous dynamics they refer to organisational interests, power dependencies, and capacity action. To understand how these work, they have framed them under two organising constructs namely the precipitating dynamics and the enabling dynamics. Precipitating dynamics refer to 'interests' and 'value commitments' that exist to facilitate change. For instance, one may look at the nature of competing interests that exist, their level of influence and how are they acted upon. Similarly the idea of value commitments establishes levels of convergence and differentiation in the organisations which may also determine the extent of change. Some of the areas to study in this case include the:

(a) Status quo commitment which looks at the extent to which groups are committed to the prevailing institutionalised template-in-use;

(b) Indifferent commitment where groups are neither committed nor opposed to the template-in-use.

(c) Competitive commitment is where some groups support the template-in-use, whereas others prefer an articulated alternative. The articulated alternative would have its origins in the institutional context.

(d) Reformative commitment is where all groups are opposed to the template-in-use and prefer an articulated alternative (Greenwood and Hinings, 1996:12).

The assumption is that the study of such commitments will determine the level to which the organisation will respond to change.

Working in tandem with this are issues of power and capacity for action which form what is known as the enabling dynamics. While neither of the concepts are theorised, they are at least seen to play a role in organisational change. For instance, the two authors argue that:

> Radical change cannot occur without the organization's having sufficient understanding of the new conceptual destination, its having skills and competencies required to function in that new destination, and its having that ability to manage how to get to that destination (Greenwood and Hinings, 1996:1039).

The issue of skills and capacity is sometimes overlooked by change programmes, which assume that change brings automatic cognitive learning to employees. There is, furthermore, an assumption made that with the mention of change people will simply throw out what they know and have learnt over years to accommodate the newly proposed change, which is not always the case.

To further examine these internal organisational dynamics, one may look at Offe (1996), who suggests that institutional change is a product of *four conditions*, namely

(a) stability
(b) founding
(c) breakdown, and
(d) critique.

By *stability,* he implies that organisations are influenced by 'path dependency', a mechanism of 'identical reproduction' (Offe, 1996:208). Path dependency suggests an historical linkage. The concept of identical reproduction therefore means that:

> institutions generate vested interest in their own preservation, sometimes to the extent that the endogenous rise of effective preferences for an alternative arrangement becomes virtually inconceivable (Offe, 1996:208).

Implicit in this is the question of choice, which suggests that organisations may not necessarily want to change because inherent in change is a question of vested interests and possible power interplays that have a history to them. This then brings to the fore the questions of why organisations should change and in whose interest they should change? These questions are fundamental, particularly in South Africa where transformation is taken as a commodity of great value. What tends to escape planners of change, however, is the fact that institutions may be more interested in their own preservation than in creating new identities.

Offe's account holds further interest, when he speaks about the identification of hidden curricula in institutions that may advance or deter change programmes. He explains that inherent within these institutions is the notion that as:

> man-made, but also men institution-made they are socialised by the educational or `hidden curriculum' effect of institutions into the values, norms, and rules embodied in them, and as a consequence they know, expect and anticipate that institutions can be relied upon and reckoned with (Offe, 1996:208).

Reliance has many connotations that include belonging and stability. Implicit in this is that they encapsulate some form of identity, hence the reliance. The question of the hidden curriculum thus becomes critical because – unless one is clear about the nature of organisational grammar that is peculiar to the organisation – it may well be difficult to understand the inherent institutional dynamics. Perhaps the tricky part to this is how one gets to access that grammar. The added value with this is that it looks beyond change as technical efficiency to include the embedded political and cultural politics of the organisation.

Another concept that Offe introduces is that of *founding*

> designed institutions suffer from a dual handicap: They have an architect and they are successors. Two conclusions can be drawn from the discussion of this dual liability, from which the activity `founding' institutions suffers, hyper-rationality and the long arm of the past (Offe, 1996:219).

What comes to mind with this concept is that organisational change is usually framed within existing frames of reference where the past has little or no significance. What is clear here is the issue of continuity and discontinuity. The point is that organisations are constantly evolving and as successors they carry certain experiences with them. This information may, of course, create a sense of pessimism in rationalist planners of change. This is most likely because historical pathways are not usually taken into account in planning change, and if anything the long arm of the past is sometimes dismissed as irrelevant to the new change. Inherent in the concept of *hyper-rationality* is that planned change or interventions have less chance of success because of their inherent rationality, and

unless one understands what this means for each organization, it is important to recognise that 'you cannot will what cannot be willed' (Offe, 1996:215).

Offe's other two conditions, namely *breakdown* and *critique*, are perhaps the most common points of reference in change. For instance, it is much easier to advocate for change where an organization demonstrates failure to inculcate the norms and preferences that condition the loyalty of members. Change may also be as a result of the manifestations of failure in performance. Similarly, it is common practice that organisations engage in critical enquiry about the validity and the relevance of their organisational purposes and outcomes, mainly to instigate institutional change and redesign (Offe, 1996).

What is interesting about Offe's analysis is that he recognises variance in organisations. The concept of path dependency presupposes organisational uniqueness. Equally, when he advocates that institutions are not built on *tabula rasa* but on memories that have set expectations and assumptions based on previous experiences, this creates the space to critically engage with that discourse. This is equally a point of emphasis for culturalist theorists, who would advocate that changing organisations should be a collaborative effort that takes into consideration people's values and experiences about the organisation, (Felkins et al, 1996). However, contrary to culturists who would use such experiences as the basis for initiating change in a constructive way, Offe (1996) and Patterson (1996) take a more radical approach by suggesting that in the event of redesign, such experiences should not be validated. For example, Offe states:

> …The more the situation conforms to a notion of *tabula rasa*, and the more the old routines are explicitly deprived of their validity, the more readily and easily will the newly designed set of institutions win the loyalty of constituents and unfold its ultimately beneficial functions (Offe, 1996:219).

Perhaps this would depend on whether the change needed is transformational or adaptational. With radical transformation, one would expect a complete eradication of previous practices, while in adaptational situations, it is usually an adjustment to identified factors that matters. In the context where radical

transformation is necessary, Patterson's (1983) article on *Bureaucratic Change through Cultural Revolution* is an interesting account of what needs to be taken into consideration. Perhaps his use of the military metaphor of war and the battle-field may be a discouragement for some change researchers, but it does provide a radically different view of change for those interested in asserting a new organisational 'grammar' while getting rid of the 'hidden curriculum'. The point for Patterson is that it is essential to understand that Organisational Development types of intervention tend to work better in already well functioning good organisations. But if one were to work with dysfunctional organisations it is imperative to identify and isolate the 'skeletal props' that support their dysfunctionality. Part of this is to understand the cultural politics that sustain the informal ways of doing things. To change such organisations thus requires a much more aggressive intervention technique that attacks the cultures that exist in the process of establishing new values. Of course his underlying influences come from Sun Tsu (490 BC), Musashi (1644) Clausewitz (1832) and Mao (1936)

Significance of institutional theory

Generally, while institutional theory has been useful in bringing to the fore the relationship between organisations and their environments, it has been criticised for its deterministic view of the environment on organisations and for focusing mainly on macro institutional developments while excluding variations of local contexts (Kim, 2004). More importantly, however, its focus on structuration has limited the focus on agency. Instead, organisations are perceived as conformist entities lacking initiative and thus eliminating the agency that is considered useful for entrepreneurship in management studies.

Despite such criticism, institutional theory has found its way to developing countries even though still in the early stages. For instance, Mavima and Chackerian (2001) have tried to incorporate theories like institutional theory into the study of public administration reforms. Similar to other institutionalists, they examine universalism and convergence in public administration, but more importantly they argue that the success of administrative reforms is dependent on

the existing local institutional arrangements. Their research is based on Zimbabwe, where they interviewed a number of interest groups and stakeholders involved in reform projects in that country. Unfortunately, the scope and depth of the interviews is not well-explained, and this may be problematic for the generalisations they make.

Nonetheless, their findings identified critical factors for administrative reforms that may escape common-sense. These include:

(a) the role of local political and administrative systems and their ability to commit to the proposed reforms;
(b) the system of governance in operation, how power is dispersed and where it is located;
(c) the history of institutional development including colonial legacies, the influence of liberation movements and the ideology adopted thereafter. A significant point is that civil service tends to serve different roles with different dispensations. For instance, with the colonial state it was a master rather than a servant, and the question is: how does it see itself post-independence?;
(d) the inherent conflict between formal regulative structures and the informal normative and cognitive institutions;
(e) the extent of corruption and graft;
(f) balancing structural and technical change with behavioural change;
(g) understanding how civil servants interpret their role in administration and in society (Mavima and Chackerian, 2001:105-107).

What is interesting about Mavima and Chackerian's (2001) research is that it is one of the few that tries to work outside structural adjustment programmes. Instead of focusing on the failures of structural adjustment programmes *per se*, they explore factors beyond the implementation of any specific programme. But more so, their observations are critical to the study of organisations in developing contexts. However, like all other writers using rational perspective they hardly question what creates the context and why.

Organisational development and change

Further to the mainstream management theoretical research on change and efficiency, is the practice of Organisational Development (OD), largely used by management consultants to diagnose or identify points of organisational inefficiency. Grieves' (2000) monograph highlight the origins of OD and the various themes that are addressed by the field. Put simply, OD is a process of institutional change using external consultants. Fundamentally, it has its roots in rationalistic disciplines where organisational problems are diagnosed clinically through a process of research and subsequent prescriptions are made on what to implement to 'cure' the organisational problem.

Even though OD does not engage with theory, it has become a popular discipline for organizational change. This may be due to the excessive faith that many organisations have in management consultants. More importantly, however, there is an assumed overlap between OD and programmed approaches to change such as Total Quality Management (TQM) and Business Process Re-engineering (BPR). Grieves (2000) highlights the differences between the two as follows:

> the differences are related to methodology, approach taken, the analysis of interest groups, the nature of development in terms of learning or training, the approach taken to organizational culture, promotion of values, the mode of intervention (Grieves, 2000).

Generally OD is traced to the functionalist sociological developments of the 1960s. It is seen as process-oriented, promoting humanistic values and encouraging learning. On the other hand, programmed approaches are seen to be top-down and task-focused and associated with the late 1980s downsizing projects that many organisations adopted as part of modernisation. Unfortunately, change programmes are associated with more failures than successes. This may be due to the narrow focus, as Edmonstone explains:

> Change programmes and projects have been seen to be distinctively different from the ongoing process of managerial life. "Bracketing-off", a problematic aspect of management into a change programme with different management arrangements, has been seen as the conventional wisdom. Taking place in large bureaucracies, it has

> embodied and enacted many bureaucratic assumptions. Thus, change has proceeded typically in "cascades" from top management to middle management, through junior management and then to the workforce. It has also focused on "infrastructure" matters (policies, structures and systems). Finally, it has assumed (in a good democratic tradition) that change is best brought about by "normative/re-educative" strategies, whereby individuals (most usually through education and training experiences) are encouraged to re-examine their values and attitudes, change them and hence modify their behaviour at work (Edmonstone, 1995:16).

The bottom line is that fundamental to these programmes is the agenda to raise productivity in the workplace. While the emphasis could be on efficiency *per se*, there is a whole rhetoric about enhancing organisational performance through humanistic and normative terms like value-driven organisations and teamwork. Interestingly, these programmes tend to be generic and also claim universal successes. Equally, they are usually de-contextualised and de-politicised.

One of the reasons that such programmes have received global coverage is because technical rationality has been equally fashionable in the late twentieth century. Some developed countries like the United States have led and defined the meaning of success through popularised movements like the Excellence Movement. Grieves (2000) states that the 'excellence debate' was enhanced by arguments for innovation and entrepreneurship and the need to think ahead of a post-capitalistic society. More importantly, he summarises the influence of the Excellence Movement in this way:

> The excellence writers tell a story similar to the script-writers of a contemporary soap-opera. This is not intended to demean their work but to indicate the mechanics of writing a moving plot. Thus, if the central theme is the place of humanity in an organizational drama that occurred over the twentieth century and which was essentially characterised by the bureaucratic, modern, machine culture, which we now refer to as Fordism, then this story is told through a simple plot and exemplifies through numerous examples that celebrate the plot, (Grieves, 2000:356)

Central to the Excellence Movement plot are customers, innovation, treating employees as resources rather than costs, and leadership. Of course, the plot has not shifted a great deal in the modern debates. Rather, it still stipulates the

absolute truths that are confirmed and validated through research of various 'successful' companies. Subsequently, such truths have become the rhetoric that is found in many private and public sector organisations today. Almost all organisations that are responding to this global phenomenon of change-speak use the common language of downsizing, right-sizing, core business, outsourcing, teamwork, strong leadership, vision and mission and managerial accountability. The common language does not in any way suggest a common way of doing things, although the common thread is that of organisational efficiency and effectiveness.

Nevertheless, Edmonstone (1995) finds these programmes limited in the sense that they

(a) focus on global and longer-term issues which are not always perceived to be in the short-term "critical path" of the organization;

(b) rely heavily on educational and training methods which encourage representational learning (through acquiring a new management language, complete with jargon, catch-phrases, etc) rather than behavioural learning (through doing);

(c) are driven by an exclusive core group who are seen to be the sole or main owners of the problem (and therefore of its solution);

(d) are often insensitive to the history, culture and priorities with sub-parts of the organization; and all this serves to set up a tension between the "rhetoric" and the "reality", (Edmonstone, 1995).

Despite such criticisms, programmes like TQM and BPR are increasingly popular in many organisations that undergo change. One explanation for this could be the close relationship between the worlds of consulting and management. As Burgundy, cited by Grieves (2000:365) states:

> In particular I am concerned that the relationship between the managers and consultants has changed. As managers have been forced to face increasingly turbulent and capricious business environments, they have come to rely, more and more, on the advice and guidance of management consultants. For example, we have seen managers turning to consultants for advice on issues such as total quality management

> (TQM) "reengineering" and empowerment, to name but a few. Yet with management increasingly reliant on consultants for advice, innovation and support, the traditional relationship between power broker and messenger seems to have flipped so that nowadays it seems that the consultants are the key power brokers in the relations, with the result that the messengers now shoot the managers (Burgundy, 1996:28).

One cannot, of course, discount that such relationships may have positive spin-offs for many organisations. Usually consultants are expected to have updated knowledge on the new trends in the field. However, one cannot escape the fact that at times the approaches adopted can be highly mechanistic and recipe-oriented. This is compounded by the fact that management consultancy is presently a highly marketable industry which is 'accelerated by the growth in the number of "recipe books" which, while helpful in demystifying some of the more arcane aspects of OD activity, also portray OD as the application of problem-solving tools and techniques' (Edmonstone and Havergal, 1995:31) cited in Grieves (2000:366). This is a perception that will remain as long as OD is seen as synonymous with change programmes.

2.4 Public administration and efficiency

The discourse of public administration and public management owe their original thought on organisational performance to earlier management traditions of scientific management. As Kettl (2000) states:

> Following the way charted by Frederick Taylor (1911), analysts sought the "one best way" to perform administrative work, a way to seek efficiency free from the meddling of partisan politics. As Roscoe Martin (1952) described, public administration built a mechanistic approach to match the emerging private-sector scientific management models…. Advocates of the scientific management approach to public administration saw virtually no barrier to its ability to improve government – if only government administrators could be protected from political meddling (Kettl, 2000: 9).

The issue of the separation of administration from politics has, of course, been an issue as early as the 1800s, through public administration pioneers like Woodrow Wilson. Central to the debates was the need to maximise efficiency. Hence it was important that the bureaucracy had clear principles to adhere to, such as those

scientific management principles that were being propagated. Kettl (2000) draws some key influences from Wilson's argument, namely that:

(a) it established the importance of the execution of public policy quite apart from its creation;

(b) it was based on the notion that management could and should do well. In this case, government effectiveness was seen as *sine qua non* to professional administration and strong management capacity; and

(c) since management was an identified factor, they established a reform tradition for the twentieth century.

Looking at the literature to date, one could argue that there has been very little shift from these original ideas. Nonetheless, one of the interesting works to emerge in this public administration genre came from the development administration research. This is the work of Frederick Riggs who developed a model 'particularly designed to illuminate administrative problems in developing countries' (Riggs, 1964:vii). Using an ecological approach, he argued that public administration inefficiency in transitional contexts was a result of complex inter-relationships between cultural values and administrative and economic problems. To explain the complexity of such inter-relationships he proposed a theory of prismatic societies.

The basis of this theory is that modern societies operate from a fused, prismatic and defracted continuum. The fused society is predominantly found in pre-modernised traditional settings, where the traditional structures like that of kings and chiefs tend to be responsible for governance. The prismatic society is largely defined as a society in transition, where both the traditional and modern modes of governance and administration overlap in a heterogeneous way. It is this overlap that tends to complicate the scenario for administration, as western traditional administrative techniques are not geared for dualistic tendencies. In defracted societies, government administration is taken as the norm and there is a clear separation of roles and structures that serve multiple interests. This situation is also advanced by the level and extent of modernisation.

Riggs' (1964) analysis for transitional society is based on the prismatic model, which is the intermediate phase where most post-colonial countries tend to operate. As societies, these countries are dealing with various dualisms like an urban and rural divide; tribal- and constitution-based governance; traditional administration systems; and legalistic and judiciary-based systems. While Riggs does not suggest an automatic progression or graduation from one state to another, his view is that societies can remain prismatic and may not necessarily move to another stage:

> The prismatic experience is not a synthesis based on the dialectical model, nor a stage on a moving belt advancing from tradition to modernist; rather, it is an enduring dilemma for peoples trapped between two different worlds, a trap that generates its own dynamics, its own inescapable logic and onerous contradictions. Although the results may be lamentable, they can also be attractive. The traditional norms or structures that persist may be humane and situationally sensitive, whereas the externally imposed standards may be more efficient but arbitrary and rude. The prismatic model strives for a synergy composed of these contradictory elements. They may not be reconciled, however. Instead, they may be held together in perpetual tension (Riggs, 1964:15).

Riggs thus focuses on the consequences of such contradictions and their implications for administration. He then analyses the factors that facilitate public administration inefficiencies in prismatic contexts. Contrary to technical models that assume bureaucracy as a given tool for administration, he questions the role and usefulness of bureaucracy in transitional and post-colonial contexts. His basic premise is that bureaucracy in developing contexts is flawed and perhaps does not exist, and explains that:

> …it is one thing to talk about the creation of such systems and how they might work, and quite a different thing to assume that they do exist in actual societies. It is dangerous to act as though their existence has been established… But neither can we assume that the effective existence in these societies of the formal market and the bureaucracy, however we might regard them as necessary or desirable, despite the apparent willingness of modernizing elites to adopt such institutions by fiat. We must first find out what kind of administrative practices actually prevail (Riggs, 1964:9-10).

The issue here is that bureaucracies are not an automatic feature of administration as their existence is part of the broader social progress. Hence he proposes an exploration of both the context and the administration. The assumption is that the progress between the two happens in tandem. This may be contentious to those that see management theory, particularly change management, as generic and applicable to all contexts. But what is interesting with Riggs' work is that he provides an alternative theoretical understanding about bureaucracies in transitional societies. His theory is centred on **four** propositions.

Proposition 1: *the weight of bureaucratic power varies inversely with administrative efficiency*. The issue here is the extent to which the bureaucracy exercises power in the organisation. It is therefore important to identify (i) the locus of power, (ii) the sanctions available and (iii) the extent to which bureaucrats determine their own goals, which he calls bureaucratism. He sees bureaucratism as a high contributor to dysfunctional administration.

Proposition 2: *prismatic structures reinforce bureaucratic prodigality.* A number of issues need to be explored in this case, namely (a) the role of social status and personal influence in determining the benefits of service delivery; (b) the way the scale of benefits works. Are they based on hierarchy or performance?; (c) the extent to which power and influence determines budgets approval; and (d) the nature of the relationship between the bureaucrats and their clientele. Riggs contends that where such a relationship is too structured it promotes violation of rules rather than the execution of law. For example, administrators would devise procedural delays and technical obstructions to service delivery to promote the payment of bribes.

Proposition 3*: Bureaucratism and elite recruitment promote administration prodigality.* The key issue here is nepotism. Some of the areas providing clues to this are: (a) recruitment which is usually not about recruitment procedures but more about who gets recruited. Riggs contends that recruitments in prismatic conditions serve loyalty purposes to superiors and/or are for possible future

political mobility to elite status; (b) the formation of clects, which he describes as a branch, sector, or stratum of a bureaucracy, whose members are recruited from a given community to safeguard the interest of that particular community. To quote directly from Riggs (1964) he states that:

> The clect is a surrogate family; its members treat each other as they would relatives. The leader of the clect is regarded as a father substitute. Sala men are treated like adopted children. Others suitably take the role of courtesy uncles and godparents. To discipline or discharge an incompetent sala official is, therefore, like disinheriting an erring son; it may be better done in extreme cases, but is normally avoided at all costs – better to put up with him and conceal his shortcomings than to expose the clect to a traumatic experience of cutting one of its members (Riggs, 1964:276).

In tandem with the formation of clects is an issue of (c) interagency co-ordination, power struggles and turf protectionism. His view is that bureaucratic salas are likely to fail, largely due to power struggles and turf protectionism.

Proposition 4: *Poly-normativism and dissensus in the Sala results in administrative inefficiency.* The issue here is about the lack of ground rules for operation. Riggs contends that in the sala model, there is very little agreement about ground rules and norms for operation. Instead, 'new set of norms, political formulas, and myths, based on foreign experience, are superimposed on the social order which continues to adhere, in large measure, to older traditional norms, formulas and myths' (Riggs, 1964:277). The implications of this are dissensus, polynormativism, and normlessness. In such situations the bureau:

> abandons attempts to reform and seeks rather to cope with situations as they arise, pulling wires, paying what must be paid, and hoping to survive somehow; one seeks, if possible, to gain access to some of the spoils of the system. Objectivity and truth dissolve, leaving the victim with no option but to judge that validity of purported information by the status of its sources, not by its basic truth and consistency (Riggs, 1964:279).

Of course, as Riggs (1964) indicates, this state of affairs does not mean that decisions are not made and that power ceases to exist. Rather, as a consequence of this, condition outputs suffer. Another feature to *normlessness and dissensus* is the issue of disengagement of authority and control. His view is that power in the

sala is neither centralised nor localised but rather highly equivocal and dispersed in the organisation. The lack of delegation thus is due to the inability to make subordinates accountable, as the sanctions are poor or non-existent. Riggs' view is that efficient administration requires a balance of power so that it is neither highly concentrated or nor highly dispersed. For example, he states that high concentration contributes to poor communication and decision-making. As he explains:

> A few individuals at the apex of the pyramid find themselves challenged to make quickly a range of decisions, which would require superhuman capabilities. The result is necessarily either procrastination and long delays, or inept and inadequate policies. But extreme dispersal of power is equally dysfunctional since it reduces the capacity of a bureaucracy to reach agreement on basic policies and to insist on their implementation (Riggs, 1964:282).

From this it sounds logical that any organisation that wishes to be effective would ensure this balance of power. In reality, though, this is difficult to achieve, especially where self-interests dominate. Overall then, while public management in general tries to explain how bureaucracies work, Riggs' work provides an interesting illumination into why public organisations in different contexts perform differently. To some extent this removes the myth of the existence of only a single type of bureaucracy, namely the Weberian bureaucracy, as he introduces the sala type of bureaucracy. The inverse of this is that his work can be deemed to be separationist and pessimistic of other contexts, especially developing countries whose administration tends to be associated with chaos. Despite that, the theory of prismatic societies provides an interesting analytical lens to administrative inefficiency.

Public management after the 1980s

Shifting to public management, one can argue that while management theories and organisational theory in particular have seen a plethora of theories that emerged in the 1970s, public administration also saw its efficiency message coming full circle with the introduction of New Public Management (NPM). NPM has its origins in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Canada. To date, it has found its way into some European countries through the Organisation

for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Developing countries are also adopting NPM to transform their public service, for example, some Asian countries like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, and some African countries which include South Africa. It may be argued that developing countries have less choice in adopting this tool, as many of the reforms in such countries are donor-driven. Whatever the reasons, NPM is now a major tool for institutional transformation and institutional reform.

To understand its thesis, one has to trace its links with other global discourses. At a global political and economic level, it is associated with neo-liberal market ideology that has changed the nature and the role of the state. There has been a definite shift from state welfarism to a market-oriented state in developed countries. The new state is about public choice and entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is synonymous with a whole process of re-organising, restructuring and re-engineering governments. The consequences of this have included the development of a new technically-oriented, efficiency-driven vocabulary of downsizing, de-layering and de-bureaucratisation of public sector organisations.

The knowledge tools for the advancement of this type of management have been popularised in the United States by consultants like Osborne and Gaebler (1992) who coined the concept of *reinventing government*. Reinventing government is about propositions to create entrepreneurial governments, but more importantly, it is also a suggested tool for the

> fundamental transformation of public systems and organizations to create dramatic increases in their effectiveness, efficiency, adaptability, and capacity to innovate (Osborne and Plastrik, 1997:13, cited in Downes, 1998:8).

Since then, there have been various interpretations of how this could happen. For instance, Osborne and Gaeblers' (1992) text on *Banishing Bureaucracy* identifies at least ten characteristics of such a government. Osborne and Plastrik (1997) identify at least '90 tools reinventors can use' to change their bureaucracies (Downes, 1998:2). The significance of this work has been the development and

adoption of tools like the National Performance Review (NPR), which was to enhance bureaucratic performance and accountability in the United States. Similarly, other countries have had reviews and commissions set up to investigate their state of government. As a result, there are a number of projects that have been adopted in a range of other countries like the United Kingdom, which adopted programmes like the Next Step and Citizens' Charter as the basis for government reform.

In academic debates it is seen as a product of public policy schools. It emerged at the time when both the fields of public management and public administration:

> have often been lured into intellectual cul-de-sacs; public management into a psycho babble of leadership without authority, public administration into the original sin of separating administration and politics (Lynn, 1998:7).

NPM thus concretised authority in public management. Kettl (2000:11) believes it has played a much more significant role, which is that of providing a 'critique of traditional administrative practice, which was not providing alternatives to traditional public administration theory and practice'. This is, of course, contestable, as NPM neither questions nor provides theoretical analysis of existing administrative thought. Rather, one can argue that all it does is to provide a revisionist logic that accentuates the superiority of management in organisations.

Over the years it has taken different shapes and forms as demonstrated in the models by Ferlie et al, (1996) quoted in Quinlivan and Schon (2002). These models demonstrate the key themes of NPM.

Model 1 is the 'efficiency drive' of the mid-1980s, which imported models from the private sector.
Model 2 is termed downsizing and decentralisation. The key point of this is management by contracts.
Model 3 is termed in 'Search of Excellence' and is closely linked to Peters' and Waterman's (1981) work derived from the book with the same title.

Model 4 is 'Public Service Orientation'. It strives to fuse private and public management ideas, whilst preserving a distinct public service mission. There is an emphasis on public values of participation and accountability.

These models are incremental rather than distinctive, and one would expect that different countries extrapolate from different models at different times, or else combine them as they see fit.

An additional factor is that NPM is packaged and marketed well. The language of technical efficiency and effectiveness is appealing to many organisations. There are very few people, if any, that want an association with chaotic and crisis-ridden organisations. It is thus an instant hit with those that want to be seen to be increasing organisational efficiency and effectiveness.

NPM also has unique attributes inherent in its programmes. Some of the identifiable features include:

(a) *Simplicity.* NPM is devoid of the abstract theoretical debate and its focus is on management. Its slogan as indicated earlier is 'let the managers manage'. In the process, it provides direction or prescriptions, either through principles or some 'to do' list.

(b) *Success orientation*. Successful organisations and successful leaders (mostly in business) are used as examples to be emulated. An association with successful leaders is definitely a psychological boost for those that walk the path.

(c) *Urgency of performance.* It creates a sense of urgency through words like outcomes, speed, results, performance, entrepreneurship and basis for action.

(d) *Cost-cutting*. Where there has been doubt about government policies on expenditure, it clearly demarcates boundaries about what is worth spending on and cutting out.

(e) *Commercialisation*. It is beautifully packaged in the sense that it advances notions of quality and innovation through modern technology. There is a sense of creating a 'state-of-the-art' government that matches successful enterprises.

Justifiable or not, it is these kinds of characteristics that make NPM appealing for managers. It gives a sense of control, authority, order and a clear direction on what works in organisations. Besides, it concretises management for those that are looking for practical toolbox kits on managing in the public sector.

A transcending factor is that within the logic of NPM institutional change, *sine qua non* is applied to the following key principles:

(a) Results over process;
(b) Focus on outputs;
(c) Steering rather than rowing;
(d) Empowering rather than serving; and
(e) Earning rather than spending, (Argyriades, 2002:11).

This directs the advancement of entrepreneurship in all sectors of public management, whether hospitals, universities, schools or churches. To date, many organisations have had to contend with all the jargon of management by objectives (MBO), strategic planning, the balanced score-card and other similar tools so that they can prove to themselves they are in control and managing efficiently and effectively.

There are few public organisations that have not experimented with NPM. Many organisations are using business models to benchmark their designs, systems, structures and processes. There is now more emphasis on managerial excellence and performance, usually exercised through performance appraisal systems. Equally public organisations are expected to design strategic systems that are results-oriented and measurable. Furthermore, organisational efficiency has meant de-bureaucratisation and delayering that has seen a lot of employee downsizing and privatisation of non-core activities in favour of those that are manageable and relevant to 'customers'. The connecting thread in all this is managerialism which is nothing else but a philosophy that puts faith in managers. Management is thus modelled on the principles of business, which is perceived as being superior to public management. Some of the commentators on managerialism include

Argyriades (2002); Maor (1999); Paine (1999); Reed (1999); Pollitt (1993; 1998) and Yeatman (1993).

There are, naturally, critics of this approach which include Argyriades (2002); Paine (1999) and Pollitt (1993). In the main, they are critical of the fact that NPM is devoid of a theoretical discourse. It is apolitical and a contextual. Fundamentally, it is seen to marginalise debates on democracy and undermines issues of inclusion and equity through its over-emphasis on the 3E's of Efficiency, Economy and Effectiveness. To conclude, one could say that NPM is just an example of how conceptions of administrative efficiency have evolved in organisational studies. It is thus another tool based within the rationalistic logic that attempts to put order into organisations by making sure that managers are in authority and in control.

Public management and organisational change in developing contexts

The review of the literature in developing countries shows very little theorisation of organisational change. There is, in fact, a glaring lack of theorisation about public sector organisations in general. Instead many writers tend to take a critical stance in their evaluation of public sector developments and reforms. Such a critical stance is largely due to experiences of development failures in Third World and developing countries, which have been initiated through structural adjustment programmes by the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The tendency then is to advance critical debates about structural adjustment programmes and their failures, rather than theory. For instance, Mukandala (1992) identifies at least three camps that attempt to analyse these failures in African contexts. These are the (i) IMF school which attributes failures to wrong policy choices and ineffective and inefficient post-colonial governments; (ii) the indigenists who base their line of analysis on conditions external to developing countries and which constrain effective development and (iii) the neo-Marxists who attribute the problems to the class in power, where African governments are

seen to be pursuing their own private class interests rather the interests of the masses. Unfortunately, most of these theories do not address organisational issues directly, much less questions of change.

In cases where one could draw inferences about organisational change, there is very little deviation from western conceptions of organisations. Organisations are described and analysed using rational tendencies. As a result, as with organisations in the West, there is a preoccupation with maximising their efficiencies and effectiveness. For instance, there is a strong belief that current public sector inefficiencies are due to archaic structures and processes, hence there is a call to speed up their modernisation. Modernisation in this case ranges from the adoption of new human resources techniques, new operational systems and new technology. Much of the modernisation agenda is, of course, based on borrowed models and technologies from the developed Western countries.

Within the South African context, one could argue that scientific management dominated public administration thoughts and research before 1994. A partial diversion from this came with the Mount Grace conference of 1992 where different scholars reviewed the future of the field. While 'Mount Grace' became an inspirational shift towards public management and policy discourses, there is very little research that challenges and develops theory in the field. This applies to organisational change literature as well. In fact, public management organisational change research is still in its infancy in South Africa. Even so, this also applies modernist lenses of analysis and remains descriptive.

2.5 The general critique of the rationalist paradigms

The review so far has been dominated by research within the rationalist approach, hence the focus was on different factors presumed to influence change. While this is useful, the reliance on factors and variables of change of efficiency has limited the broad theorisation of organisations. This has resulted in such studies being criticised as being apolitical, atheoretical and for ignoring contextual differences. Most of these critiques come from the post-modernist genre. Some of the leading

writers include scholars like Clegg (1990); Hassard and Parker (1993); Reed (1993) and Burrell (1998).

The basis of post-modern conceptions of organisations is to locate organisational dynamics within the broader social theory paradigms. While they do not write on change *per se*, their starting point follows on the sociological pathways of Weber. However, unlike rationalist interpretations, they use sociological theories to provide analytical thoughts of social reality, including that of organisations. In the process they reject the universalist nature of knowledge offered by the scientific management and other functionalist perspectives. While not discounting the achievements of functionalism in organisations as depicted in Morgan (1993), they reject the notions of order control and stability, of objective and absolute truths inherent in this tradition. Instead, they pursue the notion that knowledge is contestable and loaded with values power and politics. This is why, from the 1970s onwards, they have been arguing for the opening up of the management and organisational theory field to enhance pluralism. To date, various theoretical paradigms are being incorporated into organisational analysis.

Despite the fact that post-modernism does not address institutional change, the post-modernist trend has brought some levers for analysis in the organisational change discourse. Some of these include the introduction of a reflexive approach to knowledge. They also call for the deconstruction of theory and the deconstruction of the text. This is to enhance the critical examination of contexts, their origins, their underlying assumptions, beliefs and means of domination. Implicit in domination are issues of power and politics, which are rarely acknowledged in adaptational and rational theories. Their approach to power thus tends to explore different structural and systemic conditions that facilitate unequal power relations. The dominant approach is to study different forms of organisational domination, subjugation and resistance inherent in the managerial discourses used in organisations (McKinlay & Starkley, 1998).

One must, of course, be aware that even post-modernists can see power in a 'particular dimension of an imbalanced relationship between two parties' (Leflaive, 1996:2). Power in this case subsumes notions of hierarchy, dominance and obedience. For example, feminist writers would write on the domination of masculinity in modernist paradigms. But the most referred definition of power comes from Michel Foucault (see Phillip, 1985). Foucault's conception of power explores power as both disciplinary and relational. It is seen as disciplinary in the sense that it tends to be invested in institutions that implement particular codes of conduct like prisons, hospitals, schools and courts of law. It is also disciplinary in the sense that it can assume a surveillance position to those inside the organisation. To explain this, Foucault uses the metaphor of the prisons and the panoptican where individuals automatically discipline themselves through different organisational surveillance techniques like performance appraisal (Findlay & Newton, 1998) as if they were under the gaze of the panoptican. The point is that the panoptican, by its nature, monitors movement and subject order and control in a symbolic way.

Juxtaposed to the disciplinary power of the panoptican is the notion of relational power (see Foucault cited in Phillip, 1985). Power is seen to have multiple-sources and is not located at a specific point. It is rather dispersed, unstable and reversible. As Phillip (1985:74) explains, 'power operates to constrain or otherwise direct action in areas where there are a number of possible courses of action open to the agents in question'. This means that while power is forceful so is its opposite, namely resistance. Resistance as such is power in reverse. This thesis does not look at resistance. The critical issue to take from post-modernists is to recognise that power has agency due to its relational nature and can be used in different ways in the organisation. Instead of assuming a hierarchical, top-down and authority-based approach to power, it is seen as dispersed and accessible at different points in the organisation. Indirectly, this means power can also be organised differently depending on the interests at play. What comes to mind here are issues of networks and coalitions in organisations. Post-modern research does not look at group activities as they focus on individual patterns of self-

mobilisation. Despite that, it is argued here that such analysis of power could be extended to include groups to understand how they use power and why.

Despite the intellectually stimulating nature of post-modern research, it is still outside mainstream debates, which remain dominated by rational and behavioural approaches due to the dominance of the field by business schools (Greenwood and Hinings, 2002). Besides, while others see the critiques provided by post-modern research as its strength, some see this as a weakness due to their anti-foundational stance on knowledge. Their relative conceptions of knowledge are seen to promote what Scheurich (1997) calls 'might makes right'. Post-modernism is also assumed to undermine emancipatory struggles and epistemologies. As Scheurich states:

> those who make this critique… argue that relativism undermines factual or empirical determinations that social groups, such as women or people of colour, are oppressed or have less power or are exploited (Scheurich, 1997:37).

Again, such criticism is largely based on how different people view power. The harshest criticism in the same line of thought comes from Donaldson (1994). He argues that the critiques expounded by post-modernism and its sister theories like radical structuralism and radical humanism have nearly destroyed the school of positivist organisational research:

> Each author writes an essay which is mainly a critique of positivist, functionalist organization critique (often largely the same critique) and calls in sketchy terms for some bold new research programme which largely never accentuates in terms of solid empirical research. Yet this hardly seems to matter to the critical organization theorist for whom the important point is the doing of critique (Donaldson, 1994:192).

While advocating for what he calls a liberal revolution in organisational theory, he labels post-modern analysis of organisations as part of the illiberal political agenda that is theoretical and ideological. In his view, this does not benefit organisational theory and organisational analysis in contemporary society (1994):

> For organisational theory to embrace post-modernism, as if it is a new theoretical system with an important message, it is to reveal itself as a dullard who cannot see the joke. Post-modernism is therefore bankrupt as an avenue of new organisation theory (Donaldson, 1994: 94).

Donaldson's comments must, of course, be taken in context as coincidentally his paper is also pushing for a particular ideology.

Despite such criticism, post-modern research adds valuable contributions to organisational change discourses. Organisational change studies, especially those that advance rational tendencies, have failed to challenge themselves to advance knowledge beyond the obvious. Post-modernism as a result brings a refreshing analysis into the stalemate of the modernist trajectory. This is despite the fact that it does not put forward new theories of social reality, but its rejection of absolute truths makes it critical to review knowledge in different ways. Equally, its call for reflexivity makes it impossible to take knowledge for granted, but to rather subject it to critical engagement like any construct embedded in the social realm.

2.6 Conceptual framework for the study

This review has shown attempts at conceptions of institutional change. While some of the theoretical discourses do not address change directly, they have nevertheless shown how organisational efficiency has become a dominant theme in organisational studies. Starting with the earlier theories of scientific management, there has been very little progress towards the development of alternative theories outside the philosophy of modernism and its rationality. As a result, the research using these theoretical foundations is driven by empiricism, where findings are usually generalised in a prescriptive way. Greenwood and Hinings (2002) are naturally critical of this, as they see such approaches as responsible for the reduction of organisational analysis as research becomes preoccupied with managerial technologies of effectiveness and efficiency. This they attribute to the dominance of economists and functionalist paradigms located in most business schools. Despite the limitations of the modernist paradigms, this study finds a number of concepts that are useful for this research. These are (a) context or environment; (b) intra-organisational dynamics; and (c) power and politics.

Context

From systems theory to institutional theory, one has identified the significance of context and the environment on organisations For instance, while systems theory sees the environment as something to adapt to, institutional theory looks at how and why organisational fields respond they way they do to their environments. While neither of the theories questions the environment, institutional theory does at least identify some agency in it. It is this recognition of agency in the environment that is particularly useful in this study. Due to the nature of the study, which looks at a single case study, it is not possible to make comparisons across fields of education departments, as institutional theorists do. Instead, this study will examine the role the environment played in shaping the ECDE as a single entity. Of importance is to identify how the department responded to the contextual shifts informed by the social and political transformation agenda. To do this, one has to look at both the macro- and micro-organisational responses. By macro-responses is meant responses due to external conditions like the regulatory frameworks. Micro-responses refer to the internal structural and cultural shifts that were due to contextual influences.

Internal organisational dynamics

Management research and organisational change literature tends to focus on the internal processes and dynamics. Greenwood and Hinings (1996) call these intra-organisational dynamics or endogenous organisational dynamics. Depending on the theoretical position one takes, these dynamics many include specific tangible variables like resources, culture and leadership, as well as the less tangible factors like culture, commitment, capacity for action, power and politics. Of these factors, the less tangible tend to receive less attention, except for culture, which has grown into an extensive field on its own. This study focuses on the less tangible factors of change as it examines the processes that influenced the ECDE journey of change. For analytical purposes, it extrapolates from different management theories, especially Riggs' theory of the sala type of bureaucracy. As a co-existence to prismatic and developing societies, Riggs (1964) associates sala bureaucracies with chaos rather than order because of the broader lack of

institutional rules to govern them. This study does not intend to convey a message of chaos but rather wishes to explore internal responses as part of the complexity of the transformation process in a transitional environment. The internal organisational dynamics thus reflect on internal challenges of skills and capacity for action (Greenwood and Hinings, 1996) to include the nature of relations that exist.

Power and politics

The criticism of management literature for its neglect of power and politics has seen these two concepts steadily being infused into the debates. The literature indicates, however, that there is still very little interrogation of what these concepts mean and how they are used in organisations as management literature has generally treated them in a pessimistic way. Power and politics were seen as unnecessary in management due to the perceived negativity they are assumed to hold. However, post-modern research has shown their significance in organisations. While post-modernists provide interesting ways to examine power in organisations, their approach as indicated earlier tends to be dominated by critique of structural conditions through deconstruction. While this is useful in many ways, this study uses power and politics as exploratory lenses. For instance, while using the same key themes of context and intra-organisational dynamics, it examines how power and politics are used in the organisation to support or reject change and its consequences.

The point pursued here is that change is a contested phenomenon and riddled with conflict because of the multiple interests that are usually involved. It is assumed, therefore, that the analysis of politics and power will accentuate the understanding of how the ECDE functions in general. This makes power and politics the heart of a diagnosis of the change process. Without any particular method prescribed on how to study these two phenomena, their use remains exploratory throughout the thesis.

Social antagonism

While power and politics provide a good barometer of any organisation, other conceptual tools can enhance their strengths. Since this study is looking at change in a complex conflictual and fragmented setting, it found it useful to bring in Laclau and Mouffe's concept of social antagonism. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) are popularly used in political theory. The basis of social antagonism is to depict the conflicts inherent in change. Norval and Stavrakakis provide a useful simplification of this concept, which is otherwise a dense interpretation from Laclau and Mouffe (1985), who state that:

> Social antagonisms occur because social agents are unable to attain fully their identity. Thus, an antagonism is seen to occur when 'the presence of [an] "Other" prevents me from being totally myself. The relation arises not from full totalities, but from the impossibility of their constitution. This blockage of identity is a mutual experience for both the antagonising force and the force that is being antagonised: 'Insofar as there is antagonism, I cannot be a full presence for myself. But, nor is the force that antagonises me such a presence: its objective being is a symbol of my non-being and, in this way, it is overflowed by a plurality of meanings which prevent it being fixed as full positivity (Howarth, Norval and Stavrakakis, 2000:10).

Equally, it is the view of this thesis that with the plural nature of identities that exist in the EC context, change would not be an easy process. Instead it is seen to be characterised by conflict as different groups, previously racially and ethnically categorised by apartheid, try to assert themselves in the new dispensation of change. The point is that change in this environment, as in many parts of South Africa, was largely dominated by negotiated settlements. This resulted in the creation of representative bureaucracies. This is different from mergers, which usually are a result of takeover or assimilation of one company by the other. Contrary to this, representative bureaucracies are built on consensus and consultation. Research on representative democracy and representative bureaucracies is wide (Dresang, 1974; Riccucci and Saidel, 1997; Kelly, 1998; Meier, Wrinkle and Polinard 1999). The underlying principle from this literature is that representative bureaucracies ensure that different community interests are protected and given voice, whether they are racially, ethnically, class, gender or

geographically based. It thus becomes a measure of equal opportunity and access to decision-making (Riccucci and Saidel, 1997).

Unfortunately, inherent in this consensus-seeking process are conflicts and battles that are based on perceived differences of the 'imaginary' identities (Howarth, Norval and Stavrakakis, 2000:15). Depending on their intensity, these 'imaginaries' emphasise difference, where people begin to think of themselves in terms of 'us' and 'them'. If anything, the 'us' and 'them' phenomenon becomes the basis to associate, organize and mobilize. Usually the 'us' qualifies one for a particular community with a common conscribed identity. Indirectly, such belonging assumes collaboration and co-operation, while the reference to the 'other' may represent a threat to the acquired 'stable' identities, and thus would either be rejected or treated with suspicion.

Similarly, in this case study it is assumed that due to the long history of apartheid, issues of imaginary identities could facilitate different types of antagonisms as people remain trapped in the apartheid categorisations. This is why the theory of antagonism is carried from political theory to organizational analysis. This to some extent adds a different angle to the study of organizational change theory, since change analysis rarely leaves the jurisdiction of management and organization theory genres to incorporate external theories. Like power and politics, social antagonism is used here in an exploratory way to illuminate how the organisation has evolved from the discourses of apartheid identities to a new consensus-oriented bureaucracy, if at all.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the literature on organizational change. It traced how the debates on change evolved with the management research on efficiency. The review started with the classical approaches of scientific management where organizational goals and their efficiency were a central preoccupation. Taking cues from Taylorism, this literature identifies specific variables to enhance organizational performance. Generally management studies have hardly moved

out of this genre, and still rely on the principle-based approaches to provide answers to organisational performance and change. While scientific management studies have paved the way for the study of organizations, they are highly criticised for their approach, which is rationalistic.

While such criticism has seen the development of other approaches like systems theory and institutional theory, rationalistic approaches have continued to dominate the field. Of interest is that both systems and institutional theory took cognisance of the role of the environment on organisations; systems theory emphasises adaptation and institutional theory acknowledges agency respectively. The key argument is that the environment determines how organisations behave. While this is a significant contribution, both theories have been criticised for their environmental determinism. Despite such criticism, each theory, especially institutional theory, has become a major point of influence in organizational studies. Some of the people that write on this paradigm include DiMaggio and Powell (1991); Scott and Meyer (1991), and Zucker (1991). Of interest is their study of how organisations attain legitimacy in their contexts and their organising fields (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991:69). This indirectly tells us why organizations choose certain templates for change over others.

Over and above management theories, the review looked at public management debates. Again, there is very little difference that is accounted for by this field. Rather, it follows the same types of discussions and thoughts that exist in the broader management field that studies private organisations. This is despite the proclaimed internal differences that exist within the field of public administration that pull the debates between administration and politics. In view of the general lack of progress in theory, this research tapped into an old theory by Riggs, whose theory of prismatic societies emerged in the field of development administration (1964). The basis of the theory involves the classification of society and its bureaucracies in a continuum of developed, prismatic and pre-modernised traditional settings. The basic assumption is that the more developed a society is, the greater the chance that it will have a well-developed and well-adjusted

bureaucracy. This is seen as a consequence of a long history of development and time. What is interesting about Riggs' theory is his attempt to explain different bureaucracies and their behaviour. He also explains the sala type of bureaucracy that is a coincidence of prismatic societies or developing societies. The review identified at least six propositions that are characteristic of such bureaucracies. While Riggs' theory of the sala bureaucracy provides a possible lens for analysis, especially in complex and chaotic contexts, his theory is largely seen as pessimistic of developing contexts.

Beyond Riggs' 1960s theory of prismatic societies, as indicated earlier, public administration has made little theoretical progress in general. However, the 1990s have seen the emergence of the New Public Management (NPM). Emanating from the same genre as scientific management, it re-emphasised the essence and the importance of management in organisations. Like all its predecessors it brought the efficiency debates into the mainstream as it pushed for outcome- and results-oriented performances. There is generally a lot of research that responds to NPM, mainly critical of its neglect of other organisational values like equity and access due to its emphasis on efficiency, effectiveness and economy (Argyriades, 2002; Maor, 1999; Paine, 1999; Pollitt 1998; Reed, 1994; Pollitt, 1993 and Yeatman, 1993). Despite such criticism, NPM continues to dominate the field.

Besides these rationalist approaches, the review looked at post-modern research and its contribution as a critique to existing organisational research and theory. Central to such research is its call for the exploration of means of domination in organisations, hence the emphasis on power and politics in organisations. While post-modern research is still outside mainstream debates, its reflective approach to knowledge pushes the debate beyond the identification of specific variables to influence change. It promotes the understanding that change, like all social constructs, is part of the broader politics of social transformation and change and cannot be isolated from the other social realities that exist. The emphasis on power and politics is thus but one interesting contribution they make to organisational research, largely because to explore change is similar to exploring

relations of power and politics in terms of how they are used and how they shift with the transformation.

Finally, the review makes comments on the conceptual framework used in the study. This is primarily focused on themes extrapolated from the research namely (a) context; (b) inter-organisational dynamics; and (c) power and politics. While context and inter-organisational dynamics become key analytical themes adopted for this research, power and politics remain the analytical lenses. One of the reasons for using power and politics this way is based on their ability to unravel the conditions of conflict, struggles and contestations that may be missed with an ordinary descriptive exercise. It was also indicated that the study borrows from external theories like the Laclau and Mouffe (1985) theory of social antagonism. This theory explains how conflicts are exacerbated by perceived differences amongst different interest groups during change or social transformation. It is useful, therefore, in illuminating the complexities of power and politics.

While the review has fostered an understanding of how change is conceptualised in general, it has also shown that there are serious theoretical gaps. Very few studies are dedicated to organisational change *per se*. Instead, change debates become subsumed in other themes, including the efficiency debates. But also where it becomes the focus it remains within the rationalist paradigms. To date, it remains the stronghold of Organisational Development (OD), which is practice-oriented and finds solutions to diagnosed organisational problems. To depart from such a linear conception of change, this thesis starts from the premise that change is a complex phenomenon unique to different localised conditions. Its outcomes are thus a result of negotiated conditions that are consequential to various push-and-pull factors brought into play by different interests. To demonstrate such complexity, this thesis uses power, politics and social antagonism to clarify the inherent contestations of change and their consequences for organisational performance and progress.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed conceptual understanding of organisation change and inefficiencies. It went on to identify the post-modern analytical conceptions of power and politics as instrumental to this research due to their general neglect by the efficiency paradigms. While post-modernism is good at providing analytical levers for analysis and interpretation, it has not developed any unique research methods outside the scientifically accepted theoretical constructs of quantitative and qualitative paradigms. Instead, researchers tend to use similar methods defined and adopted under such paradigms with more emphasis on reflexivity as post-modernists believe that 'there is no methodology capable of achieving an unmediated objective representation of facts' (Kilduff and Mehra, 1997:464). Equally, while this thesis is highly inclusive of certain theoretical constructs from the post-modernist/post-structuralist research it remains within the qualitative paradigms. This chapter then looks at the process of research design and the methods of data collection and analysis adopted by the thesis.

3.2. The qualitative approach

The study adopted a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is based on the assumption that 'reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds' (Merriam, 1998:6). This is contrary to quantitative research which tends to adopt positivism, rationalism, reason and logic as the basis of scientific inquiry. Qualitative research as such challenges positivism as a one-way approach to knowledge. As Usher (1997) states, the task in social sciences is to interpret social meaning and is not a search for scientific truth. The basis of this is to understand the social world as constructed by those that experience it. Knowledge is thus seen to be contextual and limited by how it is understood, perceived and interpreted. Patton, quoted in Merriam, usefully summarises qualitative research as:

> an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting - what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting - and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting (Patton, 1985:1), quoted in Merriam (2001:6).

Equally, this study had no intention of predicting what may happen in the future. It focused on the current realities as experienced, defined and interpreted by those who worked with the ECDE. While working with meanings and interpretations can be seen as a subjective, bias- and value-laden exercise, qualitative approaches remained the best methods to illuminate this organisation's experiential accounts and narratives of change for many reasons. One of those is that change as a concept is intangible, whose meaning remains with those that apply it. To concretise that meaning becomes, therefore, as much an exercise in constructing or attaching meaning. Nonetheless, scientifically, researchers like Gillham (2000) state that qualitative research enables one to:

1) Carry out an investigation where other methods - such as experiments - are either not practicable or not ethically justifiable.
2) Investigate situations where little is known about what is there or what is going on. More formal research may come later.
3) Explore complexities that are beyond the scope of more 'controlled' approaches.
4) 'Get under the skin' of a group or organization to find out what really happens - the informal reality which can only be perceived from the inside.
5) View the case from the inside out: to see it from the perspective of those involved.
6) Conduct research into the processes leading to results (for example, how reading standards were improved in a school) rather than into the 'significance' of the results themselves (Gillham, 2000:11).

In considering these points, qualitative research is seen to address issues of complexity, lack of familiarity of context and perspectives, which cannot be predictable. It is precisely this lack of predictability which makes it important to talk to the people. Similarly, with an inherent curiosity to find out why the ECDE was perceived to be one of the worst public organisations with regard to service delivery, it seemed logical to talk to those involved in it and 'get under the skin' of what was really happening inside the organisation. It therefore became important to ask how they understood the perceived crisis of inefficiency, and also to find out how it had come about.

Talking to these managers and their counterparts who were external to the organisation was part of the broader understanding that organisations are social entities whose meaning is continually constructed and mediated through space and time. Theoretically this aligns the research with social constructionist approaches. As Terre Blanche and Durrheim state:

> Social constructionist methods, like their interpretive counterparts, are qualitative, interpretive and concerned with meaning. But where those working within the interpretive tradition focus on the subjective understandings and experiences of individuals or groups, social constructionist researchers want to show how such understanding and experiences are derived from (and feed into) larger discourses. Interpretive approaches (sometimes referred to as 'romantic hermeneutics') treat people as though they were the origin of their thoughts, feelings and experiences. Social constructionist approaches (sometimes referred to as 'critical hermeneutics') treat people as though their thoughts, feelings and experiences were the products of systems of meanings that exist at a social rather than an individual level (Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 1999:148).

Equally, this study sees change as a social construct whose interpretation resides within each organisation. This means that each individual account is seen as part of the social meanings that exist in the ECDE's context. The interpretations in the thesis are seen to illuminate not just individual accounts but how one organisation in the public sector understood and managed public sector reform and transformation. Of course it would be an exaggeration to think that this research provides all the answers about change and transformation. On the contrary, what the informants say is often convoluted and disjointed. Equally, the quality of

responses is itself a comment on the problems of transforming the ECDE. If anything, many people struggled to articulate the dilemmas they faced as they were propelled into very difficult circumstances with insufficient education and management training.

3.3 The case study approach

As indicated in most sections of this thesis, this study focused on a case study of the ECDE. There are various interpretations of what case studies are and the purposes they serve (Yin, 1994; Bassey, 1999; Merriam 2001; Stake, 2003; Hartley 2004). While many approaches to case studies depend on the different theoretical positions researchers adopt, Merriam (2001) contends that generally those that define case studies tend to perceive them as either units of study, as a process or even as a product or outcome. Whatever the case may be, case studies are generally chosen because researchers are interested in 'insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing' Merriam (2001:28-29). As a result, common to many definitions of case studies is an emphasis on their contemporary nature (Yin, 1994) and context (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2001; Merriam, 2001 and Yin, 1994). For instance, Yin simply describes a case study as an empirical inquiry that:

> Investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 1994: 13).

Similarly in this case study, issues of public sector reform, and particularly issues of organisational change and efficiency and effectiveness, were perceived as contemporary when taking into account the public debates about enhancing public service delivery. To study one organisation that was deemed to be inefficient was in fact as much about trying to understand the complexity of public sector reform, and to shed some light on the conditions that may be unique to certain organisations in other contexts.

There are various types of case studies. For different classifications, one can read Bassey (1999); Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000); Merriam (2001); Scott

(1991); Stake (2003) and Yin (1994). Scott, for instance, states that case studies are chosen either for typicality or for explanatory purposes. Usually typical cases tend to draw broad-based generalisation while explanatory cases tend to test theories, but sometimes researchers use another type, the third style which is:

> Where the researcher is not concerned with notions of representativeness, as they acknowledge the uniqueness of each case, but they are interested in how the workings of particular processes are illuminated by single cases (Scott, 1991:149).

This thesis subscribes to the third style as it neither tested an existing theory nor was it interested to draw broad-based generalisations. Rather, taking into consideration that organisations are unique entities, it focused on at least one organisation to illuminate its change complexities. The point is that the ECDE had been made unique by its integration of six departments of education that were different in culture, history and practice. Its struggles to transform itself were therefore equally struggles of integration and incorporation, and it is these unique struggles and complexities of change that were seen to be central to this research, since it was assumed that stable environments were over-researched and were likely to provide generic answers. Scott's categorisations are in accord with Bassey's (1999) classifications. Bassey identified that case studies can adopt a (a) theory-seeking and theory-testing approach; (b) story-telling and picture-drawing approach; and (c) an evaluative approach. Amongst these three different styles this research would fit most into the story-telling approach. As he says:

> Story-telling is predominantly a narrative account of the exploration and analysis of the case, with a strong sense of a time-line (Bassey, 1999:62).

While time-lines are important, they cannot be treated as being rigid, since much of a story or time-line depends on how it is remembered or perceived by the narrator.

3.4 Negotiating access

The story of gaining access into the ECDE fits no standard interpretation. Usually, research theory describes technical formalities and procedures to follow. However, the experiences drawn from this research are that while formalities help

to some extent, research is as much about drawing on informal networks, depending on how sensitive the site is.

This researcher went to the ECDE after the initial correspondence, phone calls and fax messages elicited no response. Time was of the essence as data had to be collected within a specific period in order to meet the institutional deadlines of the project. It therefore seemed logical to walk in and talk to the officials directly, but many senior officials were said to be away at workshops or work appointments. After a week of attempts, an appointment was secured with the Acting Head of the Department, who subsequently referred the request to the Director of Communications. This was effectively a gatekeeping exercise (Hartley 2000) as the writer was then referred back to Wits for a trivial exercise on supervision issues which were outside both the jurisdiction of the department's concern, and the objectives of the meeting. Automatically, this limited possibilities to speak to the departmental officials as entry had been declined in the most diplomatic way on issues of additional supervision. The delays were compounded by the fact that at the time the department was going through enormous pressures, with much media coverage on its lack of service delivery. This made people highly sensitive as they did not know who to trust.

Despite the challenges, it was important to remain in the region should new opportunities arise. An alternative plan was formulated, to approach known networks. These were people known to have worked with the department as consultants and trainers or had worked in senior positions within the department in the period under review. The intention was to start working from the outside to the inside, while still negotiating entry. This turned out to be a fruitful strategy as many of these external networks became points of reference and information. More importantly, they provided useful contacts with knowledge and experience of the departmental transformation. Some people thus recommended were not ideal to use in the study as they did not meet all the criteria, particularly regarding length of service, while others that met the criteria proved less knowledgeable depending on the roles they had played in the transformation process. All these

factors influenced people's perceptions of events and how they explained them to the interviewer.

Overall, the outside-inside approach facilitated a lot of interviews as permission was only given by the department after six months. It was important to inform all internal staff about the research and to highlight that their participation was optional. In cases where they agreed to participate, it would have been preferable to conduct interviews in a neutral space, since working environments tend to be highly formal and experience many interruptions. Politically, a neutral venue would have reduced any sense of guilt about being in the department without the official approval. Interestingly, all the officials preferred to be interviewed in their offices, despite some levels of discomfort.

It is important to explain why the ECDE is termed a sensitive site. This study was done when the ECDE was going through a difficult time with both internal and pressures being exerted on it. Internally it was experiencing teacher union protests and strikes due to non-payment of teacher salaries and gratuities, which resulted in external pressures from both the media and political spheres. For instance, the media at the time was reporting a lot on internal departmental inefficiencies, financial mismanagement and other administrative failures. This on its own created a great deal of pressure for departmental officials. The department also felt itself under siege with the arrival of a task team from the national Department of Education in Pretoria, which had been sent to the province to address perceived crises. The presence of the task team may also have been motivated by the forthcoming elections of 2004, with the state wanting to be seen to be in control of the Eastern Cape. As it was difficult to ascertain who belonged where, every outsider became a threat that could expose the department to the media, and the presence of both the media and the official intervention structures contributed to the difficulties in accessing interviewees.

Sensitive sites are, by their nature, largely not receptive to external observation and research for various reasons, some of which include the need for anonymity

and protection of identities from any type of scrutiny, more especially in time of crisis. This translates into closed doors and a refusal to participate in research for fear of retribution and of breaking the internally set laws and regulations. In spite of this tense atmosphere, it was possible to conduct research in the region as the network approach remained useful throughout.

3.5 Methods of data collection

Besides Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001) who emphasise observation as the main criterion for case studies, many writers argue for the use of different methods to collect evidence commonly referred to as triangulation of methods. For this study, however, there were limits to the type of method that could be used, partly because the nature of the research focused on past experiences rather than active reality that could be observed. Furthermore, even where it may have been useful to observe the national intervention taking place at the time, this was deemed a highly political exercise and access was limited to official appointees. As a result, interviews and documents became the major sources of evidence. Other than the contemporary and usually post-modernist researchers that question the theoretical underpinnings behind interviews, mainstream research books describe interviews as a scientific objective and rational process where the interviewer determines both the plan and process to access knowledge from the identified sources. There are thus various definitions of interviews. Amongst these they are interpreted as 'conversations with a purpose', usually between two people to get information about a particular subject that the interviewee may have knowledge of (Dexter, 1970:136, quoted by Merriam 2001: 71). Similarly, Patton explains:

> We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe….We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviours that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into other persons' perspectives (Patton, 1990:278 quoted by Merriam, 2001:72).

To enter into other people's perspectives usually takes a planned series of structured and unstructured questions depending on the nature of the study, and there are many publications that discuss interviewing processes. Of course, the whole sense of relying on other people to recall past experiences means that interviews are not neutral tools for data gathering. Rather, as a subjective process they remain negotiated experiences. For instance, Fontana and Frey see them as 'active interactions between two (or more) people leading to negotiated, contextually based results':

> each interview context is one of interaction and relation; the result is as much a product of this social dynamic as it is a product of accurate accounts and replies (Fontana and Frey, 2000:646).

What this means is that interviews are not true replicas of reality, they are reflections of selected experiences, some of which could have been distorted with time as they are bound to memory, hence Scheurich's (1987) emphasis on their indeterminacy. Arguing against the rationalistic tendencies of interviews, he states that 'in an interviews there is no stable 'reality' or 'meaning' that can be represented' (Scheurich, 1987:73). Rather, what occurs is 'contingent on the specifics of individuals, place, and time (Mishler, 1986 quoted by Scheurich, 1987:62). In retrospect, this means one has to acknowledge their subjectivity, especially epistemological subjectivity and power plays inherent in the interview process. Such power plays could be represented in different discourses of hierarchy, gender, race, language and social status (Fontana and Frey, 2000). It is noteworthy that the writer, as a black female and a lecturer at Wits University, has herself not escaped any of these power relations. As Denzin (189a:116) quoted by Fontana and Frey (2000) warns that 'gender filters knowledge'. Expanding on this, they explain:

> the sex of the interviewer and that of the respondent do make the difference, as the interview takes place within the cultural boundaries of a paternalistic social system in which masculine identities are differentiated from female ones (Fontana and Frey, 2000:658).

While this may be the case, one can only speculate as to how gender dynamics may have played themselves out in the interviews, since no female managers were interviewed. There may well have been some filtering of knowledge or

recollection, given that the officials were under tremendous pressure from the media which would have led them to exaggerate their heroic roles in transformation and change over time or even displayed themselves as victims to defend their integrity. With all such possibilities, it was especially useful to have interviewed different people as the stories could be corroborated in many ways by different interviewees even though the details differed.

Interviews are indeed also about power games. As indicated, many interviewees agreed to participate after some name-dropping using established local networks and respected internal colleagues. A particular contact was especially useful, as she appeared to be very influential amongst her senior managers. The only apparent explanation for this influence is located in the position she holds in the finance department, which obviously exercises considerable power over the officials regarding their expenditure. Her role was to renegotiate where the writer had failed to secure an appointment from a hard secretary or made to turn up at an empty and usually locked office. The writer's personal knowledge of the region and the language was also very useful in facilitating interviews, which often started on a tense note and then became more relaxed as soon as the local language was employed.

The process

The purpose of the interviews was to elicit as much of the stories as was possible. The key question was how these officials, ex-managers, and consultants had experienced change at the ECDE in the period from 1995 to 2002. The responses were thus different reflections of different change experiences and challenges over that span of time. To do this, one had to rely more on unstructured interviews, which, unlike structured interviews that look for 'precise data of codable nature', attempt 'to understand the complex behaviour of [organisations] without imposing any *a priori* categorization that may limit the inquiry' (Fontana and Frey, 2000:653). To understand the complexity of what was going on in the department thus meant that one had to give as much space as possible to the interviewees to give their own accounts of change, with the interviews therefore

ranging from forty five minutes to three and half hours in length, depending on the individual and the time available. Besides the formal interviews, there were informal conversations with different people that amplified some of the experiences. Any otherwise unclear points were followed up through telephone interviews with the same officials, except for one case where a referral was made to a colleague who was deemed to have knowledge about the political choices made on retaining Bisho as a capital.

The process of interviews was done in two stages. The first stage was highly exploratory as people were made to tap into the memories of change they had of the department and the challenges they had faced. The second stage of interviews was built on the interpretations of the first interviews, since the initial interviews revealed a number of generic management factors that were perceived as rendering the institution inefficient and ineffective. This subsequently presented a new challenge, which was to find other possible explanations that could account for the perceived inefficiency and maladministration. The point is that it became important to go beyond the *what* questions to look at *how* and *why* the organisation was struggling with transformation. These additional interviews were meant to go deeper and clarify further how organisational change worked in this context with the hope of revealing the complexities that exist.

Generally the nature of the interviews was largely conversational and based on the interviewees' ability to recall past experiences. These often evolved into narrations of historical accounts and personal experiences of change that ranged from forty-five minutes to three hours. The idea was not to 'establish the proportional representativeness of the views', (Porpora, 2001:6, quoted in Archer (2003), but rather to elicit people's interpretations of their own context. This stage aimed to get as much information as possible to illuminate the context of change and transformation, which could not have been as deeply understood if the writer had been in a different location. Overall, the study ended with twenty interviews. While it was hoped that more people could be interviewed, the sensitivity of the context precluded this. Furthermore, the high mobility of the public servants in

general and the high turnover in this particular organisation meant that some of the highly experienced people who could have contributed valuable insights to the study could not be accessed as they had either retired or taken jobs in other departments and provinces.

Sampling

The people participating in the study included people in the department itself, in the districts, other departments like public works and treasury, parastatals and consulting. As indicated earlier, the only criterion for participating was that the interviewees should have been with the department for at least five years, which was deemed an adequate length of time to have experienced transformation and change. It was also important that they had some level of management capacity and/or were involved in decision-making structures of the department at some time, or had worked closely with the department. Overall, a sample of twenty people participated in the interviews. The first set of seven interviews took place at the beginning of the Interim Management Task Team's Intervention around March 2003 while the other twelve were interviewed around May of 2004. The last interview was conducted in November 2004. Generally, these interviews happened during two-week periods of the writer's research visits to the Eastern Cape.

Theoretically, the research resembled a snowball/chain type of approach. As Cohen explains:

> In snowball sampling researchers identify a small number of individuals who have the characteristics in which they are interested. These people are then used as informants to identify, or put the researchers in touch with, others who qualify for inclusion and these, in turn, identify yet others – hence the term snowball sampling. This method is useful where access is difficult. The task of the researcher is to establish who are the critical or key informants with whom initial contact must be made (Cohen et al, 2000:104).

Indeed, with no sign of the necessary permission to enter the organisation in sight, the referrals proved highly essential. In fact, the process of being referred softened a lot of people with whom the writer spoke, as they had been approached via their

known and trusted networks. This made the atmosphere more receptive than when attempting to access these officials directly through the usual official channels.

While the network approach proved highly useful in the circumstances, it has certain limitations, some of which may include bias, selectivity and exclusion. For instance, bias can be seen where those that participate end up being powerful males in certain positions of authority, rather than a general spread of managers in the organisation. Similarly, there was a leaning towards high-ranking male officials which was not only a consequence of referrals but also a reflection of bias on how senior appointments are made in general. Nevertheless, the lessons from this study revealed that research into sensitive sites defies conventional straightforward research approaches using scientifically pre-planned methods. In fact, such sites by their nature throw out tradition and conventionality as quickly as possible as a researcher tends to rely on *ad hoc* opportunities and instinct most of the time.

Documentary evidence

Complementing the interviews was an accumulation of documents that included departmental annual reports; departmental strategy documents for the period 1995 to 2002; government gazettes; internal policy documents; international agencies reports; organisational development reports and consultants' reports, and media reports. Most of the internal documents came from the legislature, which was more accessible during the research. Merriam (2001) highlights some of the advantages and disadvantages of using documents in data collection. Some of the advantages are that they are easily accessible, [mostly] free, and contain information that would take time to investigate, but more importantly, data in documents:

> can furnish descriptive information, verify emerging hypotheses, advance new categories and hypotheses, offer historical understanding, track change and development, and so on (Merriam, 2001:126).

The point is that documents are a stable form of information as once written and published they seldom change. Of course, if there are doubts about their quality,

authenticity and accuracy of information, this becomes a disadvantage. Documentary evidence does not simply end with easily accessible pre-packaged booklets but has to be integrated with intensive internet searches. While the internet search has its advantages due to its expanded networks of information, it has limitations as most documents tend to be on purchase lists which limit their accessibility.

3.6 Data Analysis

One the most difficult processes of this research was data analysis. Part of this had to do with the fact that stories tend to be less structured than quantifiable research. Nonetheless, data analysis started with the transcription of the interviews, a long process since some of the interviews were more than three hours long. The idea of using transcripts was based on the conviction that they are perhaps more reliable than summaries and capture more detail. However, like all other research tools they are bound to have their own weaknesses. Some of these are highlighted by Cohen *et al* who argue that transcriptions are:

> Decontextualised, abstracted from time and space, from the dynamics of the situation, from the live form, and from the social, interactive, dynamic and fluid dimensions of their source; they are frozen (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000:281).

While the point being made is that words alone cannot capture the dynamics of the interactions and thus it is important to add other dimensions like the tone of voice, the inflection of the voice, interruptions, the speed of the voice, the transcriptions were used as the main source for data analysis.

Coding

Following transcription, data became subjected to coding. Simply put this is a process to categorise and sort data for analysis (Bryman and Burgess, 1994:5). Categorisation would either be based on labels decided in advance or in response to the data that has been collected (Cohen *et al*, 2000). This study followed much of the latter route. The whole process involved going through each transcribed text and identifying points of emphasis and elaboration. These were compared across different transcripts to identify points of convergence or 'clustering', if one

uses Hycner's (1985:285) scientific concept. The clustering process thus leads to building central themes for interpretation and analysis. This is a technical process, but is also time-consuming and requires separating the major themes from the minor ones, a process which involves a continuous revisiting of data.

Application of theory

As Merriam states:

> One of the dilemmas to resolve in writing up qualitative research is deciding how much concrete description to include as opposed to analysis and interpretation and how to integrate one with the other so that the narrative remains interesting and informative (Merriam, 2001:234).

Indeed, this became a challenge throughout the writing of the analysis chapters. If any balance was achieved it came through a process of several drafts and mainly through critical comment from peer reviewers. Central to such comment was the emphasis on using further data to validate the case.

While the focus on data was important, it was also critical to engage in an interpretive exercise, and for this the study borrowed from different management theories, not least from Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) conflict theory, to expand on both the social and the discursive practices that operated within the organisation. Generally, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) are associated with discourse analysis. Drawing largely on post-structuralism, discourse analysis examines how different structural arrangements and practices acquire their meanings and how such meanings become entrenched as cultural norms in different contexts. This they do through the analysis of the text using deconstruction. While this could have been an exciting exercise to engage in, it would not fit the nature of the study as deconstruction tends to be highly theoretical. Besides, as Phillip and Jorgen (2004) indicate, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) were never involved with empirical work, and they therefore recommend creativity when working with empirical studies.

Rather than relying on a formula, therefore, what this study did was to look at the analytical tools that can be applied to the ECDE context. Taking cues from the

data which identified issues of power, politics and identity as instrumental to the discourse of organisational change in this department, it seemed appropriate to use their conflict analysis as a lens for analysis. While Laclau and Mouffe (1985) are rarely used in organisation studies, their use here was motivated by their analysis of social change. The point is that organisational change in South Africa in the mid-1990s was happening in tandem with the broader social reform processes. This meant that many changes at an organisational level reflected the broader context. To understand this complexity, it was necessary to adopt theoretical triangulation rather than remain within the descriptive rationalistic discourses which management theory promote.

There is an awareness of the limitations that may arise when transporting one theory into another context, which may give rise to misinterpretation. To limit this, different texts were examined that simplified Laclau and Mouffe to ensure accuracy of interpretation, including the Phillips and Jorgensen (2002) text on *Discourse Analysis: As Theory and Method;* and Howarth, Norval and Stavrakakis (2000) on *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change.* Unlike Laclau and Mouffe (1985), however, who study social change in general, this study remains organisationally oriented using only relevant tools from their theory for analysis.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

The debates on validity and its use in qualitative study are as broad as the many authors that write on the topic. Generally there is consensus about its relevance even though there are different interpretations about what it means and how one achieves it in interpretive research. Such different interpretations may emanate from the fact that the concept owes its existence to quantitative research and thus its application outside that context varies, depending on how different authors use it. There are, nonetheless, authors that provide guidelines and criteria that can be used in qualitative research. While it would be easier to tick off what was done, it would be a misnomer to give such a neat picture of process. Rather, in recognition of the iterative nature of the process, one uses Angen's (2000) concept of

validation to explain the processes that were involved in putting this study together. For Angen (2000), validation represents an ongoing process of establishing the truth. This is contrary to validity that almost has fixed interpretations of how one arrives at the truth. Validation is thus a more open process and recognises the different interpretations of reality that may exist. Angen identifies two types of validation – the ethical and the substantive. In summary, ethical validation is concerned with the moral assumptions that we carry into the research process which subsequently affect how we interpret the research, while substantive validity looks at the substance of the enquiry. For instance, ethical validation speaks to the need for equitable representations of voices, and as a result the researchers are called to be constantly conscious about how they respond to difference and ambiguity.

Of importance to this study is the issue of representation of voices. As much as the research literature emphasises this, it is also true that it is not always achievable. For instance, the first point of exclusion started when the writer could not have access to all sections of the organisation due to the sensitivity of the context. It is thus presumed that a wider access to the broader organisation in a less tense environment could have enhanced opportunities for equitable representation. Secondly, of the twenty people interviewed, only two were women, of which one was a member of the department. Even then she was not part of the senior management team. The advantage is that she was a powerful member of the union with much experience in the department. It must be noted that the ECDE is in general a male-dominated organisation, especially at senior levels and unfortunately the only female senior manager who had worked in the department for more than five years in different positions declined to be interviewed. A key area of emphasis relates to the point made earlier – that managers themselves varied in terms of positions of influence and experience; this affected their ability to conceptualise and interpret some of the complexities that existed. All these factors explain why certain voices dominated over others.

Besides equity, ethical validation emphasises the value added by the research, in terms of the educative, empowerment or transformative nature of the research. Unfortunately, it is difficult to make claims about the extent to which any research can achieve all this as they are all subjective matters whose value is subject to individual interests. Nevertheless, one may contend that the educative value of the research lies in its potential to contribute to new understandings of organisational change in complex environments. Given that the study of organisational change is still in its infancy in South Africa's public administration, one assumes that such a study contributes to the debates about organisational transformation and service delivery.

Coming to substantive validation, Van Manen (1990) quoted by Angen (2000:390) asserts that it is important that researchers show 'how they have done justice to the complexity of their chosen topic by bringing into play all the various, present and historical, inter-subjective understandings' of the subject. This partly calls for reflections on understandings that emerged during and after the research. This research began with the conventional review of the literature on organisational change and efficiency. While the initial idea was to study the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), this changed as the ECDE was reported as being one of the more inefficient provincial departments in the public sector. This stirred interest in investigating what was happening in the department, and since the literature review was going in circles due to lack of theoretical analysis in general, one had an opportunity of engaging a number of colleagues, who advised a perusal of Riggs' theory of prismatic societies and other development administration material. Riggs' theory provided interesting propositions that could be tested easily in such a context as it was transitional and also in a developing state. Additional influences came through the PhD and Masters social theory course which added post-modern thoughts as a possible analytical paradigm.

Before any concrete theory choices could be made, the events in the Eastern Cape moved ahead with the introduction of the task team. It seemed logical then to go

to the field so as to experience developments directly. Armed with Riggs' propositions, the first thing was to design the questions around these. This approach was, however, suspended as it became clear that the context was too volatile and required a different approach. This meant that instead of rushing in with textbook-type questions, it seemed better to ask for reflections of change and transformation in the department. Where possible and where the conditions were less intimidating, Riggs (1964) was incorporated without any intention to prove or disprove his theory but rather to facilitate a critical reflection. This attempt at data collection happened in the midst of various interpretations by the media, which had also invaded the province for the sensational stories of government maladministration and lack of service delivery. Undoubtedly, at least in the initial stages, the media shaped and informed how one saw the department. The challenge then was to move beyond such sensationalised interpretations and look at the underlying factors that had contributed to the crisis.

It is important to note that the department itself did not display any obvious signs of chaos and crisis. The staff engaged with their workdays normally, and this in itself gave pause for thought, and influenced the views of the writer, who had expected to see the picture of chaos as conjured up by the media. As one spoke to the officials, it became clear that chaos was not just an event but was rather a process whose origins lay in the long history of integration and poor management of the transformation process. The challenge was to corroborate the stories told. Without immediate access to departmental records it became necessary to look outside the department. Fortunately the legislature was keen to assist and provided copies of all reports in its possession. The writer also obtained access to four comprehensive research reports that were conducted on the ECDE at different times between 1997 and 2003. Two of these reports were baseline studies of the IMBEWU project, a funded partnership with an international agency. This project worked with the ECDE on various district and school improvement programmes, and had a good understanding of the state of the department, having conducted two baseline studies covering 1994-1997 and 2000-2002 respectively.

Further documentation included records of the Interim Management Task Team (IMT) intervention in 2003. One report outlined the department's administrative conditions, its challenges and the proposed model for intervention. The other report was more of a qualitative synthesis of interviews with members of the IMT and its incorporated structures, on their experiences of working on the turnaround. These studies increased the authenticity and validity of the data collected, as various data could be compared and confirmed. Furthermore, most of the officials interviewed welcomed follow-ups and this was done telephonically to clarify issues.

While one could enhance the content validity of the interviews through cross reference and confirmations, this is still insufficient as qualitative researchers are as equally concerned about issue of reliability. Reliability like validity is a phenomenon of quantitative research as a result it is difficult to establish clear criteria of what it entails in qualitative studies. As a result Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:120) summarise its significance to include:

> fidelity to real life, context and situation-specificity, authenticity, comprehensiveness, detail, honesty, depth of response and meaningfulness to the respondents.

All these words have inherent subjective, relative and bias connotations about them. Nonetheless, the issue is to eliminate bias as much as possible. There are various propositions to this. For instance Silverman (1993) quoted in Cohen, Manion and Morrison encourages the (a) use of consistent words and questions for each respondent through structured interviews, (b) the piloting of the interview schedule and the (c) training of interviewers. Guba and Lincoln (1985;219,301) *ibid*, emphasise (a) triangulation of (methods, sources, investigators and methods); (b) peer debriefing; (c) prolonged engagement in the field, (d) persistent observation and (e) member checking. Similarly, Yin (1994:90-99) advocates for (a) use of multiple sources of evidence; (b) a creation of a case study data base; and (c) maintenance of chain of evidence. The comments made her thus refer to what was achievable within the specified period of data collection. It is important to note that due to the sensitivity of the environment it

became impossible to stay longer to observe the different processes in the department.

However, to eliminate inconsistencies in questions and words used, the researcher conducted all the interviewees herself. The questions were piloted with the first interview and they got revised due to the sensitive nature of the environment. Such a revision, (and contrary to Silverman's proposition of creating closed questions), changed the nature of questions to be largely open-ended and exploratory. Inspite of that there were broad generic questions asked to all managers like: how long had they worked in the ECDE? what experiences of change did they go through with the department since they were appointed? what forms of interventions (internal and external) did they experience? and why did the organisation need them? What lessons could they share about changing organisations? For those that were external to the organisation it was important to understand their perceptions about the department and the roles they played in the transformation of the department. It was thus through probing that one could collaborate the stories told mainly to enhance their credibility and avoid what Silverman (2005:211) calls the anecdotalism which is possible as one focuses on a particular evidence that confirms one's assumptions. Beyond this one engaged in various methods of peer debriefing which included identifying a selected group of academics who read the different analytical chapters. But also the school's internal seminars and PhD committees created a platform to present this research. The feedback from all different scenarios enhanced the required attention to detail as one had to revisit the data back and for further illumination. At another level, the interviewees were invited to add any information they see appropriate to the study or point out any instances of misrepresentation. It is important though to acknowledge that the use of a deviant case could have enhanced the analysis about what was unique to the ECDE compared to other organisations in the same context (Silverman (2005 and Hartley, 2004). Nonetheless, the researcher has created a broad database on this case which cab be used by other researchers and has equally maintained a clear chain of evidence as it cites and refers to a range of specific documents and interviews.

3.8 Learning and changing

The experience of writing a thesis is a mixture of emotions. Frankly, it was more like skydiving on a misty day, where even though the winds push you in different directions, you are still certain to land because you are aware that gravity will take over anyway. But the real writing experience resembles the floating mid-air zone. It is an unsettling experience, as one never knows where and when they will land. My floating experiences began with much enthusiasm while working with data after my initial interviews two years earlier. Before one knew, this turned to out to be a difficult exercise, with volumes of material to go through. The question of what to exclude and include became almost overwhelming, as one tried to make sense of the material. At times this was complicated by the struggle to maintain objectivity as empathy took over. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the Eastern Cape context was a personal and familiar one, and the struggles could be identified with easily.

Besides the material and the meanings, the process of identifying key themes became another cycle of trial and error which became costly in terms of time and deadlines. The process for this saw minor themes collapsed into others, or even excluded, as one tried to focus on dominant issues of emphasis across the interviews. The thesis was eventually organised along the key themes that include context, organisational identity and internal organisational dynamics. While these themes emanated from the data, they were also shaped by the literature. Generally then, putting this together was an intimidating skydiving attempt where the experience became the actual learning.

At the level of personal change, it has been a long journey from the time the 2002 Masters of Management students challenged the writer to conduct research on South Africa's organisations. For them, of course, this was partly to force debate away from western concepts of organisations. At first the challenge was seen in the form of small research projects, but later changed to a commitment to a PhD project. It was quickly realised that although very little research was available on

organisations in South Africa, this was a huge field internationally. What made things worse was the disparities in how researchers studied organisations. Management discourses dominated the field and the challenge was to look beyond the toolbox kit type of interpretation of organisational behaviour to more theoretical analysis. This quest for theoretical analysis as such facilitated volumes of literature search and reading that took more than a year to complete. While this delayed the research process, it helped to enrich the teaching at the time and to build confidence as one became acquainted with the state of the field. Becoming acquainted with the existing knowledge discourses did not, however, reduce the stress inherent in conducting research. It became clear that crafting a research project of this nature would be an iterative process, as context was equally elusive. As a result one had to learn on the field most of the time.

The point is that prior to commencing this project, the writer had no experience of working on sensitive sites; this contributed to a learning experience of itself, since the conventional research tools had to be put aside most of the time and different approaches taken to fieldwork, such as limited success in obtaining interviews, or managing different fears about participation. Nonetheless, the experience itself was enriching as one got to learn about how organisational bureaucracies function in the new democratic dispensation. Perhaps more importantly, one learnt that people in organisations are a contingent of multiple identities, which makes bureaucracies fragmented spaces rather than the unitary entities assumed in management research. It also became clear that there is no single public management discourse out there but rather multiple discourses as bureaucracies are constantly engaged in their own internal struggles to make sense of their worlds. At times these internal struggles seem to supersede the transformation and its regulatory frameworks that hope to enforce consistency and compliance across the public sector systems.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter is a reflection on the research processes embarked upon while conducting this project. While not disregarding entirely the established tradition

of writing methodology, it is true that the chapter borrowed heavily from reflexivity as a method to give account to the process. Reflexivity helped to not only acknowledge the learning that took place, but also to raise the writer's awareness about the subjectivities that had infiltrated the study. Overall, conducting research is not an easy exercise as it is bounded by its own power and politics. For instance, the difficulties with regard to access were a clear demonstration that organisations are powerful entities in their own right, and because of that power they can easily filter knowledge and limit the access of researchers. Interestingly, with this case one learnt that power does not necessarily reside within the organisation but is expanded into all types of networks, given that some of the networks used were external to the organisation. At the mention of such networks, the internal controls were easily disregarded. While it was difficult to obtain entry to the organisation, the writer remained sympathetic to the department and its officials as they continue to work under highly challenging circumstances. The next three chapters are in many ways evidence of this.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ROLE OF CONTEXT IN FRAMING ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

4.1 Introduction

Generally the management literature highlights the need to include context on change analysis (Pettigrew, Woodman and Cameron, 2001). However, this is usually devoid of debate about what this means. Rainey states that while there is a lot of attention given to organisational environments 'the management field provides no exact science for analyzing them, in part because the concept is complex and difficult in various ways' (Rainey, 2003:79). In spite of that, this thesis contends that organisational change that is based on broad contextual political decisions not mindful of, and adapted to, context and local conditions, will have limited success. Hence it is deemed imperative to look at the role that context played in shaping the organisational dynamics of the ECDE. By context is meant both the provincial and national conditions that directed change after 1994.

The argument raised is that context as interplay of various forces of power and influence has had an influence on the existing conditions of inefficiency and dysfunctionality in the ECDE. This is premised on the view that public organisations usually get their cues for change from the political context. To support this argument this chapter

(a) examines briefly the South African political, economic and administrative milieus pre-1994;
(b) maps the terrain for public sector reform after 1994; and
(c) locates the ECDE changes within the broader discourse for change.

The central questions asked are: what is the nature of environment under which the ECDE operates; what is the nature of interface between the two; and what are the organisational responses to this? These questions are, of course, raised for illumination purposes rather than to serve as directives to the discussion. The chapter rather focuses on broad themes. Firstly, it sketches the macrocosm of South Africa's change. Secondly, it looks at the politics of social organisation pre-

1990. Thirdly, it explores the politics of social organisation post-1994. Fourthly, it reflects on the legislative context of 1994 to 1999. Fifthly, it looks at public administration beyond 1999.

For analytical purposes this chapter draws from management theories where appropriate, the interviews and departmental documents such as year reports, strategic plan documents and consultant reports. Beyond this it draws from other literature such as Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) theory of antagonism to illuminate on existing, albeit it sometimes not so obvious, but significant differences that impact on the change. While Laclau and Mouffe's analysis of social and political reality tends to be limited to political theory, this thesis finds them useful for organisations as well. For instance, in their book on *Hegemony and Social Strategy* (1985) they explore issues of hegemony, antagonism and logic of difference that are seen to have prominence in this context. Amongst many existing definitions of hegemony, this is limited to contingent political articulations, which shape issues of ideology and identity. Equally, antagonism is limited to Howarth, Norval and Stavrakakis's simplified explanation of antagonism. Interpreting Laclau and Mouffe (1985), they state that:

> Social antagonisms occur because social agents are unable to attain fully their identity. Thus, an antagonism is seen to occur when 'the presence of [an] "Other" prevents me from being totally myself. The relation arises not from full totalities, but from the impossibility of their constitution. This blockage of identity is a mutual experience for both the antagonizing force and the force that is being antagonized: 'Insofar as there is antagonism, I cannot be a full presence for myself. But, nor is the force that antagonizes me such a presence: its objective being is a symbol of my non-being and, in this way, it is overflowed by a plurality of meanings which prevent it being fixed as full positivity (Howarth, Norval and Stavrakakis, 2000:10).

Equally, it is the view of this thesis that the plural nature of identities that exist in the EC context, creates spaces for conflict as different groups try to assert themselves in the change process. Hence, the theory of antagonism is carried from political theory to organisational analysis. This to some extent adds a new dimension to organisational change theory as usually the analysis of change rarely leaves the jurisdiction of the organization itself to incorporate analysis of relations

external to it. However, since this theme of antagonism is carried throughout the three chapters, its use is limited to relevance and thus will be used where appropriate, while in other cases management theories will dominate.

4.2 Sketching the macrocosm of South Africa's change.

South Africa's transition to a democracy in 1994 had been awaited with mixed emotions of apprehension and excitement. It was going to be a process of unfolding new experiences and practices. On a large scale, the new political and economic changes were expected to radically transform the existing apartheid structure in all sectors. While this was indeed possible, there were bound to be limitations. The new government was based on partnerships, with no outright winners in the long conflict for majority rule. A political brokerage which had occurred through negotiation and co-operation led to the formation of a Government of National Unity (GNU). The GNU was a multi-party form of governance comprising three parties which had obtained 5% or more of the popular vote. As Marais (1998) suggests, this is where shared political decision-making and consensus-building became formalised, in the hope of creating stability. At hand was not replacement of the old by the new, but assimilation (Marais 1998). In any event, as Marais explains:

> The settlement and the launch of the transition depended on an activated awareness of 'common interests' between the old order and the popular movement on an acknowledgment that friend and foe have to pass through a gateway of concessions and compromises in order to avert disaster for their respective agendas. The principle of inclusion became the central ideological tenet of the new South Africa. Not only were all South Africans deemed equal in one nation-state, but the reconstruction and development of society would become presented as a common endeavour, hence the intense pressure on the popular sector to 'exercise restraint' in its demands and pursuit for change. The transition proceeded on the basis of mechanisms and structures that attempt to 'reconcile' – *even transform* – conflicting interests into inclusive policies, projects and programmes (Marais, 1998:94).

Not only was the underlying theme about finding pathways of convergence, but it implied a reduction of scope and depth in radical change. The assumptions about what to change and how to change became highly debated and contested, as vested interests emerged with different agendas.

Economically, the new government was inheriting an economic system limping from previous recessions, sanctions and general ineffective economic management policies. For instance, Albedal, Spar and Cousins (2002) show the differences between what had been anticipated for economic growth and the actual performance over five years. This is reflected in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: GEAR-Targeted vs. Actual Results (annual percentage change, except where noted)

Targeted Results of GEAR	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Real GDP	3.5	2.9	3.8	4.9	6.1
Private Investment	9.3	9.1	9.3	13.9	17.0
Employment (non-agricultural)	1.3	3.0	2.7	3.5	4.3
Inflation (CPI)	8.0	9.7	8.1	7.7	7.6
Change in Real Effective Exchange Rate	-8.5	-0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Budget Deficit as percentage of GDP	-5.1	-4.0	-3.5	-3.0	-3.0
Actual Performance					
Real GDP	4.2	2.5	0.6	1.9	3.0
Private Investment	6.1	4.7	-2.9	-4.4	5.0
Employment (non-agricultural)	-0.7	-1.7	-3.7	-3.2	-2.9
Inflation (CPI)	7.4	8.6	6.9	5.2	5.3
Change in Real Effective Exchange Rate	-6.3	6.4	-9.2	-5.1	-2.9
Budget Deficit as percentage of GDP	-4.9	-4.6	-3.3	-2.6	-2.4

Sources: Extracted from the Harvard Business School Case Study on Remaking the Rainbow Nation: South Africa 2002.

Although Table 4.1 reflects relative successes in the management of inflation and the budget deficit in the period 1996 to 1998, there were struggles with the GDP, private investment and employment registering losses or little gains of 0.6, -2.9 and -3.7 respectively. Of course, many will argue that such economic tendencies

were not unique to South Africa but portrayed trends in emerging markets more generally. While this may be the case, this nevertheless suggests caution about the expected benefits of change and the importance of context to change. But more importantly it suggests the need to look at organisational change not only as an isolated concept that resides within the controls of organisations *per se* but as a condition of external pressures and challenges as well. It is a fact that poor economic growth has significant implications on the nature and speed of changes that could be achieved in a given time, especially when such changes are dependent upon specific resources from outside the organisations themselves.

Juxtaposed with this, the new government inherited high levels of poverty from the apartheid government. For instance, the UNDP Report on Human Development (2000) indicates the extent of poverty in South African provinces. This is reflected in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2 Poverty Rate and Poverty Gap in South African Provinces, 2003

Province	Rate[1]	Gap[2]
Limpopo	60.7%	23,5%
Eastern Cape	68,3%	27,9%
Mpumalanga	54,8%	20%
KwaZulu-Natal	50,5%	18,9%
North-West	56,5%	21,9%
Northern Cape	54,4%	19,6%
Free State	59,9%	20,3%
Gauteng	20%	7,9%
Western Cape	28,8%	8,5%

Source: Adelzadeh (2003a) UNDP, South Africa Human Development Report 2003.

[1] Rate is the percentage of the population below the national poverty line of R354 per month adult equivalent in 2002.
[2] Gap is the mean shortfall below the poverty line, expressed as a percentage of the national poverty line.

Interestingly, the Eastern Cape is one of the two provinces with nearly 70% of its population living in poverty. Inevitably this is an issue in discussion of the management of change debates. People's lives are extremely precarious. The established patterns of earning their living in a context of neo-patrimonial networks long established in the former Bantustan administrations makes resisting potential threats to their livelihoods a matter of life and death. For this study these kinds of statistics force theory and practice to be grounded in the external realities, and question the nature and extent of possible change. It may also be assumed that a closer examination of these realities can illuminate the reasons for organisations choosing certain pathways rather than others, especially when there is little to be gained. In the next section, brief flashbacks will be used to outline the administrative terrain that became the building blocks for the new public sector reform.

4.3. The politics of social organisation pre-1990

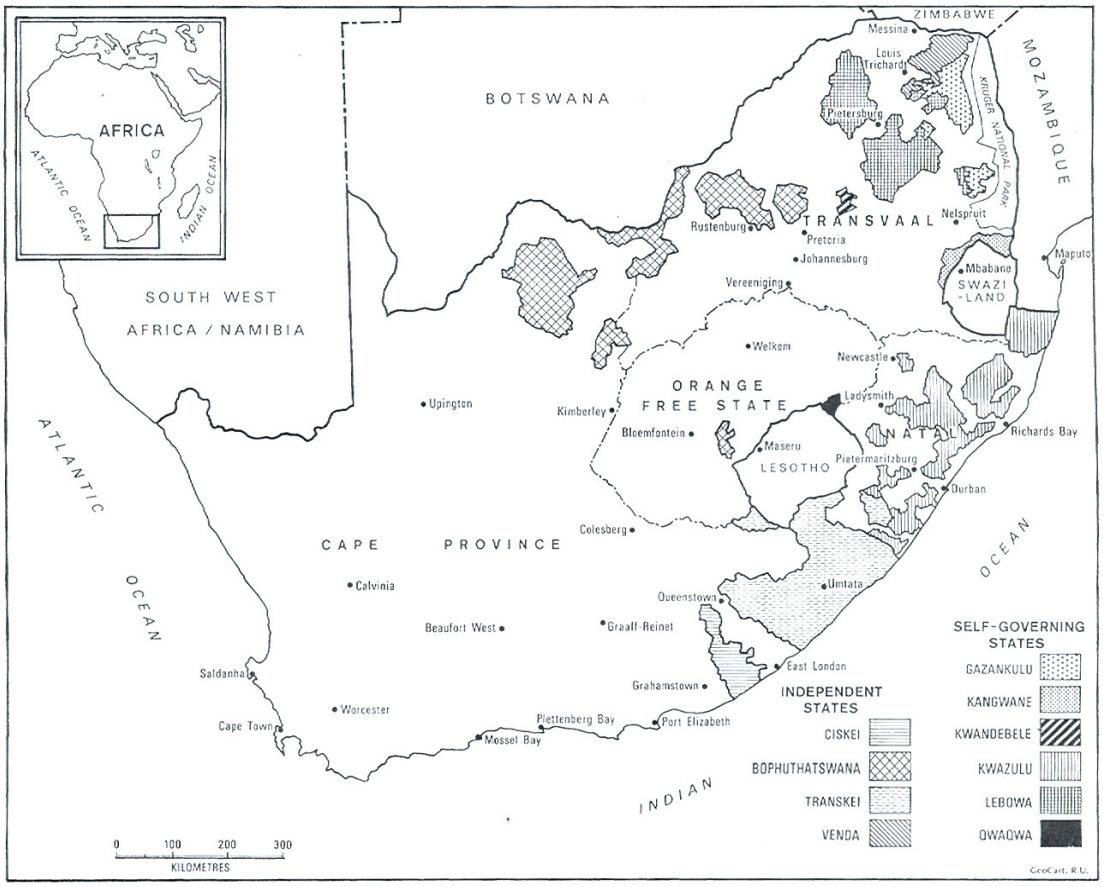
The nature of the apartheid state is well-documented and there is no reason to repeat it here (Davenport, 1987; Bienhart, 1992,; Lodge 2002; Worden, 2000 and Allen, 2005). However, it is important to highlight that underlying such a state was a philosophy that aimed to create an unequal society in both race and class terms. Race as such was the key tool to classify populations as White, Coloured, Indian or Black. This type of societal classification and arrangement resulted in huge disparities in both economic and social terms, determining access to resources and all other economic benefits in the broader South African society. Whites by virtue of allocation at the upper end of the economic and political scale thus became more prosperous, benefiting also from a highly resourced education system. With regard to the other groups, preference was given to Coloureds and Indians, while Blacks had to survive on the minimal resources provided (Thompson, 1995).

While there were different types of opposition and protests to this type of social arrangement, sometimes resulting in bloody conflicts with the state, this did not stop the apartheid machinery from churning out even more detrimental policies

like the Population Registration Act (1950), Bantu Education Act (1953) and the Group Areas Act (1950). These policies created their own crises as they exacerbated economic, social and cultural differences amongst the various populations groups. For example, with the Group Areas Act of 1950 came forced removals where scores of black communities were dumped on patches of arid dry land so that better land and space could be made available to the white population. These dumping grounds were characterised by a lack of infrastructure, few job opportunities and little capital that could sustain communities. In tandem, the Bantu Education Act (1953) ensured that blacks were educated only at a low level to fulfil the menial tasks allocated to them to service the white economy (Christie and Collins 1982) under the job segregation regime. Unfortunately, as each policy rolled out it became a key component of other mechanisms that were intended to paralyse the growth and development of the majority of South African society.

A more significant development came in the 1970s and the 1980s when four Bantustans – namely Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei (the TBVC 'states') – were granted independence from South Africa while another six black territories opted for self-governing status as shown by Figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1 South African Boundaries before 1994[3]



The six self-governing states included Gazankulu, Kangwane, KwaNdebele, KwaZulu, Lebowa and Qwaqwa. The formation of these homelands and self-governing states became realised as a result of the promulgation of the Bantu Homelands Citizens Act of 1970. This Act compelled all blacks in South Africa to become a citizen of the homeland that responded to their ethnic group. This was regardless of whether they lived there or not. Partly this was to ensure the reservation of land for the white groups and also these homelands were to protect the "white' South Africa against Marxist-inspired governments and liberation movements' (Jones 1999:513). This forced classification of blacks into various ethnic groups subsequently came with forced relocations in both rural and urban settings (Pickles and Woods 1992). The Surplus People Project on these removals

[3] Nel, E. and Binns, T. (2000) Rural self-reliance strategies in South Africa: community initiatives and external support in the former black homelands. Journal of Rural Studies, 16, pp.367-377.

and relocations estimated that 3,548,900 people were removed, resulting in a homeland population increase of 69% between 1970 and 1980 (Thompson 1995). By agreeing to these forms of homeland governance and self-governing territories, blacks became even more marginalised as the new structures and political authorities were deemed responsible for their welfare.

As for the state, Southall explains that the objective of the Bantustan programme was not merely to 'divide and rule' but also:

> To create a collaborative African petty-bourgeoisie within each of the homelands. Indeed as the Bantustan strategy took off, the deliberate intent became to build up a set of dependent ethnic states along the neo-colonial model wherein emergent auxiliary elements would rely for their material prosperity and political privileges upon the favours of the separate development and would accordingly co-operate with the white rulers in the repression and control of the migrant proletariat whose role was to oscillate between the white core and the ethnicized peripheries (Southall, 1982:182).

One example of such collaboration was through the policies of influx control and pass laws. Pass laws were documents granted to Africans as 'permission documents' to be produced on demand by security forces when travelling in urban areas (Thompson, 1995). The significance of these documents was in their emphasis of temporality in time and space as migrant labourers became regulated through time by these documents. For those in control, the documents served as instruments of power, authority and control while for others they symbolised powerlessness. But more importantly, these documents symbolised the duality of identity and tensions that sustained the homeland project. The homelands as 'reserves' produced the cheap labour needed for the white economy, particularly in the mining industry, (Pickles and Woods 1992 Thompson, 1995; Jones, 1999) while also reinforcing the logic of ethnic identity that deeply segmented social life. In retrospect, it is apparent that this was reinforced by the fact that homeland governments relied on budget allocations made in Pretoria, hence their political collaboration with the Nationalist government.

The point is that the apartheid state had to ensure that the race ideology was sustained to advance white supremacy through a vibrant economic and social

programme. In partnership with the state were secret societies of strong idealists like the Broederbond. Picard (2002) would argue that the Broederbond comprised ardent white male Afrikaner Nationalists, who dominated the senior appointments in the public and civil service at the time, particularly after 1948. They were ideologically bound to remove all forms of Milner's Anglicisation of the public services in earlier decades (Picard, 2002), but also aimed to entrench Afrikaner culture and identity as mainstream culture in the public service and in the broader society. As Thompson suggests:

> For many Afrikaners, ethnic identity was more important than occupational and class differences. The Broederbond, the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings (Federation of Afrikaner Cultural Associations), the Afrikaner churches, the Reddingsdaadbond (Rescue Association), and the National Party combined to mobilize Afrikaner cultural, economic, and political power (Thompson, 1995:183).

This type of racial and cultural collaboration created an ideological vanguard that protected and sustained apartheid thinking and its implementation, and this subsequently further isolated other ethnic groups outside the white classification.

The homelands of Transkei and Ciskei

The homelands of Transkei and Ciskei were a realisation of the Bantu Self Government Act of 1959 which focused on separate development, territorial divisions and ethnic revival (Jones 1999). Through the homelands the state organised the black groups in a peripherial discourse by assigning them to fragmented ethnic identities. Both the Transkei and Ciskei thus were part of the broad apartheid social plan which saw two Xhosa groups divided using the tribal and geopolitical boundaries of the Kei River spaces. At the centre of this homeland discourse was the need to create unique national identity and national culture that befits each group. Transkei was the first homeland to be granted independence in 1976 and Ciskei followed much later in 1981. The history of these homelands is well captured by researchers like Peires (1992); Thompson (1995) and Southall (1998). The emergence of these homelands divided the Eastern Cape into four major boundaries, the Transkei, Ciskei, and South Africa's Border and Eastern Province. Without any sense of economic developments in place, the homelands generally depended on South Africa for

their financial survival. For instance Transkei received at least about R200 million per quarter from South Africa to help sustain its 'independence' (Peires 1992).

The first leaders of these homelands were Chief Kaiser Matanzima in the Transkei and Chief Lennox Sebe in the Ciskei. They were direct appointments by the Pretoria nationalist government, which reinforced the separatist ideology of the apartheid state by creating mythical identities of separate Xhosa nations. Such identities were manifested by the revival of chiefdoms, which categorised clans into specific entities. Interestingly, with the granting of independence the Kei river that runs through the two homelands assumed a new status, where it not only served as the border that separated the two 'states' but also became a point of identity, and the side of the Kei River that one came from became either a point of unity or difference. As these homeland regimes crystallised their separatist identities, so did the animosity between the two sides increased which later resulted in physical confrontations (Peires 1992). There is a whole argument that Sebe, the president of Ciskei, 'battled to fabricate a distinctively Ciskeian national identity which could compete with the broader African nationalism of the ANC and the pan-Xhosa tribalism of Matanzima's Transkei' (Peires, 1992:377). Whatever the case, the creation of these homelands was nothing more than an extended illusion of ethnic differences.

By the mid 1980s the struggle for political liberation intensified in the black townships of South Africa. Such struggles easily spilled into the homeland territories, especially Ciskei which struggled to build an ethno-nationalist agenda in its territories. One of the reasons for this is that unlike Transkei that was a composite unit in terms of its geographical location, Ciskei was made up of fragmented township spots within the major towns of South Africa's Queenstown, King Williams Town and East London and their rural communities. But more important Peires (1992) identified the differences between the two homelands as follows:

> Transkei is largely rural with a traditional peasant population subject to powerful chiefs, Ciskei is heavily urbanized and industrialized

> with a largely proletarianized population which scarcely respects chiefs and tradition (Peires 1992:377).

To some extent this indicates the extent to which the two chiefs could exert influence and control over their subjects. Transkei relied on its emphasis on tradition and culture and the chiefs to maintain control and order, something that Ciskei struggled to achieve. Besides, Ciskei had inherited highly political and unionised environments whose loyalties remained in different class and political struggles.

By 1986, Kaiser Matanzima had stepped down as the Prime Minister and handed the reins to his brother George Matanzima. Unfortunately, George Matanzima's reign did not last due to allegations of corruption. He was subsequently ousted through a *coup d' etat* by General Bantu Holomisa of the Transkei Defence Force (TDF). The internal struggles which facilitated the *coup d' etat* ranged from discontentment within the TDF to ethnic and tribal succession politics of the Thembuland of which the Matanzima's, the Mandela's and Holomisa's belonged. Such struggles and contestations are dealt with in detail in Peires (1992). The important thing is that following the coup in the Transkei, Holomisa aligned himself with the African National Congress (ANC) going to en extent of unbanning its activities in the homeland.

With Transkei under the military rule, it was not long that Sebe also got ousted by Brigadier Oupa Gqozo in 1990. There is a notion that Sebe orchestrated his coup so that his son could be the President of Ciskei (Peires 1992). Unfortunately, the plan backfired as Gqozo became the new chief through the assistance of South Africa. Gqozo, born in the Free State outside Ciskei, started on a similar pattern as Holomisa by freeing political prisoners. In the process he promised to 'dismantle the tribal authority systems and introduce democratic representation' (Rembe, 2005:45). While Holomisa remained true to his association with the ANC until the first democratic national elections in 1994, things turned out differently in Gqozo's Ciskei. He turned against the ANC and its allies as he consolidated his power around a network of South Africa's

military intelligence (Peires 1992). The peak of this poor relationship resulted in the Bisho Massacre in September 1992, where protest marchers organised by the ANC were killed by the Ciskeian police.

Fundamentally, this thesis argues that these apartheid systems of ethnic classifications created the basis and myths of what Laclau and Mouffe (1985) call imaginary identities. It is these 'imaginary identities' that became the point of contestation and difference in the old South Africa which would thus affect integration in the new dispensation. To change the context of South Africa' political landscape thus would require the eradication of these ingrained perceptions of difference at both ethnic and racial levels, as such perceptions have a potential to create antagonistic relations in the newly formed structures.

4.4 Political and social re-organisation post-1994: The Integration of Eastern Cape

With the negotiation between the African National Congress and the National Party for a political settlement in 1991, it became inevitable to discuss the new system of governance that would be inclusive of all South African. At a political level, the Convention of Democratic South Africa (CODESA) was established to iron out areas of political difference and to forge levels of political consensus that would help create a new democratic society. The politics of CODESA and its challenges are well articulated in Marais (1998). Nevertheless, albeit the negotiation challenges, the issue of regionalism got to the table in 1992 when the ANC, the National Party, the Democratic Party Kwa-Zulu Government and the South African-Tswana forum, released their regional proposals for South Africa (Muthien and Khosa 1995). Again it is interesting how different political groupings conceptualised the formation of new regions (read Muthien and Khosa 1995). At the centre of the proposals were issues of self-interest, power and continuity. For instance, with regard to the future of the Transkei and Ciskei homelands, Muthien and Khoza (1995) went on write that:

> The Ciskei government, for example proposed a Border/Kei region that would exclude the Transkei…Business interests in the Eastern Cape as

> well as the DP and the NP, were adamant about splitting the larger Eastern Cape into two regions (Muthien and Khoza 1995:311).

Even within the Transkei, there were voices that wanted Transkei not to be incorporated as part of the EC (Interview X, Zwelitsha, 11 November 2003). Peires (1997) quoted by Jones (1999) argues that those voices, particularly in the Transkei, were part of the reactionary factions of the former elite who wanted 'to defend and extend their privileges and patronage of the Bantustan era' (Jones, 1999:512). Such patronage ranged from low taxation to include various perks that came with working for the state. Beneath this were insecurities about job losses and possible lack of influence in the new networks of power (Interview S, Port Elizabeth, 18 May 2004 and Interview P, King Williams Town, 20 November 2003). Whatever other reasons there were, theoretically the new government never entertained the idea of the tenth province. The point is that the ANC at the time wanted to destroy all apartheid structures and myths of separatism, which were meant to reinforce tribal and ethnic divisions. Nonetheless the new structural configuration thus saw the incorporation of the two homelands of Ciskei and Transkei into the broader Cape Administration as shown by Figure 4.2 below.

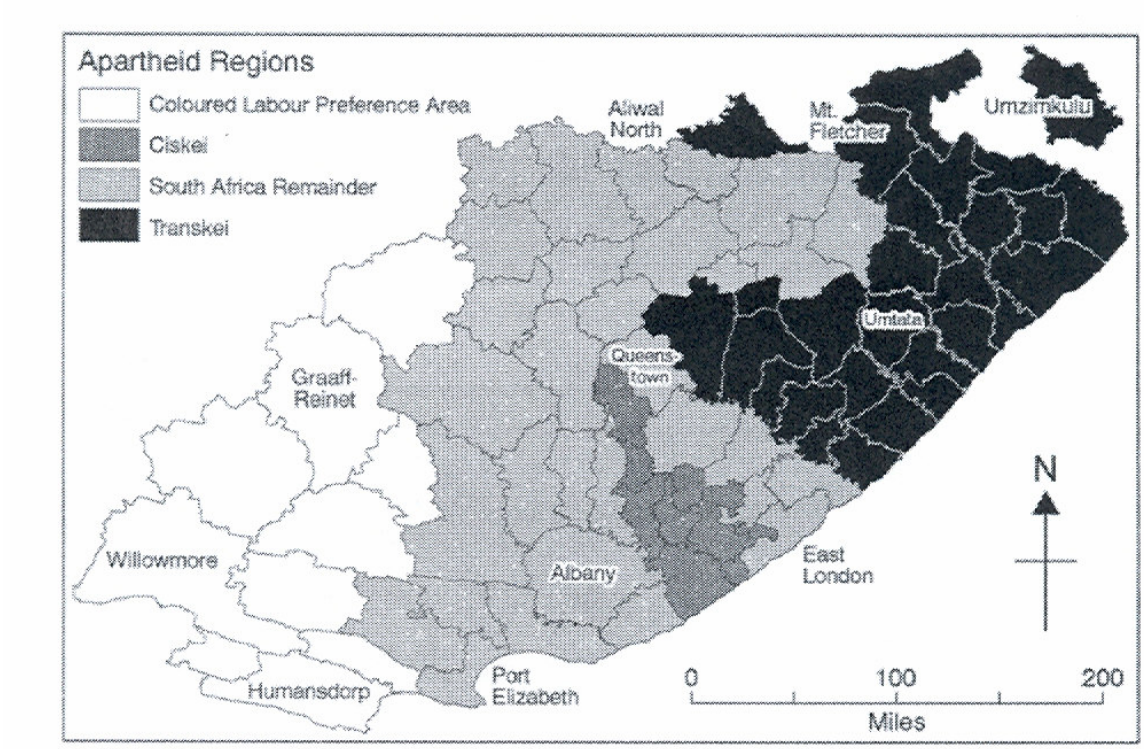


Figure 4.2 The newly integrated Eastern Cape Provinces which incorporates the Ciskei, Transkei and the Cape Provincial Administration[4]

The new structures thus brought with them different political and economic histories. Politically, the ANC appointed a 72 year old veteran Raymond Mhlaba as premier of the province. He managed the province for at least three years and retired in 1997 to be replaced by the nationally deployed ANC treasurer and chief whip in the National Assembly, Reverend Makhenkesi Stofile. The Mhlaba era was the most challenging in terms of administrative transformation as he had to oversee the integration of homelands and the fragmented Cape Province Administration (CPA). His departure was equally highly contested by some of his supporters like Holomisa (Gumede 2005). However, as a 'hard core communist he had become a liability at the time when the government was throwing its weight behind GEAR' Gumede (2005:143). But also he was seen to be

4. Lemon, A. (2004) Redressing School Inequalities in the Eastern Cape. Journal of Southern African Studies. June 30, pp.269-290 (22).

overwhelmed by the challenged to integrate the provincial administration which was chaotic, incompetent and corrupt (Southall 1998; Hawker 2000; Rembe 2005). Stofile's reign had its own challenges administratively, leading to the national intervention by the Interim Management Team, (IMT) in 2002/3. This is when four departments namely, social development, education, health and public works were put under a national intervention programme to help change their processes to facilitate service delivery. Unfortunately, by the time Stofile left the province in 2004, there were still reports of maladministration including corruption (Allan, Mattes and Millie 2002; Hyslop 2005).

The choice of the capital

Already at the time of the political changes and the re-drawing of boundaries for integration purposes, it became inevitable that contestations about who was to govern who would surface. This is because, by 1994, the province had functional white cities of Port Elizabeth, Grahamstown and East London which appeared sufficiently viable to host the new democratic capital. Figure 4.2 shows the cities. However, all these cities lacked the infrastructure necessary to run a government, such as parliament, the legislature, the high courts and other administration buildings, which were available in homelands as a result of previous self-government politics of the apartheid era. At the time of the elections it seemed logical to choose either Umtata or Bisho, the capital towns of Transkei and Ciskei respectively, which already had the necessary infrastructure. This turned out to be a highly contested issue in a large array of competing interests (Siyongwana, 2002). However, there were administrative guidelines set to facilitate this process as indicated by Hattingh (1994) quoted in Siyongwana (2002). Some of the things that were to be considered included the following:

- The administrative and infrastructural availability and capacity: The former relates to the availability of human resources in terms of administrative skills, while the latter is directed to such aspects as the office space;

- Accessibility of the provincial capital city: This relates to geographical accessibility encompassing communication and infrastructural connections, for example, air, land, water links, communications etc.;
- Centrality: This takes into consideration the geographical location of the capital city in relation to the population of the province;
- Natural resource base: This relates to aspects including the availability of land for future expansion of the provincial capital city, water supply for domestic use, to mention but a few;
- Acceptability of the proposed provincial capital by the community at different levels: This relates to people's positive perceptions, attitudes, and feelings as well as aspirations with regard to the city. Cities which tend to bear deep imprints of the colonial past are not favoured to qualify as provincial capital cities of South Africa;
- The economic viability: In this regard the provincial capital city should have the potential for economic growth, especially the industrial sector (Siyongwana, 2002:5).

Indeed all contending cities used these outlined factors to justify their individual cases for consideration. Grahamstown pulled out of the race to retain the supreme court (Siyongwana, 2002). Without going deeply into the process, the results saw Bisho retained as the capital of the new Eastern Cape for the following reasons:

- The availability of the infrastructure that the administration and the legislature could use;
- Its centrality in relation to other parts of the province;
- Accessibility of the town regarding its proximity to the railway and the national roads;
- The availability of land for future development (Siyongwana, 2002:9).

While all these reasons seem viable, this discussion lacks the analysis of the political reasons that influenced this choice. These were captured by two interviewees in the following way:

- Firstly, due to the dominance of the African National Congress (ANC) in the border region and its neighbour Ciskei, Bisho was a familiar territory and thus a comfortable political home for the ruling party, which had absorbed most of its politicians from this region;
- Secondly, Bisho was a small administrative entity with no history of political activism, and thus more susceptible to change and with minimal resistance and contestation compared to the highly established Transkei; and
- Thirdly, the history of Transkei as a powerful political house had implications for the new government, literally its political muscle and size would have swayed the new government into homeland practices; (Interview Ng, Johannesburg, 10 November 2005; Interview Ra, Telephonic Interview, 15 November 2005).

Of course what these interviews highlighted is the existence of interests in highly contested spaces. But more importantly, one cannot ignore the fact that implicit in the choice of the capital were issues of access to power and influence, marginalization and isolationism and the will to retain exclusive identities. The following quotations are indicative of the inherent tensions that came with this change.

> There was a move you remember when people wanted the offices – the headquarters – to be in Umtata. When they failed with that they wanted the capital of the Eastern Cape to be Umtata and when they failed with that they said they wanted the 10th province, you remember. You see those were attempts not to be here [Bisho], you know. When they failed to convince whomever, I believe they actually sabotaged the new government and we were not vigilant enough also to counter that… (Interview X, Zwelitsha, 11 November 2003).

> What I think was dominant was a perception that people from Transkei are not wanted in the new administration. That tended to be a view that people expressed whether it was backed up by facts in terms of counting heads or it was backed up by feelings that those people who were managers in the ex-Transkei department did not feature much in the new administration. And then the whole notion that people had to move headquarters and Umtata not being the headquarters and Bisho being the headquarters and there remained that headquarters Umtata with a number of officials… Then there were lot of perceptions that

> developed to say even the fact that they have moved to Bisho its not necessarily about [how] central Bisho is, it's about snubbing us as Transkei being bigger (Interview P, King William's Town, 20 November 2003).

The issue here is that the Transkei had ruled itself under the auspices of independence for nearly thirty years and had become accustomed to its own ways of doing things. The integration thus would have removed their power of decision-making and broad political, social and economic influence. Of course the tensions to remain separate were not only a subject of Umtata, Bisho became territorial in rejecting outsiders as well. For instance, some officials went on to say:

> Then there was for a number of years this feeling that the seat of this province, the decision to have the seat of this province here, meant for those public servants who worked in the Ciskei that there is now an invasion of foreigners in their territory to take their jobs. Then people started being critical of one another like how these Transkeians do this, how do these Ciskeians do this, how these Department of Education and Training (DET) people do this, how these white people do these kinds of things. So for about three to four years we grappled extensively with this particular problem (Interview B, Zwelitsha, 19 November 2003).

> The other issue here was the very issue of the capital of the province. It caused a problem as well. A large number of our staff were operational in Umtata and when the capital was identified to be Bisho that in itself created problems because those who were operational at Bisho saw this as their base and anybody else coming in was a stranger. The system they had was therefore the one that was adopted whereas what was needed was a new approach altogether. And obviously, the polarization – because being operational within previous systems impacted very much on a new co-existence. People identified themselves as being from Transkei or Ciskei or whatever and that didn't help us (Interview I, Zwelitsha, 15 May 2004).

What this identifies are underlying tensions in the broader spaces of a required reconciliation and compromise. The point is that the new transition treated the previous divisions as superficial. If anything it started from the premise that the change was necessary and thus assumed consensus, but as tensions intensified in Umtata, even President Mandela tried to become involved in the discussion at the time by suggesting that big departments should move to Umtata, including

education (Interview X, Zwelitsha, 11 November 2003). Fundamentally, these tensions demonstrate struggles of power and rigid identities formed through the apartheid era. Again, if one goes back to Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) concept of 'imaginary' selves it is the 'us' and 'them' phenomenon that became the basis to associate, organize and mobilize where the 'us' qualifies one for a particular community with a common conscribed identity. Indirectly, such belonging assumes collaboration and co-operation while the reference to the other may represent a threat to the acquired 'stable' identities and makes the other rejected or treated with suspicion. Beyond the political differences about what this reconfiguration meant and who was likely to benefit from the new arrangements, there were other realities to contend with which would subsequently affect effective integration. These include the economic and the administrative realities discussed below.

The economic realities

The EC province has a population of 7 million people, the third largest provincial population after Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. One of the distinguishing features of this province is that – despite the documented history of good missionary education at the beginning of the twentieth century – it still has low literacy levels. For instance, the South African Year Book (SAYB) (2002/2003) assessment of educational trends discovered that 20,9% of 20-year-olds have not received any schooling, while only 4,7% have completed higher education. This low level of education is but one of the many characteristics that contribute to poverty. There is a lack of economic vibrancy in the province resulting in a high unemployment rate. The SAYB of 2002 and 2003 describes the EC as one of the poorest provinces. The average economic growth rate from 1995 to 2001 stands at 2.4% (South African Institute of Race Relations, (SAIRR) (2002/2003). Rembe (2005) highlights that 70% of the 6.2 million inhabitants are classified as poor. Of this 64% live in rural areas. In places like Queenstown's Lukhanji district, unemployment rate has remained at 31% and 38% between 1996 and 2001 respectively (Mears 2004). Of those employed, 41% have monthly earnings that are less than R400 per month (Rembe 2005). It is no surprise then that there is a

high dependency on the state to provide basic leaving allowances through social grants and pensions.

Of course this state of affairs in unlikely to improve immediately as there are rules governing how provinces can raise their revenue. For instance Simeon and Murray (2001) did an interim assessment of South Africa's multi-sphere of governance. Amongst the areas reviewed were the fiscal responsibilities designated between the national and provincial offices. Their analysis showed that due to the high centralisation of financial decision making, provinces have limited revenue raising and borrowing capacities. Rather provinces were fully dependent on national pool of revenue as dictated by the Constitution (Sections 214-216) and the Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations Act of 1997. Such lack of autonomy thus was seen to reduce their capacity to respond to regional mandates and needs. This is despite the national directives which require that provinces spend at least 85% of their revenues on health, education and welfare sectors (ECSECC 2000 and Simeon and Murray 2001). Despite such directives such revenue allocations have hardly addressed provincially oriented needs. On the contrary provincial agendas become secondary to nationally designed mandates (Simeon and Murray 2001).

Of course this creates challenges for the Eastern Cape which had inherited two economically deprived homelands of Ciskei and Transkei. For instance studies on equity in education (Lemon 2004 and Fataar 1997) reveal that the inherited economic disparities have affected the quality of education improvement in the province. The most affected being the old Transkei and Ciskei regions. For instance Lemon (2004) identified an East-West contrast between the schools and their performances. Using the map in figure 4.2 as a point of reference, Lemon (2004) highlighted that schools in the Eastern parts of the province which include the coloured areas of Graaff-Reinet, Humansdorp and Willowmore and former white schools in Port Elizabeth, East London, Grahamstown and Queenstown had lower teacher: pupil ratios with minimum and maximum averages of 17,5 to 37,1%. This was in contrast to schools in the Western side of the province whose teacher ratios ranged between 37,1% and 66,6% respectively. Such patterns of

inequality were also evident in Matric results, where the Eastern schools' pass rates ranged between 50% and 85%, while the Western parts of the province performed at 15% to 40% averages. There is no doubt such disparities are symptomatic of the homeland and its economic resource deprivation.

The administrative realities

Beyond the economic challenges that characterise the new Eastern Cape, the province also inherits poor administration capacities that were inherent in the homelands (Picard 2002 and 2006). The homelands are known to have relied on patrimonial bureaucracy, which survived on 'clientelist' networks (Peires (1992:385). Of course this was not unique to the homelands, patrimonial tendencies were a phenomenon of South Africa as well (read Lodge 1998 and Hyslop 2005 for a historical analysis of political corruption before and after apartheid). Nonetheless, the concept of separate development had seen different systems of administration that ran parallel until the democratic elections of 1994 which enforced integration. While integration was essential for the new democratic dispensation, one cannot underestimate the legacies of these previous regimes and the divisions they created. The culture of separation had in one way or another created distinct identities and cultures, which could not be written off overnight. All previous structures had over time developed their own ways of doing things and had created their own practices in response to their supposedly unique environments and contexts.

By 1998, there were about 138 000 public servants in the province, paid 8 million per year in salaries (Picard 2005). This number had subsequently reduced to approximately 125 068 in 2002 (Radebe et al 2004). The bulk of these employees came from the homelands. For instance at the time of 1994 integration, Transkei and Ciskei had 125, 217 employees between them. Of these 94 664, 30 553 came from the Transkei and 30 553 were from the Ciskei (Picard 2005). Lodge (2005) puts these numbers conservatively at 55 000 and 20,000 for Transkei and Ciskei respectively. Despite the numerical differences the key issue raised in the literature is that common to all the homelands, the public services lacked skills to

run an efficient bureaucracies and it was prone to corrupt and nepotistic tendencies due to the patrimonial system that dominated homeland governance in general (Southall 1998; Picard 2002 and 2006; Lodge 2002). Hence it remained a challenge how to integrate it into fully effective machinery.

4.5 The legislative context and organizational change from 1994 to 1999

Theories of organizational change tend to be framed within the notions of stability and equilibrium, where change is either internally and/or externally induced for the betterment of the organization. Inherently change becomes a temporal phenomenon whose task is to enhance further conditions of control, order, efficiency and competitiveness. Rarely would notions of politics and strategy become part of this debate unless one looks specifically at strategic management research. Even there, politics are sidelined as unnecessary in organizations (Mintzberg 1983). However, in this case one sees change as a product of external strategy and politics. Brown (2000:46) goes on to define strategy as 'a decentering movement, a re-ordering of discourses'. Equally with the general transformation, opportunities were seized to re-order and destabilize the discourses of the apartheid administration. Using the normative or value-based conscriptions of the Interim Constitution of 1993, the reformers forged ideological consensus to see change as a necessity, to lobby for ideological incorporation and the alteration of power relations. Indeed, this was a conducive strategy in the era of the Government of National Unity (GNU) where political co-operation was essential.

Equally then, the ECDE, like all other public organizations, drew its mandate for transformation and change from various government policies and regulations. At the beginning the Interim Constitution 0f 1993 and the White Paper on Public Service Transformation (1995) became the major points of reference, followed by other newly developed policies which all had differing impacts. Some of these include the White Paper on Education and Training (1995), National Educational Policy Act (1996); the South African Schools Act (1996) and the Public Finance Management Act (1999). While almost all these policies were based on the

normative values of equity, redress, quality and access, the way they were interpreted depended on the local conditions.

In the ECDE, the national department of education dominated most policy directives. This was in line with the fact that national departments had concurrent and even overriding powers over provincial departments. The powers of the national and provincial governments are highlighted in schedule 4 and 5 of the Constitution of South Africa. Section 146 of the Constitution deals with conflicting laws between the two spheres of governance. For instance Section 146 (2) (a) and (b) states that:

National legislation that applies uniformly with regard to the country as a whole prevails over provincial legislation if any of the following conditions is met:

(a) The national legislation deals with a matter that cannot be regulated effectively by legislation enacted by the respective provinces individually.

(b) The national legislation deals with a matter that, to be dealt with effectively, requires uniformity across the nation, and the national legislation provides that uniformity by establishing

(i) norms and standards;

(ii) frameworks; or

(iii) national policies.

Implicitly, such emphasis on national norms and standards, frameworks and national policies elevates the powers of national department's authority and control over their respective provincial departments. Hence the provincial departments tend to follow policy directions set by national offices, albeit their autonomous status.

However, with the furious pace of reform this meant that at times provinces were caught off guard by pronounced mandates leaving the departments stranded without the necessary resources and capacity to deliver. This was largely due to

the tenuous relationship between policy-making and policy implementation, where the former remained the jurisdiction of the national offices while provinces had to contend with implementation (McLennan 2000). Equally, when talking to the officials here there is no doubt that external policies became major drivers for change, although their experiences of both conceptualization and implementation could be equated with nightmarish dreams. One reason for this is that there was little or no conceptual alignment and co-ordination between the national and provincial offices. While this disjuncture could be explained by the urgency to change the system, in retrospect it paralyzed the department's ability to plan, co-ordinate and streamline its activities. In the process, one could not fail to read the articulation of 'us' and 'them' as the provincial officials continuously referred to the national officials as 'national'. This almost suggests distance rather than collegiality, which was supposed to be built through interaction. Perhaps it is that implicit distance that made it difficult for national to play an empathetic role around local conditions and contexts as it proposed change after change. The quotations that follow are expressions of different forms of ambivalence in the policy-changing environment:

> …now the critical thing, national determines policy and also pronounces some policy. National says now we are going to admit learners who are turning six or are six-year-olds into Grade 1 and we all clap in the legislature. Yourself as a parent you are very happy, my child won't stay home until he is seven. Now immediately you translate that into the EC arrangement where you are now going to bring into the system almost 10 000 students for example, and this allocation that Mr Godongwana [MEC Finance] spoke about there in the policy speech, it says nothing about the policy that has been pronounced by Minister Asmal. Remember this budget is for this year until March and schools start in January. So schools are not going to wait until we say something else in March. They must do admissions in October and November by law. So they are going to start admitting these Grade 1, six-year-olds in October, November. …..

He went on to say,

> They are going to come back to us as Education and say declare what we call staff establishment. So a school must be told how many teachers they qualify for so that teachers… schools can plan for next year. So I know I'm going to have twelve teachers instead of 10, then I know I can take so many kids, then I can give them responsibilities, all that. That's what education does. So we do that basing it on indicative

> budget figures we are going to receive from Treasury and remember we've got two years, so we already have a sense that its not going to take us far because the two years are already indicated in the budget speech. So the national policies are putting additional pressure on provinces. Now they put more pressure on us because we do not have any other resources in terms of revenue (Interview P, King William's Town, 20 November, 2003).

> The politician will pilot policies into parliament and they will be passed and become laws and they would write to bureaucracies at national levels, which does nothing but make those policies and laws…and the law says there shall be this, there shall be that, there shall be this… So now people at the national level, they make the policy, which is translated into law, and then they produced the regulations then they expect the provinces to implement, right?…The department of education has this kind of room full of policies and documents and the majority of them have never been read by anybody. This explains to me when they say they have got policy overload, they will tell you that we have not been able to read, interpret, internalise and assess the first policies you came up with, the second one, the third one…now you are at number hundred and fifty. So we don't know how to implement the rest of the policies (Interview S, Port Elizabeth, 18 May 2004).

> There was new policy from national that obviously had to be implemented. So we had a changing policy situation. Curriculum was one of those areas, major changes as from the beginning of 1998 that had to be implemented. It was an imperative, with all the implications of implementing new curriculum, there were a number of other major policy changes which were all necessary of course, and there is no suggestion that policies per se were a problem. But it is the impact of massive policy change on a system that had all those inherent challenges. And that of course has… resulted in some people becoming confused, demoralised and demotivated (Interview I, Zwelitsha, 15 May 2004).

Inherent in these quotations is the sense of being overwhelmed by the mass production taking place in the policy realm. But more importantly, these policies found the officials not yet ready to deal with, or interpret them, due to various change pressures. It was thus no surprise to hear the former MEC (Interview S, Port Elizabeth, 18 May 2004) frustrated by the fact that the officials did not read policies but relied on workshop materials, which are usually thin and lacked detail. One union member went on to identify this lack of reading and

familiarisation with policy as one of the major problems in the organisation as it left managers vulnerable to manipulation as workers tend to bargain on everything, including allocated work. Undoubtedly this has implications on broad organisational competencies, capacity and empowerment.

Nevertheless, the issue here is that whenever mandates were pronounced provinces were expected to jump on board whether they were ready to do so or not. Sometimes such policy pressures came from 'outside', through highly influential entities like the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) who also had the mandate to change and modernise public administration in South Africa. To do this they also designed new policies, laws and regulations that had to be implemented by all departments and it is a common feature that departments sank or swam with the current, largely because there was little or no space to negotiate the avoidance of any form of development or reform. Instead as one official indicated, the process rolled out exactly the same as anywhere else:

> We all sign performance agreements we are going to do one, two, three, four, five, six, seven. We have no idea whether we will be able to do those things. The whole process of planning activity and budgeting accordingly and then measuring performance against your plan is completely undermined. It becomes an artificial exercise. It becomes whatever you were doing, what did we get last year, what can we ask for in addition and what did we actually spend. So what I am saying is that as a result of that process, the implementation of some of those really important reforms in the public service that have enabled other provinces to move forward significantly in terms of the performance of their managers say at Deputy Director General, Chief Director and Director level, this simply hasn't been possible here (Interview J, East London, 18 November 2003).

Complicating this situation has been the lack of adequate preparation of officials with regard to training and skills development, who have relied on cascaded workshops that were more information-based than skills-oriented (Interview S, Port Elizabeth, 18 May 2004). All these ambivalences were consequential to externally driven reforms where the department was more a follower than a proactive player. This is perhaps the major difference in changing public institutions, that their agency unlike that in the private sector is limited by the set guidelines and rules as they emerge from the political processes. As one may

expect, the contradictions and tensions were not just about how much content was to be handled in short pressured spaces of time, but more about what the implications were at an organisational level. In this context, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) as a service delivery tool will be examined.

4.6 The RDP as the key driver of Access, Redress and Equity

Generally, when talking to the officials there is no indication that the broad policy values of access, redress and equity were ever contested. Rather, indirectly they became the new change signifiers of relations between the state, the bureaucracy and the local communities. For instance, their articulation was a shift from the politics of marginalisation and exclusion to general access and inclusion in state services. Theoretically, the RDP changed the state's role in the new democratic change process to a distributive entity and its bureaucracy was included. For bureaucracies surrounded by massive poverty circles, such distributive logic automatically focused bureaucratic activities towards expenditure rather than efficiency. By this is meant the notions of redress, access and quality stretched both the community expectations and their respective bureaucracies about the role and expectations of the state in the new dispensation. Fundamentally, the South African state had adopted more of what Ngema (2003) and Matomela (2003) describe as a developmental state. As Ngema says:

> The developmental state is usually established when there has been some sort of rupture in the pre-existing order. Such rupture need not amount to a revolutionary one; it could simply be reformist. The developmental state therefore strives to change the pre-existing power relations but the degree to which it seeks to change them depends on the balance of forces within the state and in society (Ngema, 2003:18).

While the reformist nature of the state could be driven by policy, the changing of power relations was always going to be a contested issue due to the varied interests involved. Theoretically, one claims that the RDP became an attempt to change such power relations, as it became a resource redistribution tool. As a needs-driven programme, located in the office of the President, it became a distributor of key funding for various Presidential Lead Projects in various sectors. However, due to lack of key strategic direction for public sector reform at

the time, it became a flytrap that attracted anything to it. Munslow and FitzGerald (1995) examine its many faces as (a) a fund; (b) a set of development planning tools for government; (c) a major governmental change management process and (d) a societal vision and site of a national development debate. For the ECDE officials it became a point of challenges. This is evident in the following articulations:

> You see the people with the new government were under the impression things are going to change overnight. My office was like the real *gqirha* [doctor's] office. You know I had a bench outside. Every day delegations came from all over and it was a question of going out and say Next! Next! Next! Mr X and I dealt with that. So we had that difficulty, how do you contain and how do you address these expectations. (Interview Fr, Zwelitsha, 20 May 2004).

> You had to make sure that all communities are provided for with facilities and the new ratios that were required – the learner to educator's ratios that they required has to be met. And people were very much aware of what was supposed to be provided because the RDP was there before we moved into the election…So guided by that, they knew exactly what was supposed to be happening in education and they demanded in a state that was being set up and not ready. So the demands were more than the state of readiness of the state (Interview To, Bisho, 19 May 2004).

> Now as we bring together these people in 1994, all of them I believed had expectations. Now the challenging aspect was how you manage expectations…Because if you look at parents, parents have their own expectations and in terms of education the parents' expectations were in relation to free and compulsory education. Parents said for the first time our children will have access to education and it will be free education, because they take it from what the Freedom Charter said because it was a popular voice in the 90s to say doors of learning and culture will be opened to all. So they went further to say that not just opened but there will be free and compulsory education. So that was mainly the parents' component. Then the students, there was a period where everybody believe that its liberation before education, that was the popular slogan. Then the whole thing changed then there was a whole campaign I mean especially within our province, but I'm sure nationally, that which we termed mobilisation. Mobilisation for a Learning Nation, so we had to mobilise them to go back to school because there was a whole new paradigm shift to say without education you will not be able to sustain our liberation within the country, so students went back in droves, large numbers. We had all of an experience of overpopulated schools. Now if you come to

> educators, remember I said educators belong to a number of groupings. So educators' expectations were that for the first time we can receive resources, the learning and teaching environment will be improved, will be maybe a different one and then there was an element of remuneration because somehow people believe that what they were being remunerated far below what is supposed to be the threshold in terms of remuneration of educators (Interview P, King William's Town, 20 November 2003, Zwelitsha, 20 November 2003).

Implicit in these quotations are reflections of internal organisation inabilities to cope with the political demands and set expectations. For instance, one sees how the notion of distributive justice became easily intertwined in the broader politics of the Freedom Charter and the political campaigns of 1994. To some extent one argues that it is this type of justice that reconfigured relations between the state and the communities. While contending with their own competing interests, communities bargained using the same RDP and the Freedom Charter to advance their own particular interests. The point is that democracy and the vote had made it possible for people to voice their needs, something they could not do within the repressive state.

With such varied expectations then in place the questions are: what were the implications for the new distributive bureaucracy? What kind of power relations emerged from this? Firstly, the bureaucracy found itself under extreme pressure to respond to various stakeholders' needs, and the pressure became the determinant of the responses, and when and how they happened. Such pressures came from various sources, including the politicians whose success depended on the votes, the local stakeholders, the donors and even the media. Of course, without any measuring glass to give weight to competing claims, this meant that other needs were prioritised, hence the *doctors' queue* outside the offices. In extreme cases, however, this resulted in hostage-taking of officials whereas one interviewee went on to say 'during that whole first year I was held hostage at the school because they wanted to have something now and I had to talk myself out of it' (Interview Fr, Zwelitsha, 20 May 2004. One of the reasons for this is explained by one official who said 'we were in the camp site but we were expecting all the luxuries of living in the established residence, you know walls, floors, water, sewerage and

electricity whereas you know in the camp site those things were not functioning' (Interview I, Hogsback, 17 May 2004). Such pressures and expectations were also exacerbated by the context of extreme poverty and under-development, and tools like the RDP became synonymous with escape from such conditions.

For the departmental officials, the pressures had consequences, with work being done erratically, and achievements uncertain. As was explained:

> In 1997 you know we selected 278 schools. We've given each community R63 000 and we have said build three classrooms for us this is the plan, establish a building committee. We will give you R10 a day and we'll give you the support. We'll send the work-inspector for you to put out the foundation, we give them a step-by-step manual and we say will you please now deliver those three classrooms. We can't, if you don't help us you'll only get classrooms in ten years time. Open a bank account, we are going to give you, the MEC went there to hand over cheques. A big risk that we took, but we've realized that we have got to make one big effort. Our target was to put in as many classrooms in a short space of time. As I said it was part of this pressure we got from the communities. So, you know the communities, we gave them three months to build three classrooms in 278 schools. You know they delivered on that project. We put into that area 861 classrooms through community participation. We said we don't expect you to do it for nothing you can buy milk, you can buy bread for R10. We will pay you ten Rand out of that money of 861 classrooms. Beside that 861 classrooms we also built 2 000 emergency classrooms. We've used 13 contractors to do that.
>
> Q: What would be the emergency ones?
> A: Emergency ones, these are these pre-fabricated, you know. Now we say you know when we started we looked at a backlog of over 22 000 classrooms, now we're looking at a backlog of 12 000 to 13 000 classrooms and at that time we had to depend on the information that we got through our co-coordinators in each district. They did not have cars, they reacted on information that they in turn heard from schools which meant that we have made many mistakes. We may have built more classrooms at a school we should not have. We have built schools where we should not have because of inadequate information so we've made our mistakes in some areas. But what we are saying now is we've got to a point where we have now managed to visit each and every school (Interview Fr, Zwelitsha, 11 May 2004, Zwelitsha, 20 May 2004).

Again this reflects the complexities of managing competing stakeholder interests and the compromises that were made. Theoretically, these compromises come

from the reconfigured bureaucratic-community relations. For instance, it is mostly unusual that the bureaucracy of the ideal type engages with the community on service delivery. This is usually left to the politician and her/his constituency. However, with democracy in place, it opened spaces for communities to challenge government on realising their rights where necessary. It is possible to contend that the direct community interactions in places like the Transkei were partly to pacify the discontentment from those who were calling for self-governance, but also to dismiss the mythical dispositions that had emerged that it was the 'Cinderella of this province' (Interview P, King William's Town, 20 November 2003, King William's Town, 20 November 2006). This is illustrative of how decisions are made to consolidate hegemonic ideology. The new state had flagged itself as a state of abundance and had to play along to meet the expectations thus created. With the aid of the minimal cheques and promises of better schools (even though these were often sub-standard, for example, the prefabricated temporary classrooms), it retained its position as a demi-god bringing manna from heaven; the indirect result of this was to build community confidence in the new democratic state, which subsequently won the next election. Such observations are not intended to detract from the ingenuity of the bureaucrats to somehow produce service delivery in even the most inaccessible places – the intention is rather to demonstrate the complex relations that bureaucracies forge in externally driven contested change settings.

The RDP was unfortunately not able to deliver on all these expectations for many reasons. Some of the reasons cited by Munslow and FitzGerald (1995:47) include the fact that its basic philosophies underestimated the influence of global considerations on the decision-makers. Its assumptions were based on the 'cozy world of autonomy and self-reliance, which unfortunately existed only as a development fantasy' (Munslow and FitzGerald, 1995:47). For instance, some of the international funding had conditions attached, which had to be met, but the RDP also suffered from lack of institutional capacity, which paralysed communication about the criteria for funding. They contend that some of the officials dealt with departments in presumptuous and patronising ways that

'earned them a minor reputation as self-anointed development commissars' (ibid: 47). At another level, the RDP was in motion when there were no clear institutional arrangements for its operations in some departments, and this lack of clarity led to the RDP encroaching on the territory of other departments, especially since the accountability of its development programmes lay outside the host department.

Although the RDP did not make any significant impression on the structural and cultural arrangements of state bureaucracies, it became the organising tool for development and service delivery for at least the first two years of democracy. It was unfortunately a programme set in motion when the field was hardly prepared for it to take off and it faced increasingly harsh criticism. On closure of the RDP, it was replaced by a more orthodox and fiscal austerity-oriented macroeconomic policy, which will be examined in more detail later. It is necessary to turn now to an examination of the dynamics of resource provisioning, which were instrumental in shaping the early dynamics of the initial transition phase.

4.7 Resource provisioning and allocations: The Tale of Empty Coffers

Although significant amounts of money were spent on various RDP projects, the reality was that this department, like all others, had to fight for its share of resources in the broader context of varied parameters of resource allocation, financial continuity and discontinuity that had been set by the Interim Constitution Act No. 200 of 1993. Among the many conditions set, sections 239 and 240 which addressed assets and liabilities and state revenue funding respectively, appear to have had a direct impact on provisioning. For instance, section 239 (3) (a) talks to the inheritance of debts and liabilities, stating that 'all debts and liabilities directly linked to an asset vesting in terms of subsection (1) in a provincial government shall be assumed by such provincial government (Interim Constitution Act No. 200 of 1993:18). In retrospect, what this meant for the ECDE was an automatic transference of all education debts and liabilities to its financial coffers. Such debts predominantly emanated from the two inherited homelands which had minimal infrastructure and were predominantly poor. This

meant that any structural rationalisation thus became a merger of debts, an inheritance of financial backlogs and an adoption of poorly developed administration financial systems, which would have a bearing in the new dispensation. The comments of officials reflected their frustration with the lack of assistance in these matters. For example:

> On the other side it is fact, that fact is that the department of education in the EC which is in control of 6 500 schools, in control of over 73 000 to 75 000 employees with a learner population of about 2.1 million inherited the massive backlogs that were found in the homelands, Ciskei and the Transkei and also your ex-DET inherited all of that and was charged with the responsibility of putting a government together to address that. The fact of the matter is that no-one pronounced what we were inheriting. The people of this province were not sensitized fully about the magnitude of the problem we were inheriting here. If I could use a thermometer or something like that I would say when other people started at 0 degrees or at 5 degrees we started at -20 degrees. Like having to fill a hole before building a house, you know. We have that challenge and whenever we try to build that house we discover a new hole, you know (Interview B, Zwelitsha, 19/11/2003).

> The distribution or sharing of the cake started from the basis that was not informed because the basis did not consider that as we entered into the dispensation of 1994 we already carried a huge financial backlog. There were debts that were sitting somewhere, whether it was Transkei. Remember the homeland systems were run by debts or over-expenditure and borrowings and all those things. So when that government collapsed, De Klerk had no duty to tell anyone to say that remember Transkei has x-amounts of debts sitting somewhere, it would come one day. And now since that period the debts were like springing up whether it's people that have not been receiving their monies or back pay or bonus or whatever. Those people came up and said I have not been paid my this and that and we had to pay them…So I'm saying until we are able to cost the policy implications financially for the province and also cost the backlog accumulated by the province and allocate a separate earmarked funding or redress fund. You earmark x-amount of money to deal specifically with backlogs… (Interview P, King William's Town, 20 November 2003).

This inability to fully comprehend how deep the hole of debt is means that the department is in a constant state of repairing different damages, some of which have bearing on infrastructure, pensions and salaries. The consequences of this are discussed more fully in the next chapter on departmental re-orientation.

Amongst many reasons for this financial state of affairs, is the initial arrangements implied by section 240 of the Interim Constitution Act of 1993. One of the major issues here was the delayed transference of funds from the old State Revenue Fund to the new National or Provincial Revenue Fund of the new democratic government. Instead, the Interim Constitution communicated more on the basis of continuity until the new structures had been put in place, and delegated that:

> In the 1994/1995 financial year the head of department of the Treasury, as defined in section 1 of the Exchequer Act, 1975 (Act 66 of 1975), may, in consultation with the Minister responsible for national financial matters, from the Exchequer account, on conditions aimed at ensuring financial control, grant advances to provincial governments as he or she deems necessary for the purposes of establishing of structures of government at provincial level as contemplated in this Constitution until Parliament has appropriated money for such purposes (Interim Constitution Act 200 of 1993).

With Parliament not yet fully operational, and typical of the negotiated transition, a great deal depended on consultation and discretionary authority. The delay in formalising the structures thus meant delayed access to funds and to formal decision-making; it also meant that financial allocations could only be based on financial estimations which the officials contend were inaccurate, given that they were not statistically based. Recounting some of the experiences the ex-then Director-General of the province observed:

> We had not participated in the formulation of those budgets [this is in 1994] because they had been approved the previous year. We were governed from outside this province because the headquarters of [Cape Provincial Administration] CPA was in Cape Town…So the budget was crafted and paralyzed in the Western Cape for many of the issues that affected the Eastern Cape in as far as former CPA portion of the province. So you had budget X from CPA, budget Y from Ciskei, budget Z from Transkei and you had to amalgamate these and as you know that the per capita allocation for the former homeland areas for Africans was far lower than for whites and even if you went to the CPA side of the province, the whites under CPAs or coloured or Indians were allocated more than Africans. Now you had the majority of the people of the EC coming from the Transkei, about one million from the Ciskei and CPA about one million. So more than five million came from the homeland and on average if you had to deal with equity

> issues you had a very low baseline of the EC, and that has dogged us throughout the budgetary system… But of course limited as we were with information the key issue was to plan and we could not budget adequately – we had problems. So allocations were very much off the mark because even if you consider the population, the population statistics were so unreliable in this province. So those were the external factors that also affected the department as we built it because when people came in there they struggled with budgets, struggled with resource allocation (Interview To, Bisho, 19 May 2004).

Indeed, statistics came into effect with the first population census of 1996. It appears that these unfortunately had little bearing on the revision of allocation of funds, according to departmental officials interviewed. Instead, the system continued to use pre-statistic estimates without consideration of new information and data for education. Nevertheless, what this discussion suggests is that while the broader political shifts were happening, the resource conditions and allocations continued to be imposed by the previous apartheid administration systems, effectively. This reduced any hopes of administrative reform to a synthetic exercise due to lack of authority over resources and debt overload. It is likely that debt overload and limited resources are the reason why this organisation is still running on the treadmill while other education departments in the richer provinces are on the race-track. A case in point, is the issue of classroom backlogs. Table 4.3 compares levels of classroom shortages between three provinces.

Table 4.3 Comparative statistics on classroom backlogs

Province	Number of schools	Number of classrooms short	Rurality %
Eastern Cape	6 148	11 557	63
KwaZulu-Natal	5 583	9 867	57
Limpopo	4 180	9 071	89

Source: Adapted from the South African Institute of Race Relations.

According to the table the ECDE has a backlog of approximately 12 000 classrooms, which is very high when compared to other provinces with similar conditions. These backlogs are not the only challenges that are inherent in the system. For instance, department has 1,487 schools without toilets, 1 972 schools without water supply, 2 931 with no sports field, 4, 333 have no electricity and 90% of schools have no libraries or laboratories (Infrastructure Journal: 2003). Obviously this is a huge challenge for a department that has limited resources on the table. To leave such responsibility this to the creativity of individual departments and their respective provincial governments can be a serious contention to equity and redress and may even perpetuate inequality and marginalisation in the newly formed democracy as the poor departments struggle to mobilise the resources.

What we see here is that while the transformation created a good political space of engagement, it mechanically endorsed rigid structural arrangement it found in place without thinking about their consequences on the reform process. While at another level this is indicative of the complexity of the transition, it also confirms Kallaway's (2002) observations on the ANC's lack of readiness to govern when it took power from the National Party. He compares the two parties by saying that 'the National Party arrived into government in 1948, much like the ANC in 1994, without a clear plan of action', (Kallaway 2002:13). For the ANC there was urgency to transform and own the state in a way that would make it accessible to the broader citizenry, especially the black population that had been marginalised before 1994. This meant that there was very little detail put on the costing of the transformation project, and provinces encountered debts that they had not known existed. More importantly, and unlike the Bantustan programme, they had no national office to bail them out (Southall 1998; Interview To, Bisho, 19 May 2004 and Interview P, King William's Town, 20 November 2003). The new concept of regionalism became strongly synonymous with ownership of debt, including the respective departmental apartheid debt. Effective change as a result seemed conditional on how inherited debts were to be managed, in many cases presenting

a serious challenge (Interview To, Bisho, 19 May 2004; Interview B, Zwelitsha, 19/11/2003; Interview P, King William's Town, 20 November 2003).

4.8 Public administration beyond the RDP from 1997 to 2002

By the late 1990s and in tandem with global economic changes and the newly coined concept of globalisation, public administration – like all other discourse – was put to debate. At the forefront were challenges about the role and the relevance of the state. This precipitated another shift in public administration discourse in general. While public administration had relied on traditional bureaucracies to deliver state services, these structures were now being questioned on their efficiency and effectiveness to the extent of proposing a new entrepreneurial bureaucracy. The basis of what this means is captured by the NPM thesis already considered in Chapter Two. In the South African context these debates found resonance with the revision and literal dumping of the RDP's economic and social distribution strategy in favour of the adoption of the Macro-Economic Strategy for Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR). Since the subject of GEAR is beyond the scope of this research, Marais (1998) is recommended in order to obtain an understanding of its historical and ideological origins. What is significant about GEAR is that it changed the discourse of reform, moving from the RDP's 'social democratic, basic needs agenda' to a 'neo-liberal' agenda (Munslow and FitzGerald, 1995). The new strategy was focused on:

(a) Slashing state spending to drive the budget deficit down to 3 per cent of GDP by the year 2000;
(b) Keeping inflation to single digits;
(c) Reducing corporate taxes and providing tax holidays for certain investments;
(d) Gradually phasing out exchange control regulations completely;
(e) Encouraging wage restraint by workers;
(f) Creating a more 'flexible' labour market, possibly by deregulating certain categories of unskilled work and exempting small business from aspects of the new labour regime; and speeding up privatisation (Marais, 1998:162).

The question then is: was this new strategy successful in off-setting public sector reform? To some extent one could argue that ideologically, GEAR was instrumental in bringing about the changes seen in the public sector in later years. However, it would be an exaggeration to credit GEAR alone as there were many other contentious and powerful forces directing the new discourses for change internally and externally, and these will be explored independently.

4.9 Internal forces for change

Internally, the administrative bureaucracy was under pressure to enhance service delivery. By 1995 the functioning of the state bureaucracies was synonymous with poor service delivery, crisis and chaos. While this was to an extent due to the fact that many public organisations lacked the capacity and skills necessary to deliver large-scale reform programmes, the public sector reform programme also lacked direction and clearly articulated goals that could be translated into delivery programmes at an organisational level. This meant that organisational effectiveness at the time could only be conditional on acquired leadership skills and general staff competencies. Otherwise organisational processes remained more haphazard than following a controlled planning process. The subsequent public criticisms of the state bureaucracies led to a number of reviews being instituted including the Provincial Review Report (PRR) (1997) and the Presidential Review Commission of Inquiry on Transformation and Reform in the Public Service (1998) to investigate the functioning of systems of government. In the next few paragraphs, commentary on the two reports will show how these were instrumental in creating pressure for fundamental change in the public sector.

The Provincial Review Report

The Provincial Review Report was intended to (a) take stock of the reform process to date; (b) assess how well the new administrations were progressing; (c) establish whether the administrations had capacity to manage the block budgets that were to be introduced during the 1997/1998 financial year; and (d) to assess whether the new ways of governing and administering the country, especially

corporate governance, are workable (Provincial Review Report 1997). The findings of the report focused on three areas, namely (a) the role of the national government (b) issues common to most departments and provinces (transversal issues) and (c) department-specific issues. Without getting into too much detail about each of these areas, the findings on the role of national government highlighted tensions between the national and provincial planning systems where national government was seen to set policies with little consideration of provincial capacities. It was also seen to concentrate power on issues essential to organisational effectiveness such as performance, discipline and accountability. Beyond this, the lack of balance of power created confusion with regard to roles and responsibilities and support.

With regard to transversal issues, the findings reflected a lack of alignment in various areas. For instance, the departments were still structured in highly functional terms with strong centralisation of key areas like personnel and finance, which surely presented a contradiction, especially when departments were expected to be client-focused. Underlying a client-focused approach is the notion of organisational flexibility and autonomy to facilitate speedy decision-making at points of service delivery. However, when the tensions between centralisation and flexibility are unresolved, they tend to complicate the balance between accountability and control. Without getting into the debate about the relationship between these two concepts, it is a fact that when these forces function in unison and are located at the same level, there is likely to be evidence of organisational performance. The basis for this is that those put in charge become custodians for accountability and control.

Nonetheless, the Review went on to identify other key transversal issues like (a) leadership, management, and strategic planning; (b) organisational arrangements; (c) human resources; (d) financial management; and (e) information systems and technology as all inadequate at the time. All of these issues are indicative of challenges to public sector reform. Seemingly, there was very little that was in place and going right in the beginning. Surprisingly, many organisations

continued to function in such chaotic arrangements without experiencing a total collapse, including education, which showed the same dysfunctional tendencies as all the other departments. For instance, education had problems with (i) management systems such as a lack of financial systems and controls, poor communication systems, poor information systems and resource provisioning; (ii) training of teachers and administration staff; (iii) conflicting roles and responsibilities between the administrative and political heads; and (iv) lack of shared values (Provincial Review Report 1997). Of course, all these factors are fundamental to organisational performance.

Presidential Review Commission

Similarly, the Presidential Review Commission (1998) identified various points of misalignment and dysfunctionality in the system. Comparatively, the Presidential Review Commission provides more depth and detail on many of the issues identified by the Provincial Review and even makes recommendations on how to address some of the system dysfunctionality. It outlines clearly the strategy that was adopted to reform public bureaucracies:

> government opted for a strategic change management or strategic-developmental approach to administrative reform, rather than traditional bureaucratic models or neo-liberal models based on the restructuring and increasing contracting-out of state services (Presidential Review Commission, 1998:2).

Central to strategic change management is the belief that strategy is the driver for effective organisational change and performance. Organisational success therefore depended on how well it was conceptualised, articulated and implemented. This was in line with the broader management discourse propagated by leading schools of public management who also advocated strategy as the key aspect of driving transformation and fundamental change. Swilling captured the spirit of the debates in the following way:

> A strategy for managing administrative transformation must be rooted in and enhance the process of political transformation. If we allow the process of administrative transformation to become depoliticised, that is, to become a technical process of redeploying resources in new structures, we will find ourselves left with a new public service that, while having merit of being non-racial, will remain incapable of

> impacting on social, economic, and physical development…. What is needed is a strategy-led process that transforms existing structures, systems, and processes into an administration capable of implementing and executing the policies of a developmental provincial dispensation (Swilling et al, 1995b:491).

The basic assumption then was that, contrary to relying on traditional bureaucratic functional structures that had lost legitimacy through their over-reliance on tight authority and disciplinary controls, a new developmental strategy would be a vision to transform the state and its bureaucracy. In fact, the new strategic management approach was supposed to open up the bureaucracy and make it more creative while also being democratic. As De Clercq (2002) highlights, the South African 'broker state'

> relies on the strategic management model of public administration with participatory work processes and devolved decision-making and managerial powers to lower units. It combines a strong policy and strategic management centre with flatter decentralised structure to be flexible and answer the changing needs of the society and economy. The bureaucrats are expected to be flexible, strategic and innovative to respond to the differentiated societal needs and are subject to public market as well as bureaucratic accountability (De Clercq, 2002:85).

Inherent in this is the notion of the devolution and decentralisation of power and decision-making to the points of service delivery. To some extent, one may argue that the provincial system was partly to advance this. But as organisational management literature suggests, divisionalised structures work well when the centre is strong to co-ordinate and manage key strategic issues and is able to give direction to policy and key management issues. At the beginning the transformation lacked such a co-ordinating point, which was picked up and emphasised by the Presidential Review Commission, which subsequently recommended that the President's office co-ordinate and 'pull things' together for strategic direction. Unfortunately, the early transition was more about policy formulation than co-ordination and implementation. The lack of such co-ordination obviously resulted in maladministration and inefficiencies in some sectors as Munslow suggests:

> In terms of strategic management reforms and re-engineering, a mixed picture had presented itself at the half-way term of the first democratic

> government. While in some departments and provinces considerable efforts had been made and clear efficiency and rationalization gains have become evident, other national departments have apparently made little progress, not addressed themselves to institutional issues or appear reconciled to gross inefficiency, maladministration, and chaos (Munslow et al, 1995:12).

Such 'gross inefficiency, maladministration and chaos' also created conditions for the emergence of opportunistic tendencies like corruption, mismanagement and poor work ethics due to inherent multiple vested interests (Picard, 2002). This scenario is perceived to have been worse in the former homelands, which had incomplete records of their civil servants.

As part of a cultural revolution then, business process re-engineering was seen as the mechanism to change the practice and ways of doing things, to ensure that:

> departments overcome their functional parochialism and embrace the "one-stop shop" or "single window" approach to service delivery…(Presidential Review Commission, 1998:6).

Underlying this one-stop or single-window approach, the idea was to decrease multiplicity and duplication of tasks across departments. At the time the reviews were made, many departments worked as self-sufficient silos co-ordinating themselves as fully functional entities. Perhaps what complicated issues further than silos was the diverse nature of organisations that existed outside the mainstream bureaucracies, which included centres and agencies which, because of their relative autonomy from the state were difficult to manage and control. In addition, there were departments like health, education and local government that had developed their own ways of doing things which made conformity and compliance to the new reform programme a challenge. By adopting business process re-engineering, the assumption was that the organisational bureaucracy could now be organised around particular sets of activities that cut across departments and agencies. The question then is: were the strategic management and business-process-engineering approaches the best approaches to resolve the apartheid organisational dysfunctionalities and the subsequent inefficiencies and maladministration? Trying to answer this question now is perhaps a subject of

theoretical rather than empirical debate, but one thing that is clear is that such thinking has framed the basis for reform. In a way, change had to go beyond the reshuffling of bureaucracy and locate the new bureaucracy in a particular mode of thinking. The consequences of this are still to be determined.

Nonetheless, De Clercq (2002) questions the premise of the reform adopted. She argues that it operated from a premise of a strong mature state that is able to work with 'partners and retain its relative autonomy', while in reality the new transitional state was still emerging and thus unable to achieve this. More importantly, however, she identifies three assumptions made by the reform model. These are that (a) it assumes that organisational development occurs under external pressure and tighter accountability systems; (b) it ignores context, particularly the underlying values that drive public organisations; and (c) it over-emphasises strategic planning and management systems and ignores other organisational weaknesses like policy overload, inadequate leadership and poor human resource capacity. While one agrees with her, it is imperative to acknowledge that these weaknesses are synonymous with management theory and practice, which tends to focus on identifiable and quantifiable input, process and output chains rather than the reform strategy, *per se*. For instance, the over-emphasis on outputs creates less flexibility even when context calls for this. As a result, organisations tend to be treated as homogenous entities even where their differences are acknowledged.

Such additional limitations mean that strategy can easily turn into a mechanistic plan, especially when there are resources attached to it. In such cases, instead of it playing the liberating and visionary role, it becomes a stabiliser of past achievements. Furthermore, those who have faith in it tend to ignore the role of agency. For instance, strategic approaches assume co-operation but as is well-known, managers constantly make decisions and choices in organisations that shift with different interests. Equally, Swilling et al (1995b) warns against the dangers of strategic management because it can slide into crisis management, and explains:

> This is an instance when the consequences of change trigger administrative, institutional and policy disjunctures that cannot be sorted out by line managers. In such instances incomplete change processes create greater confusion and disharmony than would have otherwise been the case. This is then used to discredit change management entirely (Swilling et al, 1995b:507).

In retrospect, one has to take cognisance of organisational change literature, which acknowledges that organisational effectiveness is more a product of the alignment of several factors than any one isolated entity. Some of the factors include organisational skills and competencies, staffing, leadership style and culture and strategy, where strategy is but one of the key elements. The tendency though is that organisations tend to rely on adopting new strategies, hoping they will drive performance, while in the meantime they retain the same old modalities that made them dysfunctional in the first place. It is thus no surprise that many public organisations, including some education departments, could not break the mould of inefficiency and ineffectiveness in their internal organisational operations for at least five years after the democratic inception.

4.10 The external forces

Turning to external issues, it is a fact that by the time South Africa was evolving into a democratic state, international debates on public administration had also moved to embrace New Public Management (NPM) and its neo-liberal tendencies. NPM puts emphasis on creating lean, mean and efficient governments. Efficiency as such is the dominant concept around state re-organisation and reform. While the interpretations of NPM vary, it set a platform for change for many countries including South Africa. In South Africa, it found fertile ground in a context where there was little indigenous knowledge of what needed to be done. It thus became an automatic choice in the field of international benchmarking and adoption of existing models. The advantage of this was that such an adoption of foreign models located public sector reform in the country in the broader context of international reforms. This indirectly gave legitimacy to both content and process. Benchmarking thus became a way of life as various teams were sent to different points of the globe for learning purposes but also to

adopt best practices that would enhance productivity. However, while international borrowing was instrumental it also stifled growth of local knowledge as pressure became synonymous with shortcuts.

Besides developments in public administration, the business world was producing influential texts which propagated business practices as better and more useful for organisational management. Similarly, the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (1997) popularly known as *Batho Pele – 'People First'* advances the notion of a customer-oriented public service. For instance, Section 3 of the policy document identifies the eight principles which are deemed central and mandatory to the reform programme, namely:

(a) Consultation: where citizens should be consulted about the level and quality of the public services they receive and, wherever possible, should be given a choice about the services that are offered.

(b) Service standards: where citizens should be told what level and quality of public services they will receive so that they are aware of what to expect.

(c) Access: where all citizens should have equal access to the services to which they are entitled.

(d) Courtesy: where citizens should be treated with courtesy and consideration.

(e) Information: citizens should be given full, accurate information about the public services they are entitled to receive.

(f) Openness and transparency: where citizens should be told how national and provincial departments are run, how much they cost, and who is in charge.

(g) Redress: where, if the promised standard of service is not delivered, citizens should be offered an apology, a full explanation and a speedy and effective remedy; and when complaints are made, citizens should receive a sympathetic, positive response.

(h) Value for money: where public services should be provided economically and efficiently in order to give citizens the best possible value for money (White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery 1997).

Generally, *Batho Pele* is a widely accepted doctrine to reform public organisations in South Africa. To date, however, there has been limited engagement with what it really means and how it impacts on organisations. Instead, the existing thoughts are dominated by state reviews and case studies-based advice on implementation found in the Public Service Delivery Review publications, which are government publications within the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA). With the lack of critique, it seems unavoidable to reflect on experiences drawn elsewhere to examine how organisations in other countries have responded to the NPM genre. Generally, the literature demonstrates that different counties choose different versions of NPM and thus it is difficult to consolidate lessons that are similar. However, research in five African countries that have implemented NPM showed that these did reasonable well to implement 'cost reduction and stabilization related reforms' but struggled with 'performance improvement' and with 'removing systemic bottlenecks' (Mutabaha and Kiragu, 2002, 48-49). This is because performance improvement tends to demand more that an enumeration of identifiable variables to focus on systemic cultural change and long-term benefits. Pollitt communicates better in his review of managerialism when he says that there tends to be a greater concern with

> procedural rather than substantive issues – with whether income support claims are dealt with within an average of four days rather than whether the level of benefit allows one to live decently… (Pollitt 1998:55).

The questions then are how different is the ECDE's response to the change? Could it be procedural rather than substantive? While responses to these questions require different research, the next paragraphs draw opinions on the general observations on the direction of the reforms within a particular context.

4.11 Change implications for the ECDE

Undoubtedly, all these outlined internal and external factors influenced the trajectory for change. Public sector reform in general had caught the global whim of reforming state institutions to follow the three popular Es of Economy,

Efficiency and Effectiveness. Strengthening this was the adoption of the Public Finance Management Act No.1 of 1999, which stipulates conditions for financial expenditure for all state departments. The significant shift promulgated here is the introduction of budgetary-driven planning cycles and conditions to enhance accountability. For instance, with regard to planning the departments had to develop three-year corporate plans that demonstrated projections of revenue, expenditure and borrowing. This would vary with each department's needs and emphasis. Similarly, the ECDE has showed some conformity to these basic requirements. As one former DDG explained:

> [The] SA government has brought out the SA Excellence Foundation Model and if you look at it it's the same model, it was first called the EFQM, the European Foundation of Quality Management and so that model talks to outputs. These are your inputs, this is your process and these are your outputs. We define the outputs, we improve the processes and the whole system's computerisation. We optimise the inputs through resource utilisation and calculation of the costs. That is the model we are focusing on. We just come from a conversation now with the new person who has been appointed talking about all the inputs and things like that and I could see the people around the table are so frustrated because they want the result. Is it done? Or not done? If not done, what are you going to do about it? And the person was talking this and that, and we sat around the table thinking, Dear God! We still have to educate this colleague. But the person had just joined the organisation. So it's the mindset, its the management mindset that you must get results now, get it out. So we put out that model to say it must be output focused and this is how we will measure your performance (Interview E, Zwelitsha, 21 May 2006).

Of course the reference to the European Foundation of Quality Model is more of an individual interpretation and association than a real interpretation of *Batho Pele*. Generally, as this official maintains, the shift is on outputs and results rather than inputs. While this may change the traditional inward-looking practices of the bureaucracy it is interesting that other countries like New Zealand are shifting from outputs to outcomes-based planning systems for various reasons, as outlined in Webber's article on *Wrestling with Outcomes: The New Zealand experience* (2005). Fundamentally, the basis is to generate sufficient attention to broad-based public service improvement. Notwithstanding these international shifts, it is a fact the departments like the ECDE were still at the initial stages of their

transformational process and will go through their own learning curve to see what works better within their specific context.

4.12 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the role of context in organisational change. It has explored the broad historical trajectories that enforced different organisational shifts and some organisational responses to them. While the issue of fragmented histories is mentioned but not fully developed here, it becomes more evident in subsequent chapters. However it is mentioned here as a reminder that while the technical context of policy shifts has been realised, they happen in a conflictual environment of differences and previous politics of separate identities that must still consolidate. More importantly, the historical legislative genre explored illuminates the context under which the department operates and hence the directions it took over time. In many ways this chapter confirms the significance of context in determining organisational change. For instance it is clear that before the 1994 democratic change there was a lot of emphasis on tribal and ethnic politics than on creating efficient and effective bureaucracies. While this exclusive and separatists ethnic agenda was eroded by the new shift to nation building and inclusive democracy in 1994, the study showed that there was still very little conceptualisation of the nature of bureaucracies that existed at the time and what they needed to make them work effectively. If anything the bureaucracy saw little development between 1995 and 1997, as it focused on the external political agenda of social reconstruction and development. The point of illumination here is that bureaucracies that are highly embedded in the macro state politics and are centrally (nationally) controlled than locally driven tend to focus on issues external to their immediate environment. In terms of service delivery purpose, this makes them less relevant to the local needs even though they are nationally compatible. In many ways, this brings to question the issue of whose purpose should provincial departments serve? and why? Without clarity on such questions, the provincial offices will remain caught in the web of tension and dual responsibility between the local and national needs. Nonetheless, the next two

chapters examine the micro processes that are in place in the ECDE and their consequences on the organisation and its efficiency and effectiveness.

CHAPTER FIVE

FRAMING THE NEW ORGANISATIONAL DESIGN

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter looked at the general macro contextual factors influencing public sector reform, including the ECDE. This chapter focuses on a micro exploration of the processes of reorganisation and organisational change of the ECDE as a consequence of the external pressures of transformation and reform. Such reorganisation has not been extensively studied, but there has been some commentary, such as March and Olson (1986); Wise (1990); Cheung (1996) and Swilling et al (1995), for instance, who define reorganisation as a process of administrative transformation more fundamental than restructuring that encompasses a change of systems, cultures and practices. How organisations respond to reorganisation depends on the models of change adopted and how they are implemented. Keeping the themes of power politics and identity in mind, this chapter traces how different logics of reorganisation influenced the ECDE in its efficiency and effectiveness. It argues that while reorganisation and its side tools of restructuring are championed as good managerial strategy for organisational change, they are neither a neutral nor a politically free exercise. Rather, they are value-laden and highly political tools that can be variously used by different interests to achieve different goals that may well exclude efficiency. The key questions raised by this chapter are: (a) what were the levers for the reorganisation of the ECDE? and (b) how did they influence the themes of change, efficiency and effectiveness? To answer these questions the chapter first looks at the historical emergence of the department at the time of the merger and the conditions affecting it, and secondly it explores different logics of organisational re-ordering between 1994 and 2002 and the inherent complexities and contestations that emerged.

5.2 A brief historical outline on the nature of the bureaucracy pre-1994

A brief examination of apartheid bureaucracy shows that it functioned within scientific management discourse for its everyday execution of the apartheid policies. Bureaucrats were highly socialised into the principles of management such as planning, co-ordinating, organising and control. Like all other entities derived in the modernist project, the bureaucracy was perceived to provide objective and calculable means to service provision. Rules became the means and ends as public administration became synonymous with value-free, neutral and apolitical sentiments. Besides, like all Weberian bureaucracy it was partly conforming to established principles of control, order, authority, efficiency and rationality. Beneath these appearances, however, there was chaos that was embedded in the broader political irrationality and corruption.

A deeper analysis of education suggests that the same trends of administrative rationality governed the system. With regard to its configuration, the system exhibited one of the most complex designs, in the sense that it had 19 departments of education that serviced it, 11 of which served Africans alone (Hofmeyr and Swart, 1984, quoted by Hofmeyr and Buckland, 1992). Such an elaborate structure meant that there were duplications in systems and functions, which made it an expensive entity to run. For instance, like any bureaucracy, one expected some standardised assignments of duties, training, communication channels, and work rules (Dessler, 1986). This was almost impossible to do across the system due to separate development, under which systems could not be developed uniformly and be of the same quality, since this would defeat the ideology of apartheid policy. A consequence of this was that African education in particular became the worst-planned system, with poor communication and information systems. Those most disadvantaged by this were rural communities and their schools as they were seldom included in the general information statistics that were used for planning (Hofmeyr and Buckland 1992).

To function then, the system relied on over-centralised authority and power while delegating responsibility at lower levels. These lower levels ranged from sub-

units in the national ministry to the 'divisionalised' (Mintzberg, 1983) systems at provincial level. Overall, as Hofmeyr and Buckland (1992) explain, the fragmented management structures prevented the national implementation of policy on any single matter. Quoting Selfe (1990:12) they argue that the multiplicity of the departments produced 'superstructural administrative chaos'. While there may have been various reasons for this, the duplication of parallel functions and running multi-systems was always going to be a challenge especially when co-ordination was based on tight policy control rather than the espoused managerial efficiency and effectiveness. How did this play out in reality?

The education system in South Africa had always been organised through hierarchy, with the national department of education acting as the intellectual pot for the whole system. In the process the provincial, the district and the schools systems were to respond to the directives of the national ministry. This top-down approach created highly bureaucratic and rigid systems of organising where almost every level played a god-like role over the level below. As a result, the system could only be effective as far as the next level, depending who was in authority and the level of discipline exercised. While it could be argued that such an approach was intended to create efficiency, on the contrary it created a culture of secrecy, discipline, bullying and manipulation (Soudien 2002). A case in point is that of inspectors of schools who would bully teachers when they visited schools for school and teacher evaluations. While such bullying could easily be validated as exercising authority, control and order in schools, the question is: in whose interest? Such a system of management and governance could not be sustained through subordination and repression, as became evident with the 1976 school boycotts. Black schools in Soweto protested against the use of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction. Such protests became the turning point in the struggle against oppression as schools ceased to be sites for teaching and learning and instead turned into platforms for mass protests and mobilisation (Morrell and Moletsane 2002).

As for its maintenance, the system had to ensure an enmeshing of values and culture based on the racialist ideology. Organisations had to conform to prescribed formal and informal rules with very little or no challenge to the status quo. This saw public organisations turning into spaces of marginalisation and alienation. Such marginalisation and alienation included exclusions of certain groups, and black people in particular, from broad and meaningful participation in education. This included denial of access to critical education services and resources. Table 5.1. shows how different systems benefited from the previous racially oriented system. Unfortunately, because homelands statistics are not readily available, the table uses only the broad South African statistics in demonstrating the patterns that fed the system at the time.

Table 5.1 Comparative Education Statistics 1989

	White Education	Indian Education	Coloured Education	African Education (DET)
Pupil-teacher ratios	17:1	20:1	23:1	38:1
Under-qualified teachers (less than std. 10 plus a 3 year teacher's certificate)	0%	2%	45%	52%
Per capita expenditure including capital expenditure	R3 082,00	R2 227,01	R1 359,78	R764,73
Std 10 pass rate	96,0%	93,6%	72,7%	40,7%

Source: Hofmeyr and Buckland in McGregor's (1992:22)

From this table one sees disparities in expenditure, teacher qualifications, and teacher pupil ratios, all of which are essential to quality schooling. It must be kept in mind, however, that these disparities became worse with each school and point of location. For instance, further disparities would be exacerbated by the rural, urban and farm school divide. Both the rural and farm school arrangements have always been the worst off in terms of neglect and marginalisation. To use Hofmeyr and Buckland's (1992) metaphorical reference, they were the 'Cinderella' of the system. Coincidentally, both the Ciskei and Transkei homelands were predominantly in rural settings and thus carried the greatest burden of poorly resourced schools, as confirmed by Interviewees P, King

William's Town, 20 November, 2003 and F, Zwelitsha, 20 May 2004. For example, their descriptions of schools in these areas were that they were highly under-resourced, dominated by mud structures and highly overcrowded.

Caution is necessary when placing emphasis on structural conditions at the expense of agency. However, it is the view of this study that agency was passive in many ways. One of the explanations for this is well-articulated by Archer when she explains that

> By reproducing a stable corpus of ideas over time, cultural forces work to produce a unified population. Its members may indeed be the victims of perceptual power rather than voluntary adherents to consensual precepts, but in any case they are incapable of articulating dissident views and of passing these over the intersection to stimulate structural disruption. On the contrary, the cultural forces generating S-C [structural conditioning] unification and reproduction work to depress incipient forms of structural opposition (Archer, 1988:290-291).

While for Archer the central issue is to explain the reciprocity of structure and culture, this indirectly also provides insights into why the education systems of the time perpetuated the status quo. As a result, education became synonymous with authoritarianism, repression and ideological dogmatism.

Equally, homelands like all other apartheid creations, continued replicating the broader South African administration systems. There was little reason to deviate, as incentives were based on conformity with the nationally designed systems. With regard to education bureaucracy in the homelands, there was very little that was unique about its administration systems, except that it followed the same repressive, discipline-oriented systems seen in the broader South Africa. Picard (2002) picks up this point, explaining that:

> homeland governments often approached the public sector with the same framework as the National Party. Obedience and loyalty, not education and competence, were often the qualifications for these jobs (Picard, 2002:288).

Southall's (1982) elaboration on the emergence of the petit bourgeoisie in the Transkei touches on the subsequent class formations which emerged with the new

bureaucracy. This is the bureaucracy that was driven by expansionism which came with the departure of white bureaucrats and the creation of new service departments. It was consolidated through material privileges such as good salaries and other benefits such as generous housing subsidies (Southall 1982). An interesting observation is that these bureaucrats were:

> …separated from the mass of the reserve community (which is largely dependent upon the meagre returns of migrant labour) by the education (which was what enabled them to gain white-collar employment), by the level of their financial remuneration and by their constant preoccupation 'to better themselves' (Southall, 1982:178).

Explicit in this was that class determined access to resource and wealth distribution. Equally one could argue that the bureaucracy was separated from the communities, which exacerbated the master-servant attitudes of the apartheid era, a consequence of which was reduced civil service accountability with further marginalisation of the 'voiceless' when it came to service delivery.

Nonetheless, Ngubentombi (1989) goes into detail about the planning processes of the education bureaucracy in the Transkei. He outlines the structural design and the organogram used as the basis to organise that system. While these indicate clear roles, responsibilities and relationships between various levels and systems, they are also based on a hierarchical, functionalist and rationalist logic of planning, where power and authority are centralised at head office while the rest of the organisation responds to directives. Indeed, such planning was in line with general administrative developments at the time. Administrative theory and practice had not progressed beyond scientific management to offer alternatives. Hence homelands mimicked broad administration and modernisation techniques available at the time, including rational planning. The unfortunate part is that such planning tended to benefit, and work well in, highly resourced capital towns like Umtata and Bisho in the Eastern Cape, but had marginal effects in semi-urban areas and the rural peripheries.

5.3 Organisational reorientation: The representative logic of 1994

To change the previous apartheid and homeland bureaucracies, public administration reforms of 1994 and 1995 were influenced by the broader national politics of reconciliation and integration as different and fragmented systems were brought together. Embedded in this was the concept of adopting representative bureaucracies as the main reorganisation politics. By representative bureaucracy, this thesis refers to a system of bureaucracy that saw different ethnic and racial groups equally represented in the new structure of administration. Research on representative democracy and representative bureaucracies is wide (Dresang, 1974; Riccucci and Saidel, 1997; Kelly, 1998; Meier, 1999). The underlying principle extracted from this literature is that representative bureaucracies ensure that different community interests are protected and given voice whether they are racially, ethnically, class, gender or geographically based. It becomes a measure of equal opportunity and access to decision-making (Riccucci and Saidel, 1997). Within the South African context, of course, threading through the notion of representative democracy were the politics of redress, equity and reconciliation derived from key legislation including the New Constitution (1996), the Employment Equity Bill (1997) and the White Paper on Affirmative Action (1998). All these policies advocated for a much representative and inclusive public service that is sensitive to different community needs.

With reconciliation and equity guiding the policy reforms, the new ECDE was also reconstituted to reflect the identities of previous bureaucracies. For instance, the province had inherited six different departments of education, two of which were homelands of the Transkei and the Ciskei, and the other four made up of former apartheid education systems, namely the House of Representatives (HOR) for Coloureds, the House of Delegates (HOD) for Indians, the Department of Education and Culture (DEC) for Whites, and the Department of Education and Training (DET) for blacks outside the homeland boundaries. All these departments operated their own systems through policy directives and resource provisions that were determined by the central government in Pretoria. At the time of integration they exhibited the heterogeneous identities and cultures

resulting from separate histories and traditions that enabled them to survive different apartheid storms. Describing these systems, some of the officials went on to say:

> Unfortunately those six administrations were very discrete administrations and previously they had different systems and very different procedural administrations (Interview J, East London, 18 November 2003).

> You had different policies, different systems, people coming from different departments, different skills and different views on how government operates (Interview N, Grahamstown, 19 May 2005).

> There [were] cultures and subcultures. That's what made it so complicated… People were at different levels of development with different levels of understanding in terms of what the agenda is… You find people belonging to different parties and therefore perceive differently (Interview B, Zwelitsha, 19 November 2003).

> There [were] tribal and ethnic undertones that [were] at a low intensity level which you can't see, if you can't see things deeper (Interview Ng, Johannesburg, 10 November 2005).

These descriptions support McLennan (1995) and Swilling and Wooldridge's (1995) theoretical considerations that South African bureaucracies were highly diverse and not monolithic entities, but also that they were highly fragmented and poorly co-ordinated. Conventional wisdom suggests that between 1994 and 1996 there was very little radical transformation in state bureaucracies, possibly as a result of an 'implicit understanding carried from the negotiation period into the government of national unity' which was to maintain 'much of the existing personnel and structures' (Munslow et al, 1995:11).

The process of change

The process of integration started with the provincial public service commissioner who led public service reform in the EC in conjunction with the provincial Director General (DG) and other key stakeholders. In discussions with both the commissioner and the former DG of the province, it became clear that the process of change was highly contested and filled with tensions and anxieties emanating from the uncertainty of the time. Such uncertainty was due to the fact that

inherent in any change are connotations of displacement and dislocation. Furthermore, the change was about to threaten familiar homeland and apartheid networks of access and influence to power and decision-making. As these processes of change began, it became clear that the displacements were inevitable, as the commissioner explained:

> You had to ask people to leave their offices, the old public servants and the old administration because you had been allocated those [offices]. That was very interesting and not a very easy and smooth process, as you can imagine, because everyone was quite uncertain as to what the rules were and who was in charge and what their function was (Interview I, Hogsback, 17 May 2004).

Despite the lack of clarity of rules, inherent in this reorganisation was the underlying notion that the change would benefit and serve the broad national interest of instituting a democratic public service. The process to create a representative bureaucracy thus started with the implementation of affirmative action. Fundamental to this was the assumption that the apartheid bureaucracy was inadequate to addressing the needs of the new democratic state. Furthermore, the existing structures and personnel had less capacity and capabilities than expected. As Munslow states:

> Abilities and capacities more suited to a previous order did not automatically or easily translate into a democratic and diverse South Africa, concurrently emerging into a new and highly competitive global environment. New people, attitudes, skills, and concepts were urgently required, as well as new personnel, training, information technology, labour relations, grading, and salary policies and procedures (Munslow et al, 1995:11).

While this was partly to eradicate marginalisation and exclusion of certain racial groups from the state systems, there was also a reconciliatory agenda, which focused on bringing all representative structures into the new government. For the EC the process was described by the DG as follows:

> We had criteria that we could put down to say this person comes from Transkei, this person comes from Ciskei, this person from the old CPA. They [ECDE] started recruitment towards the end of 1994, and the first crop of people who were the HODs were employed in March 1995, and then the support staff around April, May and June. So every time you had to write a report, how many directors you have, the gender issues were coming up, the racial issues were coming up,

> because of equity issues. But our equity went beyond that, [it was] geographical as well: "How many come from Transkei, how many come from Ciskei?" so that with time we would cut down on resistance to change and make people accept this is a democratic order with no favours to anybody – impartial and objective (Interview To, Bisho, 19 May 2004).

The notion of impartiality and objectivity is contestable as change by itself is a value-based and biased process, but before getting into the politics of this exercise, it is important to highlight its basic features. It was a massive drive which took about eight months to complete. However, like all change process it had limitations some of which were that it was time-consuming and costly. One of the reasons for this was the high mobility of civil servants which saw them move between jobs, departments and provinces. Without adequate systems to track appointments being made, this meant that filled posts became vacant overnight as civil servants competed for the best opportunities available everywhere and anywhere. In other cases, this led to unintended consequences where cycles of interviews had to be repeated due to 'double parking' as some people were appointed to more than one position while chasing different opportunities made available by the restructuring (ECSECC 2000 and Interview I, Hogsback, 17 May 2006).

At another level and as a political tool, this resulted in organisations of compromised identity, due to the reconciliatory agenda which could hardly function in a unified way. The high level of fragmentation brought about by representation as such became another point of contestation as organisations, including the ECDE, struggled to move forward. For instance, talking to the officials in this department there was always reference to this history of fragmentation, as one official strongly asserted:

> …the strategy was that the set-up should be representative of the departments, that was the fundamental principle, to be representative of the ex-departments which was wrong, that was a wrong approach… the second thing was the appeasement of different nationalities that were there. I am not talking about equity, I am talking about appeasement.
>
> Q: Can you elaborate on that?

> A: That all nationalities should be part of administration, but not necessarily on merit. You just do that for people to be there. Even today there are people who are products of that process, they can't deliver, even as I speak now (Interview Ng, Johannesburg, 10 November 2005).

Of course such comments need to be understood in the context of underlying tensions emanating from regional and racial differences that are pervasive in the organisation. In fact, the integration had brought in people whose loyalties were in their historical spaces of culture and origin. The ECSECC (2000) baseline study, for instance, looked at the conditions in the ECDE from 1994 to mid-1997. Their findings identified that the new bureaucracy was a mixture of forced groupings of people suspicious of each other. This they attributed to the fact that the officials came from opposing sides of the education system. These opposing sides would not just be racial and ethnic but would be consequential to other dimensions including the fact that:

> …other people came on board because of the sunset clause, you know, because they wanted the jobs; others came on board to come and transform this education department. Now if you have those different groups you are going to have a problem (Interview B, Zwelitsha, 19/11/2003).

Another interviewee went on to say:

> If you take 1994, you are now bringing in these people, those that were dismissed in the 90s or 80s, those who were in the administration of compliance, those that were used to being governed by rules, those who were very hostile to anything that seems like rules and regulations and those people who claimed to be democrats, those people that were sitting on the fence and who said if you shake the fence left, I will remain there, if it falls right I will remain there, if I remain in the middle its good for me [laughs]. So these are the kinds of people we brought together (Interview P, King William's Town, 20 November 2003).

Theoretically, while the notion of representative bureaucracy was to endorse the broad unified politics of national reconciliation one cannot escape the fact that it also legitimised in an unconscious way the separation, fragmentation and difference which had literally been transposed in the new system by the

compromise. The point is that the compromise was not just bringing in people that were different in terms of race, gender and politics but also that it was people who believed in the constructs of difference as represented by different notions of 'us' and 'them' conscribed by different political systems that ruled them over forty years of apartheid. Indirectly, this was the beginning of challenges in a system of forced integration and reconciliation. Consequentially, this reorientation and re-organisation of the new bureaucracy resulted in the formation of Bisho as the head office, the incorporation of six regional offices with their districts and schools.

Bisho as the central office

The reconstitution of Bisho as head office was managed by various task teams ranging from the Educational Transformation Task Team of 1994 (ETTT) (Interview P, King William's Town, 20 November 2003), the Strategic Management Teams (SMTs) around 1995 and the Departmental Transformation Unit (DTU) (Interview Fr, Zwelitsha, 20 May 2004, Zwelitsha, 20 May 2004 and ECSECC 2000) around 1996. All these structures played different roles in setting up the department where the ETTT was an advisory body to the MEC at the beginning of process. This was replaced by the SMTs whose mandate is well-articulated by (Wooldridge and Cranko, 1995). Amongst other things, these structures handled the policy, legal, financial and institutional processes. Presumably their powers varied with each province and department. In the ECDE they seemingly focus more on institutional processes of setting up the departmental structures (Interview Ng, Johannesburg, 10 November 2005). When the SMTs were disbanded in accordance with Public Service Commission (PSC) directives they were replaced by the DTU which became a consultative forum of 'different representatives of all directorates and labour organisations' (ECSECC 2002) to set the new organogram. Unfortunately the DTU never got to work on a consistent agenda because of challenges in the department, which included poor communication and unclear roles, functions and responsibilities (ECSECC 2002).

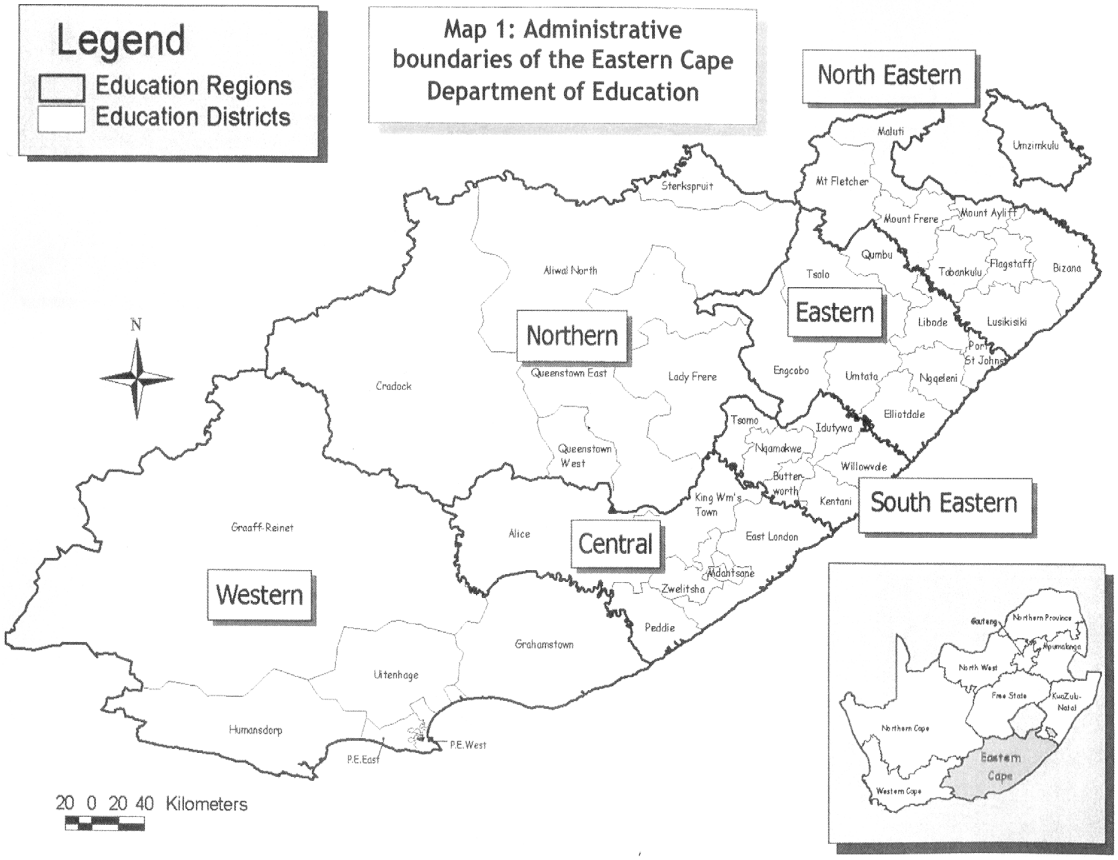
Nevertheless, what was common to all these structures was to transform Bisho from a homeland structure to a new bureaucratic system that represented the democratic ethos as prescribed by new regulatory frameworks. But more importantly, the transformation of Bisho was important for the eradication of homeland practices that would have been part of the homeland system and its informal networks. However, what became of Bisho was that at the point of transformation it lacked internal systems to make regional offices accountable, which, as a result, continued running the old mill as if it had no responsibility over them. It also had no databases and so was unclear as to who existed where and in what capacity, and rather relied on regions for whatever information was needed. Structurally, the new reorganisation resembled Mintzberg's divisionalised structure. Divisionalised structures consist of independent entities joined together by an administrative overlay (Mintzberg, 1980). In this case, Bisho acted as the administrative overlay over the six regional offices but with symbolic powers rather than real authority over them as these entities remained functioning as they had been before the 1994 elections.

Adding to the complexity of the situation was that the integration in 1994 saw the department become a hybrid of different and unrelated units. This was due to the fact that with the early structural allocations in 1994, MECs held parallel portfolios and functions (ECSECC 2000) because of the limited allocations of human resources in general. Education was thus combined with Sports Recreation and Youth Affairs, Arts and Culture, Library Sciences and Heritage and Museums. Since these units had little relevance to education, it is difficult to imagine how education was prioritised, with its extended and varied needs emanating from regional, district and school entities. In this hybrid structure, education as an entity focused on (i) professional support services, (b) regional co-ordination, (c) standard education and administration support services. Managing these were a permanent secretary and five deputies, twelve directors and six regional directors (ECSECC 2000).

The regional offices

The six regional offices (later five, due to the closure of Butterworth) saw these regional structures being the major power blocks in the new dispensation. The Annual Report of 1998/1999 and the Education Management Information System (EMIS) review of education indicators in the EC (2001) provide a glimpse into the operations and the configuration of the regions, which were the North Eastern, Eastern, South Eastern, Northern, Central and Western regions as shown in Figure 5.1. Between these six regional entities, they managed 42 districts of education. A large concentration of these districts is in the former Transkei as shown by the North Eastern, Eastern, South Eastern and partly the Northern territories.

Figure 5.1 The Regional Boundaries of the ECDE[5].



[5] Source: Education Management Information System: Review of Education Indicators 1995-2000. Eastern Cape Department of Education.

In the period between 1995 and 1997, these regional entities had high levels of autonomy over their budgets, recruitment and appointments of teachers and principals for their schools. This means that very little changed for them, with the transformation era resembling bureaucratic continuity rather than discontinuity as they continued to manage the same jurisdiction of schools as they had done under apartheid with the same teachers and inspectors of schools. Theoretically, this means that while the merger dismantled the symbolic structural fragmentations of the apartheid period, it is also true that such dismantlement was artificial as it touched only the superficial spaces created by race, ethnic and homeland discourses. With the adoption of regions, people continued to work in the same culturally and socially constructed environments that existed pre-1994, except for the top political and administrative leadership that moved into the newly adopted administration centre in Bisho. The regions thus became the *sine qua non* of the new power arrangements defined by geographical spaces, race and ethnic alliances and other external networks.

5.4 The exhibition of chaos

The administrative bureaucracy was very soon under pressure to enhance service delivery. By 1995 the functioning of the state bureaucracies in general was synonymous with poor service delivery, crisis and chaos. Reasons included the fact that many public organisations lacked capacity and skills to deliver large-scale reform programmes, but also that the public sector reform programme lacked direction and clearly articulated goals that could be translated into delivery programmes at an organisational level. This meant that organisational effectiveness at the time was conditional on acquiring leadership skills and general staff competencies. Otherwise the trail of reform became more haphazard than following a controlled planning process. The subsequent public criticisms of the state bureaucracies, led to a number of reviews being instituted including the Provincial Review Report (1997) and the Presidential Review Commission of Inquiry on Transformation and Reform in the Public Service (1998) alluded to in Chapter Four. Amongst the generic factors this study identified that part of the problem was that the integration of the six regions and the recreation of Bisho as

the new centre did not automatically transfer power to Bisho. Rather, Bisho remained as the weak structural overlay supported by six pillars it had little understanding of, other than their past. Implicitly, what this thesis confirmed is that in mergers where centres are weak and the divisionalised entities are more powerful this creates problems for organisational functioning, co-ordination and efficiency plans as each division becomes a consolidated turf in its own right thus protecting its own interests. If anything, the lack of reconstitution of these regional bases validated their fragmented power bases and their previous cultural and identity practices which were being nurtured under new organisational arrangements. It also provided an opportunity for different interests to consolidate themselves in the new order thus creating conditions for resistance and sabotage.

A case in point is evident in how the merger failed to consolidate basics like what Deetz (1998) calls artefactual databases. By artefactual database, he refers to all forms of information management systems including client records, filing systems and financial management systems. Systems as such became points for contestation, manipulation and even sabotage. For instance, in other cases in the homelands they were disrupted, disintegrated and disengaged (Lodge 2005; Piccard 2002, 2006; Interview X, Zwelitsha, 11 November 2003) due to unresolved politics of resistance. Such disengagement included the manipulation of data and in some instances the removal of data from files. This threw the organisation into a spiral of incompetence as it struggled to account for the basic elements of its resource functioning. For instance, it could not state how many schools and teachers there were, let alone provide accurate statistics on the schools register of needs and the salary bill. Equally, as client records were stolen, mishandled and destroyed, the system became almost self-terminating. Most of these problem were not unique to this period, but continued for many years into late 2003 when this study was conducted. The following comments therefore speak to some of these issues:

> The first area is systems especially, our information management systems, relating to personnel, relating to finances, relating to asset management, relating to education management. So you have this area of systems that are sort of broken down. That worries me a great deal. So first let's talk about personnel management information and

> personnel management. How many teachers we are paying, where they are, what the total salary figure or the total salary bill is, and how we can verify some of these things is still a huge problem. You know sometimes you don't know how many bills you are paying (Interview R, Zwelitsha, 19 November 2003).

> [the senior managers] left the lower management there [in Umtata] to carry on and those people just decided not to control anything. So you could go there and get your file and you could take whatever you didn't want in your file. When I had to go there and collect files I collected files with almost nothing inside, and in fact even today we are still having a problem of paying gratuities, because there is no record. How do you know if a person says to you I started teaching in 1955 you know, then you have to go to the file not so, but there is no file to do that, that is why, one reason why for instance, we are failing to pay gratuities. For instance, one big problem is that people who go on pension wait for two years or three years without their pensions simply because one of the main reasons is that we don't have a record of their service. Literally, I took my files from passages there all over Umtata. It was chaotic in that building, it was chaotic and I think if you want to trace our problems, you trace our problems to that, that is where our problems started (Interview X, Zwelitsha, 11 November 2003).

He went on to say:

> As a regional director there I was expecting that somebody would come and say here are files from the Ciskei, for our people there. I will receive those files and check, you know, Umtata will bring files, and Port Elizabeth. I remember one day they dumped files from Middelburg for the Coloured Education Department and they were not properly arranged. The other mistake also which we made was that they engaged some consultants to try and sort this thing out and they opened the processing centre at Bulembu. That was another big mistake at Bulembu, and I think those people just took our money away, those consultants. We were asked now to second people there, you know, people to be there to second and those people to be able sort out the filing and all that kind of thing. So we had to pack our files to send them there, you know. We tried to pack them in a system but you know when these people when they left, in fact they didn't achieve anything they just send them back but now in a muddle like that you know, that is why you will find in most of our offices you don't find properly run registries. For instance, if you want a file you will struggle to get a file. Let me say you want a particular file, there is no system but now, its only now that an attempt is being made now to have proper registries, you know (Interview X, Zwelitsha, 11 November 2003).

> The other critical aspect was systems because we all come from different systems. Then it took time to integrate the systems. If you take a system in Transkei was there nothing called Persal systems, which is the systems for personnel and salary payment or appointment of the personnel. So in Transkei they mainly relied upon files, ordinary manual filing systems and then they would capture and pay a teacher. In the DET and others they had Persal systems where all teachers were in this system where you press a button and you see myself and all that I'm supposed to be and paid at the end of the month and all those things. So there was a big process then to put the ex-Transkei teachers into the Persal system (Interview P, King William's Town, 20 November, 2003).

> These documents that get lost cause hardship for our people because they pay. You are waiting for your salary and your file has been lost in a district office or your file cannot be found between Bisho and your district office. And that is another critical issue that has to be addressed…. We have a running battle with the treasurer about our base-line when they want to determine our budget for personnel. We always fight. We say, we have 65 000 teachers in the system, they say that's not true – in terms of persal you have 63 000 teachers. Drawing information from EMIS, here is information from EMIS, this is how things are. Then they start punching holes in that. We retreat because we are not sure about the credibility of the data that we have. So this issue of not being able to manage information and data is also challenging in that sense. (Interview B, Zwelitsha, 19 November 2003).

The department has since adopted a project called Get The Record Straight (GTRS) which aims to tighten systems, especially around personnel (Department of Education: Policy and Budget Speech 2001/2002). It is a project meant to eliminate ghost employees through head count and matching personnel to existing posts. All these efforts are a reflection of the complexity of change in transitional environments. What these experiences reflect are contradictions and complexities emanating from an abrupt rupture in the system where the consequences depict chaos and inability to manage basic information transfer due to interests working against the direction of change adopted.

Similar patterns are evident in the lack of management of the finance systems. The department suffered from poor financial systems and lacked accountability measures for financial expenditures, leading to financial crisis and bankruptcy. As

the Imbewu project (ECSECC 2000) discovered, they did not follow financial regulations or meet basic accounting standards set by the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) of 1999. As a result, by 1997, the department was sitting at R1-billion over-expenditure. Amongst other things, the basis of this expenditure was a result of the autonomy given to regions in the absence of clear accountability measures and rules from the centre. In any event, the centre was as confused and lacked knowledge and expertise about finance, as officials explained:

> They were unable to recruit competent financial managers. There were financial reports presented but it was chaos. Particularly from Transkei it was a shambles (Interview J, East London, 18 November 2003).

> Finances were a factor and one cannot deny that. On the management of whatever little was budgeted for and allocated in that department there were a lot of inefficiencies in the department… So they were just spending and that culture permeated to lower levels because you could authorize spending on an item which was not budgeted for – the lower levels could later on learn that this can be done and they would do it. You would find that in regions, because we had people placed in regions besides the centre – people would just hire teachers without even checking that there was a budget allocated for that. And once a person is there, there is a legitimate expectation that they will be paid at the end of the month…. Some opened loopholes for corruption. You can't exclude that (Interview To, Bisho, 19 May 2004).

> But one of the mistakes that we made was that we did not comprehend the difficulty we were putting ourselves into in terms of budgets. Where I came from, the districts, the regional office had the meeting with all the EDOs there, with all the people from the former departments. [They would ask] how many teachers do you need. The answer would be 500. There is no justification for the 500, nothing has been tested. You come and say you can have those 500 teachers. Now you appoint, no proper costing etc. That has landed us in deep trouble because you see why this was done, one was to get rid of the people that are angry on the ground… Its only when we got to 97/98 that we looked at the budget and then realised we were in trouble. I was deeply affected in 97 because I couldn't pay my contractors (Interview Fr, Zwelitsha, 20 May 2004r, Zwelitsha, 20 May 2004).

> This bureaucrat who was heading the finance unit repeated that things were in order because we were not able to go into systems and look at things. We were just reading reports, we believed that, until such time that he left the department. After he left another bureaucrat from the CED [Cape Education Department], the white department, then

> discovered that we were overspending by about 100-million Rands a month on personnel (Interview B, Zwelitsha, 19 November 2003).
>
> There were three main systems that were operational and those systems didn't talk to each another. That was one of the big reasons why it was only almost two years later that it was discovered that there was over-expenditure because the systems were not speaking to each other. And when we talk of systems, we talk of computerised systems in terms of payment of staff etc. So there was never any data in terms of spending methods and cash flows almost until it was too late. And it was too late because there was then already at that stage approximately a billion Rand overspend, which then impacted on the following three years… And that meant that the following three years, the non-personnel budget was reduced to almost nothing, to insignificant amounts. That resulted in actual delivery of the department being very severely affected obviously (Interview J, East London, 18 November 2003).

The plight of the department was highlighted through union protests, media pressure and state intervention as they failed to meet financial obligations made with contractors, schools and other stakeholders. Again the issue of regions and their lack of co-ordination come to the fore. While one would argue that by their nature the homeland and the other former apartheid structures were bound to collapse due to the inherent history of lack of capacity and skills, it needs to be taken into consideration that the adopted regions were powerful entities on their own and thus one cannot water down issues of sabotage that came with the change. Such sabotage was defined through different measures of corruption including creating ghost schools, self-promotion and manipulation of Persal systems (Interview Be, Zwelitsha, 20 May 2004; Interview X, Zwelitsha, 11 November 2003 and Interview Fr, Zwelitsha, 20 May 2004). These happen as a result of lack of control and clear rules and sanctions. As a result it seems fundamental to take cognisance of the former commissioner's words:

> …the other reality is that when you are moving between systems in administration things are extremely loose. And that opened a great deal of space for graft, for what I call the *skollies* [colloquial for thieves, small-time crooks] to go in and scope things, duck and dive, hide behind what I call the sort of transitional process and that you know….. that's probably one of the most remarkable phenomena of transition, that you haemorrhage all over the place and one of the critical issues is to get it under control because there is so much space for the criminal mind actually (Interview I, Hogsback, 17 May 2004).

The point being made here is that transitional environments by their nature are unpredictable and complex and due to their fluidity they create spaces for different forms of behavioural tendencies to emerge, which may be detrimental to the change itself. While some of these may be reduced to the inherent chaos of complexity, others may be due to different interests that are trying to assert themselves as part of the change and thus create further chaos to legitimate their interests.

5.5. From autonomy to centralisation: The mid-crisis of 1997-1999

The reorganisation of Bisho had started on the basis of a supposedly functional Ciskei bureaucracy, where Ciskei had put in place systems and structures unique to its homeland environment. Debates about the inefficiencies of homelands are well-known and will not be repeated here. However, in the context of change it is presumed that change will create better conditions than those previously experienced and this was no exception with the creation of the new bureaucracy. Generally Weber and his iron cage inform bureaucracy debates and its planning in public administration and this was no exception. However, since Weber's ideal type iron cage is idealistic, it is important to draw attention to other analytical types, which closely analyse instances of bureaucratic inefficiencies. Here one thinks of Gouldner's (1954) and Blau's (1955) bureaucratic analogies, which include the mock, representative and punishment-centred bureaucracies (Gouldner and Blau quoted in Clegg, 1990) and Riggs' (1964) sala bureaucracy. In terms of their definitions, there is indeed a closer resemblance between the mock and the sala bureaucracy as both tend to identify lack of rules or their lack of application as instrumental to organisational inefficiency. Riggs' work is perhaps the closest analytically to giving accurate accounts of inefficient bureaucracies due to his empirical observations of different public sector contexts. What is missing in his research is an exploration of how to change such conditions to ensure efficiency. The next few paragraphs explore the processes embarked upon by the South Africa state to correct the situation.

Going back to 1997, the crisis of reported inefficiencies shifted the reorganisation to centralisation. Symbolically this moved the bureaucracy from its sala/mock status to resemble what Gouldner and Blau in Clegg (1990) call a punishment-oriented bureaucracy. As one may recall sala and mock bureaucracies tend to be weak on rules. In punishment-centred bureaucracies rules are enforced through 'punitive measures' (Gouldner and Blau cited in Clegg, 1990:47). Equally here, the bureaucracy came under siege as the state recaptured the territory for financial management and planning. This they did by withdrawing all departmental autonomy on financial expenditure. While one official acknowledged that some drastic measures had to be taken to push back the over-expenditure, it is true that the process reconfigured all power dynamics 'as all department delegations or control including those that were in the regions went back to central treasury' (Interview R, Zwelitsha, 19 November 2003). By this treasury had instituted section 100, of the Constitution of 1996 as he explained:

> The National Treasury instituted the Section 100 (a) or (b) of the Constitution. Section 100 of the constitution is for the national treasury to intervene when a province is incapable of managing. The Financial Management Regiment was put in both KZN and the EC. Enoch Godongwana was sent to sort out the mess. The Provincial Treasury decided on recovery and financial controls. The strategy was blunt. We are going to close the tap for five years (Interview J, East London, 18 November 2003).

Similarly, one official added:

> then there was section 100, the national government took over, you know. I mean the province then that gets subjected to that kind of thing, definitely everybody in the country, everybody's attention is drawn to that. The administration of that province has been taken over, they have been placed under section 100 (Interview B, Zwelitsha, 19 November 2003).

The basis of section 100 (1) is that

When a province cannot or does not fulfil an executive obligation in terms of legislation of the Constitution, the national executive may intervene by taking any appropriate steps to ensure fulfilment of that obligation, including

(a) issuing a directive to the provincial executive, describing the extent of the failure to fulfil its obligations and stating any steps required to meet its obligations; and

(b) assuming responsibility for the relevant obligation in that province to the extent necessary to

maintain essential national standards or meet established minimum standards for the rendering of the service (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996:57).

The pronunciation of section 100 was therefore a confirmation that the department had failed to meet the minimum standards of service delivery. Already unions had enforced a public focus as they embarked on strikes that included the physical occupation of the head office education building. These measures declared a 'crisis' that would legitimise the state's intervention (Kotter, 1995; Patterson, 1983). Such state intervention was, of course, a double-edged sword, since on one hand the intervention was a takeover. The new state had to assert itself in the bureaucracy that had refused to co-operate, while on the other hand, unlike its predecessor, the apartheid state, it had to build an image of a listening and a caring state for public approval. This legitimated its actions as it also got support from the premier's office.

Theoretically, the application of the financial takeover became an instrument to close the symbolic negotiated spaces that were perpetuated by regional, district and local fragmented identities. It is these spaces that advanced lacked of co-operation and even subordination. For instance, when reading correspondence between the head office of education and its regions and between the same office and the office of the Auditor-General (AG), it is dominated by complaints about lack of submissions on basic information needed to write and complete accountability reports. For instance the AG's report of 2002, subsection 3 on Qualification, states clearly that:

(a) A significant number of payment vouchers, personnel files, revenue vouchers and other documents in support of transactions of the department and the financial statements could not be produced during the audit. This placed a limitation on the extent of the audit work to establish the validity,

accuracy and the completeness of transactions in ledger, expenditure and revenue accounts.

(b) The inability of the department to produce records has been reported since 1995.

The report goes on and comments on the department's internal control systems which are almost non-existent. In a brief way, it goes on to say:

(a) The personnel and salary system has not been updated to reflect staff movements and terminations. Paymasters did not always certify the payrolls to confirm that officials listed thereon were employed at the relevant paypoints.

(b) Personnel and leave records were found to be unsatisfactory. Significant backlogs of information have not been captured on the Personnel and Salary System.

(c) Financial obligations were not settled within the prescribed period in terms of section 38(1) (f) of the Public Finance Management Act (Act No.1 of 1999).

(d) Monthly accounts and statements of outstanding balances rendered by suppliers to the department were not checked to verify discrepancies or outstanding amounts.

(e) Adequate control is not exercised over assets and records of assets are not always properly maintained.

(f) There was lack of evidence that the accounting officer ensures internal compliance to regulation.

(g) The provisions of Treasury Circular 37 of 2000 were not adhered to. Revenue was not deposited into the Provincial Revenue Account nor was it deposited daily as required, (For a full Auditor General's report read the Depart of Education: Annual Report 2001/2002: 99-104).

All these statements are indicative of the system that failed to conceptualise the technical side of the bureaucracy. For instance as the centre failed to set the ground rules for financial accountability, it assumed that the semi autonomous

regions had the ability to manage, control and monitor themselves following the broader policy regulations. This proved not to be the case as it is implied by the poor consolidation of information. But, while regions were a challenge to manage, one cannot take away that the centre itself lacked the capacity to manage its own activities let alone that it was expected to lead others. It lacked good internal systems to management its own activities. This is despite the fact that it was paying over a million rand to a group of consultants to sort out its human resource and information technology systems (Department of Education: Budget Review Action Plans 2001/2002).

Unfortunately, even with the Auditor General, there was little it could do. Other than basic correspondence of appeal and negative financial reporting there were no sanctions in place to curb ill-discipline and lack of co-operation. Section 100 thus became an instant disciplinary tool instituted by national, compelling the provincial administration to attend to strict conditions which are summarised by the Department of Education Annual Report (1999/2000). It had to:

(a) remain within the allocations made in the Appropriation Act of the Province, as a province and as individual departments;
(b) improve financial management and cash flow management to ensure that the budget will be sustainable over the three years of the MTEF [Medium Term Expenditure Framework];
(c) ensure that provincial departments honour their commitments, responsibilities and obligations;
(d) establish efficient and effective budgetary practices to ensure budget achievability;
(e) ensure sound financial practices including the timeous payment of legitimate claims, the enforcement of Treasury legislation and Tender Board legislation;
(f) optimise the collection of own revenue and to improve own revenue by at least 10%;
(g) undertake a number of other administrative measures to save costs (Department of Education: Annual Report 1999/2000).

While these conditions were to apply to at least four departments, each department would respond to them differently. Implicitly, the intervention was bound not only to impede the poor bureaucratic activities but it was to starve networks of power bases that fed on patronage and corruption spread throughout the diverse fragmented systems. The level of patronage in South African bureaucracies is well covered in Lodge (2005), (1998), (1997) and Piccard (2002), (2006). For the Eastern Cape analysis of government corruption one can read Allan (2002). But more important, Bisho as the centre had no sense of financial expenditure in its different regional entities. Section 100 was therefore a mechanism, it is argued, to enforce civil obedience, subordination and conformity and the strategy was 'deviant-centred' (Pettit, 2000). Deviant-centred strategies over-emphasize compliance, penalties and discipline. Even here, compliance penalties and discipline became central as treasury refused to approve any expenditure that did not meet the set regulations and requirements (Interview M, Bisho, 11 May 2004).

Consequences of the disciplinary mode

While centralisation is a dominant norm in instances of organisational failure, there is very little research that tells us about the consequences of such disciplinary intervention on systems, processes and on the managers themselves. While this research was also not meant to look at this, it is interesting that some officials found it necessary to talk about this process and how it affected them. Since the strategy was to target financial expenditure, all powers were delegated within treasury, leaving the department with the political and symbolic responsibilities but with no financial mandate. These disciplinary strategies and tactics employed by the state intervention reduced the education officials to glorified clerks, as one official indicated, with feeble responsibility and tasks they could not execute (Interview K, Zwelitsha, 15 May 2004 and Interview J, East London, 18 November 2003).

The consequences of this included the fact that the organisation had problems with its stakeholders and external alliances as delivery was halted at all levels.

The point is that the intervention by treasury was a double-edged sword which on the one hand proclaimed state authority to enforce discipline for state legitimacy, while on the other hand facilitated internal organisational paralysis that would enhance conformity in set rules. As McKinlay and Starkey (1998:5) argue, 'disciplinary power is most potent and efficient when it operates through administrative rules rather than *force majeure,* largely because 'rules presuppose agency and discretion'. In this case agency and discretion was reduced to treasury limitations:

> With authority centralised on treasury officials, what the HOD in education could not approve the deputy director in finance could approve. So it created for me an anomaly in terms of bureaucratic practices that what cannot be approved by a Senior Manager in education can be approved by a junior official in treasury. It created a problem in terms of credibility of these managers in education and it created a situation where people always went with cap in hand when they went to treasury. It was a situation of begging for the few resources that you have been allocated and you have no control over how you spend the money but you remain accountable to the public in terms of perceptions and delivery. So if there are no schools and there are no desks people don't know Mr X sitting in Treasury has said no to your request. They know you in education sitting in a district office (Interview P, King William's Town, 20 November 2003).

> There is famous quotation from one of the acting SGs [Superintendent General] who said in 1999 that 'I have a responsibility for nine billion Rands but I don't have the authority to utilize one cent or buy a pen'. That tells you immediately that there is a problem, if the head of the department of education, a department this big did not have the authority to buy a pen. Because what that meant was that for the head of the department to approve that I buy this pen what is going to happen was that the submission from the head of the department would have to go to a junior clerk at treasury (Interview K, Zwelitsha, 15 May 2004).

> Essentially what happened was that in the centralisation of decision-making in the provincial treasury, your role as an accounting officer is completely undermined. I mean you sit with a situation where you have responsibility for the budget and we are talking big budgets of like 7 billion Rands in some cases. But the authority over that budget is removed from you and is placed in the hands of a junior official in the provincial treasury. So you will have somebody who is a director level person who determines what you are able to spend money on or not and as a head of department whether your judgement says this item is absolutely essential or not, the centralisation of the payment

> function and the authorising function meant you had absolutely no say. This was really the situation that made it untenable for me. You see effectively you weren't managing, you can't manage if you can't make decisions about allocations and that was the one key problem (Interview J, East London, 18 November 2003).

The junior officials had the power to approve or reject any proposal put forward and this they would do by scrutinizing every detail of the requisition forms where each missing detail would add another cycle of correction and delayed processing. This was partly to enhance discipline, conformity and obedience but also to reconstruct the culture of *laissez-faire* to a culture of accountability and responsibility. These junior officials thus became the embodiment of discipline that was to train the education officials in docility and subordination. That they were junior was a misnomer as the hierarchy had placed them in a position to execute such tasks, the basis of which was to break ill-discipline and enforce conformity irrespective of rank and status. This is close to Foucault's description of discipline which explains that while discipline

> dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an "aptitude," a "capacity," which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection' (Rabinow, 1984:182).

Similarly, one contends that the department was now experiencing such a reversal of power where subjection became visible through the reduction of internal tasks into superficial plans that could not be undertaken. Equally the organisation had been reduced to a state of paralysis which one official (Interview P, King William's Town, 20 November 2003) called the 'Bisho Syndrome'. Such a syndrome became manifested in different ways as articulated below:

> …those were the years when the department couldn't pay electricity bills, the schools get cut off, we can't pay fuel bills and the children freeze in the hostels because there is no fuel, we can't buy books and there is no toilet paper or soap and on and on, I mean the list goes on and on. We couldn't service photostatting machines so they did break down and they just stand. You can just imagine items of expenditure, the process was just absolutely brutal (Interview J, East London, 18 November, 2003).
>
> When we centralised nobody understood the impact of that because the public perception also was so huge to say we have these useless

> managers who cannot even take a decision. They will always tell you about Bisho, that's where the Bisho syndrome came up, and people were saying 'why do I go to a district or to a region when the decision resides with Bisho?' So these other structures were rendered in a sense useless or ineffective and people were moving straight from schools or communities, delegation after delegation after delegation came to Bisho and Bisho education offices unfortunately had to manage this because we had to nurse relationships and not pass them over to treasury (Interview P, King William's Town, 20 November 2003).

He went on to explain:

> So you had a situation where most managers, most middle managers, were just demotivated and demoralised and never thought anything could happen. So the state of apathy grew by the day in a number of offices and the work culture, the work ethics started to disappear in the district offices and in the regional offices. People felt that there is nothing we can do, we are just here. All we are here for is to receive our money because there was almost nothing in terms of non-personnel budget Then there was the whole problem of electricity being cut, teachers not getting their monies, transport couldn't move, you had to ground them, there was no money for petrol. So it created a whole state of apathy and very much huge unhappiness from managers and a state of hopelessness from the side of seniors in the department. You are sitting with pressures from social partners or unions who are saying you are not paying our members and therefore you are a useless department and therefore go public and shout. You have problems of payslips. There are no more salary advices and there are payslips because they don't advise anyone because they get late to the teachers and ourselves. That's a problem because education does not print the salary advice, treasury prints them centrally, distributes them to education and other departments. But the public in the form of teachers don't see treasury, they see education. If I get my salary slip after two months I shout and I wag my finger at this useless education department (Interview P, King William's Town, 20 November 2003).

> … In 1997 remember we had already now been three years coming and we were now looking at how we're dealing with it and how we have made this undertaking to schools as to where they would be in 1997 but to complete your schooling. And then when we could not deliver on that it placed us under tremendous pressure. Not only to the communities but also to our clients or the people who were rendering the services for the department. You know in our particular field of work I saw contractors suffering. I saw families of contractors, I saw people losing their properties. You know that time contractors could not even reach their goals because their workers had taken over because they were not paid. In 1997 I was sitting in the MEC's office with a group of contractors where the MEC's office was under siege

> where the chairperson of the contractors' association told Nosimo, 'You type man, type!' There I saw the MEC typing a letter making an undertaking by Friday you will be paid. They took that letter to the press, this is coming from the MEC, but on Friday we couldn't pay. This is how it was. Treasury didn't want to budge and we were held hostage. These guys came to my office and said "you know, I'm sorry you are not going to go home". So 1997 was a terrible time (Interview Fr, Zwelitsha, 20 May 2004).

From these comments, one sees that the disciplinary nature of the intervention did not make things better but rather made them worse as the department struggled to operate within the allocated budgets. Interestingly, it is Patterson who advocates that things should never get worse in the process of being made better. For him, the strategy is to find the 'elements of the system that can be attacked with little costs' (Patterson, 1983:5). Unfortunately, this intervention did not take this into account as the situation worsened with each year of lack of service delivery.

Concomitant with this pressure was the media pressure that became the new point of surveillance as it reported on teachers' strikes and teachers' perceptions of inefficiencies, focusing on financial non-payment to teachers. The role of the media in change is never an issue largely because the transformation of many organisations is never great enough to attract attention, and its role generally tends to accentuate the crisis that legitimises any intervention planned, it is also true that its role can be sensationalist as it focuses its attention on the negative than the positive. Actually Lingard and Christie (2003) quoting Bourdieu (1998) address the notion of the media and its characteristic of 'permanent amnesia' when it reports on issues, where the past and related events lose significance in the moment of accentuating the present. Even here the media drew a blindfold over history as it put emphasis on the perceived crisis. For instance, one official articulated his frustration in the following way:

> You have a media that is not worried about whatever… they find stories from whoever has been affected, whether it is one teacher not paid. They create those as weekly stories and they forget that maybe 65 or so or a 1 000 of them are getting their money on time… I bet we are not different than any other province but its because its very easy to talk about the EC. For example, anyone coming from Johannesburg goes to few hospitals here and films them and goes to Third Degree or

> Special Assignment and says this is what is happening in the EC. He didn't go to Frontier Hospital that has been revamped and rebuilt, they didn't go to Umtata Nelson Mandela big hospital, or to the Lusikisiki Hospital. They don't go there because that is not newsworthy. So they come around to a few schools. We have built more schools than any province in the country. They don't worry about those schools. It's not newsworthy. You invite them, the MEC is going to open a school, please come, they ask you where and [you tell them] in Mt Frere in a particular village. [The response is] we don't have a car. We don't have a reporter in Mt Frere. Our reporters are only in Umtata. You phone the reporter and he tells you, hey there is a story, there will be payments of social grants today. We anticipate that all payments of CPS will run into problems. We've gone there early in the morning and we have seen long queues. We think its going to be more dramatic than that school of yours. Sorry man, we can't come. Now nobody reports and we don't own the media. We can't report and say this is what the media is doing, because even if you send the story to them they look at and it competes with the space of social grants, child hit by a car there, a bus fallen there. This editor says they have been building these schools man, nothing new. Put the school aside, put in the bus accident or the granny that died in the queue. So I'm saying then perceptions, the media has assisted to create a particular perception (Interview P, King William's Town, 20 November 2003).

> …[with the attention] therefore on the number of roads we have built, the number of schools we have built, the number of learners that have gone through the system, all these other things that [you] have done are forgotten. All we get is bad press, is bad comments, even ourselves, we started being critical about ourselves (Interview B, Zwelitsha, 19 November 2003).

Undoubtedly the idea for public exposure had indirectly instigated a mixture of emotions that included frustration, embarrassment and cynicism as the same official went on to explain:

> You know this thing about people telling you all these bad things about yourself, it affects your self-esteem and to try and cope with that you also use it, you also laugh at yourself, then we got into that. You would go to Jo'burg and meet with an EC person and say but what is happening there (Interview B, Zwelitsha, 19 November 2003).

In the same vein, one official added:

> … one needs to be appreciative of the people who have been working in this department under such difficult circumstances. But you are always condemned for things that did not go right. But nobody really looked at this thing carefully and said, but look, these guys are

> overwhelmed, you know, they are working and they must put systems in place and at the same time working with a limited budget and there's no support. So our challenge as we moved along has always been, how we could get ourselves out of this quagmire since we can't work like that. People thought that we enjoyed working under such difficult circumstances but it is not a matter of enjoyment, it is how do you get out. How do you manage at the end of the day to get out of here? I have been asking myself whether I am incompetent? When we apply people think we are not competent, when they hear we are from Bisho, which department? Education? Oh no, you are useless!. That is the perception that people have (Interview Fr, Zwelitsha, 20 May 2004).

Overall, the disciplinary nature of the centralisation strategy was to normalise a situation of chaos which was a result of lack of co-ordination, lack of order and lack of rules for accountability. To use Foucault it was introducing 'governmentality' (Faubion, 1994). The centralisation strategy had its limitations, of course, partly caused by the inability of treasury to process large amounts of information. As a result, documents went missing, departmental information was delayed resulting in systems blockages, but also it became vulnerable to corruption (Interview P, King William's Town, 20 November 2003 and Interview Maz, Bisho, 11 May 2004). This compromised its authority over the departments it had taken over. For instance, while it seemed essential for treasury to institute all disciplinary measures towards the department, it ignored the time factor in strategic interventions. Change management prescriptions argue that the time for an intervention cannot be prolonged; instead the system must be seen to work on its own as quickly as possible. Such lack of understanding saw treasury perceived as part of the problem rather than the solution, so it was not surprising that the Auditor-General intervened. For instance, with accountability removed from the education officials, this plunged the department into a different curve of under-expenditure which treasury became liable for (Interview P, King William's Town, 20 November 2003), as shown in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 ECDE Financial Expenditure between 2000 and 2002

Year	Budget	Expenditure	Under/over Expenditure
2000/2001	7,439,714,000	7,191,331,000	248,383,000
2001/2002	8,118,856,000	7,863,867,000	254,989,000

Source: ECDE Strategic Plan 2004-2007-Incorporating Operational Plan and Budget.

This under-expenditure was largely due to the conditions set which saw the department unaware of how much it was to spend, where and when, as finance decisions remained with treasury. Unfortunately, the consequences of these under-expenditures contributed to new pressures for both the department and treasury. This subsequently saw the Auditor-General intervening and instructing treasury to hand over the responsibilities to the departmental officials after a period of three years (Interview P, King William's Town, 20 November 2003).

5.6 From centralisation to decentralisation: The conformity age of 2001-2002

The disciplinary tendencies were of course happening in a context where global trends on state reforms were dictating smaller efficient governments. In South Africa this had seen a dramatic shift from the politics of the RDP and its redistributive function to embrace efficiency models propagated by GEAR. This prompted a policy shift that saw the White Paper on Transforming of the Public Service (WPTPS) (1997) concretised by a more managerialist NPM-oriented White Paper on Transforming Service Delivery (1997), known as *Batho Pele*, which was efficiency-, customer- and output-oriented. Equally the Public Financial Management Act of 1999 had been put in place to streamline the state expenditure. At the helm of these shifts had been the election and the appointment of a new president, Thabo Mbeki in 1999. Compared to his predecessor president Nelson Mandela whose presidency was dominated by policy formulation, he was advocating policy implementation and enhanced service delivery. At a governance level, the new era saw provincial public service commissions disbanded leaving MECs to run their respective departments. MECs had now

more authority and powers over their departmental functions as promulgated by the new Public Service Laws Amendment Act of 1997. All these factors gave a new identity to the new organisational re-orientation that ensued.

Internally, the discourse of change commenced with the arrival of the new MEC in 2000/2001. Although the department was still swamped with financial tribulations a number of changes were proposed to facilitate an efficient and effective service delivery. At the backdrop of this were numerous challenges that had been identified and illuminated at the launch of the Provincial Education Summit in 2002. For instance in his keynote address on the transformation of the ECDE, the MEC then Mr Stone Sizani identified that the organisation was suffering from issues of administrative backlogs, structural dysfunctionality, leadership turnover and severe budgetary and resource constraints (Department of Education Report: Proceedings of the Provincial Education Summit and Launch of the Eastern Cape Education and Training Council 2002), which will be shortened as the Report of the Provincial Summit from here on. In the process it identifies elements of intervention to help 'address the blockages facing the education transformation project in the province' (Report of the Provincial Summit, 2002:7). These include building a decisive political leadership, organizational restructuring and gearing, school development and support, popular mobilization, human resources development and mobilization of technical support. Of these, and consistent with the area of study in organisational theory, the focus will be on the managerial intervention of organizational restructuring and gearing.

The organizational restructuring and gearing

Premised on the notion to improve organisational dysfunctionality, the new strategy for change thus focused on two elements namely (a) developing and rolling out a District Development Plan; and (b) building senior management capacity in line with the identified strategic priorities. This was to re-organise the department from four to nine directorates and effect change to 30 senior management positions in the department (Report on the Provincial Summit,

2002:7). The next discussion thus focuses on these two elements of change and how they steered the new direction for the department.

Decentralisation as the Roll-Out Plan

Central to the district development plan is the notion of decentralization. Of course decentralization is one of the strategies seen to be foundational to efficiency in the New Public Management (NPM) paradigm. The basic principle guiding decentralisation is that flatter hierarchies accentuate speedy responses to service delivery, hence the concentration is on the redistribution of functions and devolution of decision making powers (Hart, Rosenthal and Kouzmin 1993) and autonomy at the local centres. The assumption is that due to close proximity to their communities, these centres create better access to government services and can speedily respond to the varied needs. Other than being a generally developed phenomenon, different contexts tend to handle this differently depending on the uniqueness of their contexts.

In the case of the ECDE, the general reorientation had focused on creating a three tier system where Bisho retained its guiding role on policy articulation, the districts became the centres for policy monitoring implementation, and then the schools. As the MEC explained the change:

> The focal point for administration in our education delivery system will be the district office. The district office we envision will have the capacity to deliver effectively and efficiently… To attain this we will consolidate our current forty-one districts into twenty-one newly constituted district offices, and we will, over time, phase out our six regional offices (Department of Education, Province of the Eastern Cape: Policy and Budget Speech 2000/2001:5).

Other officials added:

> We designed a new organisational structure, which was aimed at flattening the management chain. So we abolished the regional offices. We had a head office and we had six regional offices and forty-one district offices and beneath them of course circuits and 6 500 schools operating. Before this period the district office was a small office in general consisting of between ten and fifteen staff members essentially acting as a post office for schools, with no proper service functions – essentially just circuit inspectors and some clerks. So we replaced

> those with executive districts and we consolidated the forty-one to twenty-four so you have a direct relationship between the head office, which is meant to be co-ordinating policy, determining, facilitating and supportive of districts and then twenty-four district offices that have responsibility with the director level staff member in charge so that you can delegate executive responsibility to a member of the senior management service who can manage a budget. The idea being that the only way that you could turn around poor performance of the system is to have much local accountability which was at the time lacking in the system. But I think any sort of sensible modern organisation appraisal would tell you that its madness to try and administer 6 500 schools from the central office, you know. It just doesn't make sense and it cannot be done efficiently (Interview J, East London, 18 November 2003).

> I think the improvement came when the department realised to improve service delivery you had to decentralise and you have to bring service delivery closer to the people. Now there is delegated authority to District Directors and the level of the head of the district has now been upgraded before it was District Manager now it is a District Director at SMS level 13. You can appoint your own staff at schools: teachers, principals, you have control over certain parts of the district budget. Before that we had the provincial office, and we also had regional offices and district offices. Now they have removed that centre part, the regional, and its just provincial and district. The decentralisation improves the service delivery [because] you are closer to your clients and they are closer to you, you expedite (Interview N, Grahamstown, 19 May 2004).

From this, one can see the convergence of ideas between the notion of decentralisation in this context and the global trends where decentralisation becomes synonymous with flattening the horizontal hierarchy in the hope that it would increase accountability and efficiency at local level while also empowering local structures. Hence it is no surprise to hear these officials putting emphasis on new executive managerial titles because the basic assumptions of this are modelled on private sector managers who tend to be accorded executive status and superiority in an organisation. But more than that, there are assumptions about accountability and what it means. For instance, the emphasis on local accountability seems to suggest that local communities have the capacity to engage officials on issues of service delivery (read Department of Education: Policy and Budget Speech 2001/2002), something that is a misnomer as usually

bureaucratic programmes are rarely, if ever, driven by community needs. Equally, the notion of flattening of structures tends to work better if systems are well developed to run independently. Somehow there was little to suggest that this was the case here as the organisation was battling with basic resource capacities and skills at all levels. The question then is: was this another fashionable fad in a context that was not ready for it?

While there is no attempt to answer this anywhere in the thesis, the issue here is to highlight how generic programmes tend to overlook the realities unique to each context. For instance, while the ECDE had started with this project at the time of the research, it is argued that it had no capacity to carry it through. Some of the criticisms of this process are highlighted in the Radebe et al report (2004). An official who came from the disbanded regions felt the process lost its significance because of lack of continuity between the regions and the districts (Interview X, Zwelitsha, 11 November 2003), and felt that there should have been a gradual hand-over to the new districts. While this makes sense in many ways one cannot underestimate the levels of political contestation which were part of the regional systems, and thus relying on them to hand over would have been as disastrous. In any event, the restructuring itself was equally contested. For instance, a question had been asked at the summit on how to deal with resistance if people did not want to move to districts. The answer from the MEC confirmed the political nature of the process, paraphrased in the report as follows:

> The MEC replied that placements at District level have become a political issue and an avenue for people to oppose government. People in urban areas who are redundant and used to their comfort zones do not want to move to other areas. The MEC emphasised that the managers are employed to observe such trends and act on them… Similar positions exist in offices where office staff refuse to move to rural areas. A precedent seems to be created when government uses the law, and it is seen as 'forced removals'. District managers must identify such instances and act on them and follow procedure to ensure that these persons move (Report on the Provincial Summit, 2002:14).

Indeed, the issue of economic disparities that exist in this region cannot be understated because sometimes resistance to such policy changes may be economic and not necessarily political. For instance, this quotation rings a bell

about the levels of poverty in this area which would make an ordinary move impossible, as agreeing to the move could be synonymous with agreeing to alienation, poverty and marginalisation due to the peripheral nature of some of the rural areas and their high levels of under-development. Nevertheless, the strategy to redesign the department had implications for the central office which coincidentally had to go through similar processes. This is discussed in the next paragraphs as the second leg of the change, which in reality happened interactively but is treated separately here for the purposes of the discussion.

Building senior management capacity and re-reorientation towards strategic priorities

With *Batho Pele* in the background and its emphasis on results-oriented bureaucracies, the organisation joined the bandwagon by developing its own management tools. For example, it created the four-year Corporate Plan for 2000-2004, the Budget Review Action Plans 2001/2002, the Business Plan 2002-2003, the Strategic Plan 2002-2005 which all reflect programme objectives, Key Performance Areas (KPA), expected outputs and their budgetary estimates. Of course this is not new to South Africa, most countries that have followed Osborne and Gaebler's thesis on 'reinventing government' and the NPM philosophy have adopted similar performance-oriented trends. The basic thesis is that results-oriented and performance-based organisations enhance accountability even in instances of limited budgetary constraints. Hence there is always an emphasis on programme-based management. In Mintzberg's (1983) structural terms this is 'adhocracy'. In adhocracies, programmes and projects dominate and there is high reliance on the professional's skills and expertise to deliver the expected outcomes. Because of this high reliance, accountability remains at this level rather than with the broader organisation.

While this seems sensible for management empowerment and capacity-building, there is much faith placed on managerial autonomy which is not as flexible in public organisations. More importantly, NPM or *Batho Pele* philosophies tend to assume organisational stability and order and it is a rare phenomenon to hear how

they fare in contested environments. Although this was not the basis of the thesis, it seems logical to assume that its success will be conditional to each context because, like all tools, it is bound to interpretation and thus will be acted upon by local meanings and contestation. A case in point is that while the reorganisation in the ECDE was also programme-based and befitting the efficiency rhetoric of the *Batho Pele* programme, the organisation was still highly publicised as lacking in service delivery two years after its adoption of the efficiency drive. There may have been many reasons for this, including the inability to consolidate the merger; however, data reveals instances where organisational politics dominate, management tools remain part of the cosmetic change and politics of conformity but do not necessarily create performance shifts as they depend on who directs the change, how it is done and its legitimacy and acceptance in the broader organisation as discussed in the following chapter.

Strategy

Compared to the districts, the strategy for change in the centre became Machiavellian in nature as consultation became minimal. As Cobb (1986) says 'High Machs' believe the end justifies the means as they tend to operate in situations that are uncertain and emotionally charged. The strategy for change thus involved shifting the managers around to fit the newly created organogram that supports the newly adopted programme-based and results-oriented delivery approach. However, beyond the neatness of managerial language of efficiency and maximising performance, there were rumbling tensions of historical conflicts and battles for power. In fact, the new change was as much about asserting new power bases and survival. This is reflected in some of the comments made by the officials, one of whom, for instance, saw this as a battle for survival between the political and the administrative bureau:

> You see, the big problem is every MEC comes with a different challenge. His political colleagues said that when you go there [ECDE] you are going to sink. So when he comes here he comes with this intention that 'I am not going to allow [them] to sink me'. These guys are not going to sink me, so he changes the systems that allowed the previous guy to sink. (Interview Fr, Zwelitsha, 20 May 2004).

For one MEC and his planners for change, the fear of sinking indeed resembled another war of displacement, as one official explained:

> [The MEC], the HoD and I sat down and talked and the HoD simply said that the one way is to motivate people to change. The other way is to take a big stick and discipline them. We have been doing both of these. The third thing we are going to do is to rotate them. We are going to do a massive rotation. We decided to study people's skills and look at the jobs they were there for, and said they are not good for these. If in this section we cannot see performance after four months of guiding somebody, then we can just let the person go. Because you can transform by building or just shocking the system that somebody must just go to another area and start from scratch. Bring somebody into his area and say – look at what you have been doing here, this is unacceptable. And so we did that with the whole team and people were very angry. And you are faced with twenty managers in the upper level who, we had perceived, were not performing. We simply said what we were going to do was to give them a fresh challenge. Give them a fresh group of people to work with. At times you work in a section and things just don't work well and people don't get along well with each other and that affects performance (Interview E, Zwelitsha, 21 May 2004u).

> Our strategy was that we must change these people and it should not be automatic that if you were acting you will be appointed, even though the Labour Relations allowed that. I did that. The people became disgruntled, organizationally disgruntled...There was a perception that I was brought in to destabilize the organisation and rebuild – the theory of freeze and unfreeze… One friend used to say, you are running alone, you are exposed to missiles and I said I can't be part of the commotion. I don't want to be part of the furniture because the furniture was broken ((Interview Ng, Johannesburg, 10 November 2005).

In true Machiavellian style, the MEC and his senior managers adopted a new culture of micro-management, disrupting all known networks. One of the officials keen to talk about this period thought this was the most traumatic time for management. He branded the respective DG as *'inkwenkwe'* (a boy) with poor people management skills and a bully who lacked respect for his fellow professionals. It is important to note that the word *'inkwenkwe'* is derogatory if used to a grown man and is loaded with cultural stereotypes. Besides, the DG was from another province, which made him an outsider in cultural terms. Nevertheless, he adopted a 'hit and fire' strategy, significantly targeting senior

managers in the department. Senior leadership got moved to different programmes and portfolios causing frustration, anger and even resistance. Largely this was also to destroy the farm mentality, as one former DD-G of the department has likened the situation of turfs to farm ownership. As he said:

> This is my farm – we use that term here… This is my farm, why are they coming to my farm without my permission? Yet the person above him has more power but because he has been delegated, they now think they need their permission to get in there (Interview E, Zwelitsha, 21 May 2004u).

These farms had been legitimated by the initial politics of reorganisation that saw Transkei, Ciskei, HOR, HOD, DET and the DEC farm tags on them. Disrupting these was therefore the equivalent of capturing the generals in a war situation and putting them in enemy camps. In the process, the organisation lost eleven generals who were suspended due to poor performance (Allan, 2002). However, this did not break down resistance as the MEC observed:

> … if you dare touch [the organogram], you have then developed an enemy of these people, because the person is not going be the individual opposing you, he will rally his own forces with all those people that are benefiting from his patronage (Interview S, Port Elizabeth, 18 May 2004).

Similarly, the former DD-G went on to say:

> But these people unfortunately are also linked to other people. They are not individuals. My brother would be in one position, my cousin another.
>
> Q: Outside?
> A: Outside, and they would have that power to influence, and they would use it aggressively and actively and that is the bad part of it – that the people don't see what the picture is all about and they get angry (Interview E, Zwelitsha, 21 May 2004).

Theoretically this thesis argues that the blind spot in these power games is where managers are constantly moved around. It is argued that this renders them ineffective. The nature of the move requires that they adjust to the newly allocated portfolios, thus wasting time studying the intricacies of the new job rather than doing it. The point is that contrary to other public service organisations, professional organisations tend to be organised around areas of specialisation and

thus managerial competency is as much conditional to the mastery of subject knowledge. For example, a curriculum specialist does not turn into an educational psychologist overnight. Access to an unfamiliar territory in terms of space and knowledge thus becomes a negotiated terrain. Here also, managers faced the risk of being marginalised by their new staff who have already mastered the content and have access to already crystallised networks of relations.

But more importantly the constant changes were not creating pressure organisationally only but were tempered with questions of economic survival. Due to lack of employment opportunities in this region, any secure jobs determine economic survival. Any threat to this form of security then is likely to be challenged, so it was no surprise to learn that particular DG left the province fearing for his life after receiving death threats. One of the reasons for this is that this organisation was infiltrated with networks extending way beyond the organisation itself (Interview S, Port Elizabeth, 18 May 2004 and Interview E, Zwelitsha, 21/05/2004). The point is that tampering with structure is almost tampering with representative proxies of wider networks brought along with the change. None of these change strategists remained in the organisation, the last of which was suspended in early 2004 for poor performance.

The question then is what happens to management tools of Batho Pele and NPM in such situations? The answer is that they become a smokescreen of the rumbling volcano, the cues of which can be taken from these officials' comments about the unending cycles of restructuring in this organisation. For instance, while restructuring is used to resolve organisational inefficiencies, it can be equally disruptive to organisational goals and efficiency. Commenting on these restructuring pathologies, some officials explained as follows:

> Every time we want to put people something happens to the organogram…We have this history of not having completed one single organogram to its ultimate conclusion. The only one that we got to was the first one [1997]. Then we changed that first one, after that no organogram in this department was a success up to this one we've got now (Interview Fr, Zwelitsha, 20 May 2004).

> I don't know how many times now the organogram has been changed. There has been a lot of instability even insofar as the organogram which we are supposed to operate with in the district. You would never be certain as to how many people you should have and you won't have or even be certain as to whether the people in the district are still holding those positions. Because once there is a new organogram it means everybody else has no position. You have to be reabsorbed or something of that sort (Interview R, Zwelitsha, 19 November 2003).

> We had a structure prior to 2001, it has changed and I was employed in that structure. In 2003, less than three years, that structure was changed to the new one and there are indications that the structure, which was approved in October last year, might be changed because it was for instance disputed by one of our social partners, SADTU, you know. With the structure of 2003, only senior managers (SMS) members were placed, levels 12 down were not placed yet, and even before they are placed there are rumblings that it is going to be changed. Immediately it affects the individual (Interview K, Zwelitsha, 15 May 2004).

> The structure of the ECDE has been changed more than five times. Each MEC or HOD comes and changes the structure – why? (Interview N, Grahamstown, 19 May 2004)

While the answers to this question reside in the organisation itself, one learns from theorists like March and Olsen (1983) that state reorganisation is always infused with either the rhetoric of administrative orthodoxy or the rhetoric of *realpolitik*. The former speaks of administrative reorganisation as means 'to facilitate efficiency and effectiveness in bureaucratic hierarchies' while the latter speaks of reorganisation in terms of 'political struggles amongst contending forces' and political interests who seek 'access, representation, control and policy benefits'. The ECDE represents both worlds of rhetoric. For instance, while the efficiency rhetoric was adopted to enhance efficiency and even legitimise the department activities by modelling itself on existing practices (Offe, 1996) it is also true that in the process it had to contend with the rhetoric of the *realpolitik* as different fragmented interests of apartheid origins continued to assert themselves in the change for continuity and survival.

5.7 Concluding comments

This chapter explored how different logics of bureaucratic reorganisation contributed to cycles of inefficiency. It argued that while reorganisation is essential in public administration it is not a value-free objective exercise and it is also political. To support this argument, the chapter first explored the notion of representative logic and its reconciliatory agenda and the complexities that emerged with it. Amongst other things it identified that while the representative logic became synonymous with a political compromise and continuity it also accentuated fragmentations and validated previous cultures and practices due to the negotiated settlement that saw the apartheid and homeland regional identities continue in the new dispensation. The consequences of this saw the new department being an island in the midst of powerfully constructed regions that continued to work under their apartheid rubrics. The lack of direct influence on these entities became the first cycle of inefficiency due to the negotiated spaces created by the change that lacked rules and accountability measures.

Second, it looked at the efficiency logic of 1999 and the attempts to enforce conformity through section 100. While this type of intervention shifted the organisational orientation towards generic managerial tools of efficiency, it brought lessons. For instance, it showed that where such interventions ignore broader social and economic conditions of context they accentuate chaos. In fact, the urgency to create order through financial discipline paralysed all systemic operations to deliver recourses to schools thus reversing the very normative intentions of service delivery of access, redress and equity. Also while technical rationality creates managerial order it is not sufficient to address power battles inherent in conflictual environments. This organisation demonstrates continuous conflicts, some of which have origins in the apartheid history while others have emerged in current political battles for power and control as demonstrated by the inability to create stable organograms, which theoretically suggest that organisational structures have become embodiments of power battles rather than job functioning. To change such institutions, it is argued, would have to go beyond technical rationality to include resolving the political relations that have

dominated the organisation in different ways. The next chapter sheds more light on this as it explores issues of leadership in the organisation.

CHAPTER SIX
INTERNAL CHANGE CHALLENGES AND COMPLEXITIES

6.1 Introduction

Continuing with the themes of power and politics, this chapter explores the internal organisational dynamics that perpetuate organisational change inefficiency. It argues that unless the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDE) addresses its politics of leadership fragmentation, its leadership instability and lack of capacity and skills it cannot experience any significant cultural shift and change nor improve its service delivery to the required levels. Instead the organisation will continue to be challenged by inefficiency and poor performance. The point is that organisational change is usually perceived to be a linear exercise of well-orchestrated plans. However, this chapter argues for recognition of complexity, since organisations are a milieu of formal and informal cultures which may dominate at different times. The ECDE is found to be a complex network of fragmented leadership and fragmented spaces of influence. This means that any change in such an environment has to consider the nature of these fragmentations – how they are organised, how they function, and how they affect skills' organisation and co-ordination for use in the organisation. In order to examine these issues, this chapter will:

(a) explore the existing internal networks and fragmentations and how they influence the ECDE and its functioning; and

(b) examine the nature of skills available and their influence on change.

6.2 Internal networks of dominant coalitions: Reflections from 1995-1999

One of the assumptions of the majority rule government's transformation project was to treat public organisations as uniform entities, creating the expectation that they would implement similar approaches across the board. This lack of recognition of difference meant that at times it became difficult to understand why certain organisations behaved differently or even became less efficient than others. At a time of crisis, therefore, there would be calls for national intervention as was the case for the ECDE. While interventions may differ, the Radebe,

Matomela, Moloi, Schoonraad and Sekwati (2004) reports demonstrate that these are not easy interventions to implement, since they cannot rely on ready-made plans; their success is subject to an understanding of how organisations work. This lies partly in understanding the context which has already been discussed in the previous chapters. This chapter contends that it is equally important to understand the ripple effects of change and how they affect the organisation.

One of the major ripple effects identified is the organisational inability to manage a complex network of relations brought about by the integration of six different departments. The point is that the change process itself was not an easy exercise, bringing in a range of relations that became difficult to resolve. These relations were the products of a broad-based logic of creating representative and equitable bureaucracies, as discussed in Chapter Five. With the integration of the six departments there was now a plurality of interests to be co-ordinated, but there were no co-ordination efforts made from the start. Instead, the organisation was pulled in different directions at different times, depending on who was in charge. As a consequence of this, the organisation is perceived as operating as a conglomerate of different interests, some of which have formalised over time into coalitions and networks of support largely determined by historical alliances.

By networks and dominant coalitions is meant the existence of tightly coupled groups of people that share similar interests and values. Entry into such groups is usually limited and controlled, given the support that is expected from those within the group due to their bounded specified loyalties. However, as implied elsewhere in this thesis, one cannot claim that these networks were the result of an organised plan but are rather seen as consequential to the transformation. The point is that while the transformation encouraged integration and reconciliation it hardly had a blueprint for how to resolve internal differences and conflict, and this was left instead for each organisation to resolve. Theoretically, this meant it became the responsibility of the leadership to resolve such tensions where they existed, as they reoriented their organisations to fit with the broad public sector transformation. Before discussing leadership issues, the literature on networks and

coalitions usually focuses on the positive aspects of their existence, which often includes an assumed faith about their pursuit of organisational goals. As a result, networks in such environments are perceived to be part of a healthy competition to gain leverage on resources. Most of the research on networks is, however, theoretical and lacking in empirical evidence, while others have a quantitative focus based on business organisations.

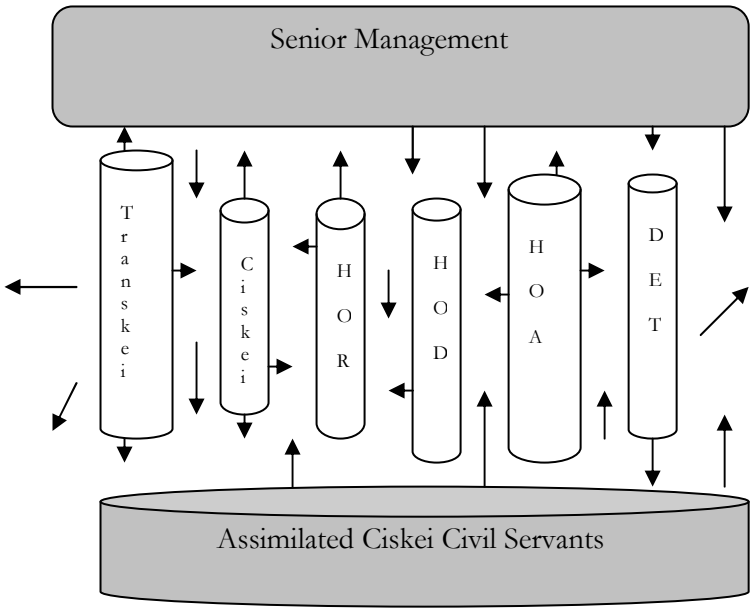
While the emergence of networks in the ECDE may be contentious, evidence shows that they were a product of the transformation. The 1994/5 period determined who would be included and who would be excluded in the organisation, and for what purpose. The most obvious process of inclusion and exclusion started with the politicians that came into power who wanted their own trusted comrades heading, leading and filling the departmental structures (ECSECC, 2000). Presumably, this was to create a critical mass for change but also as the Presidential Review Commission (PRC) identified 'there was a threat, real or perceived, of political sabotage by intractable incumbents of the previous dispensation' (PRC, 1998). This was not left at the political level since the appointed bureaucrats adopted the same tendency. Politicians hired political appointees and the rest of the bureaucracy followed a similar pattern of recruitment. There was a strong tendency for the new leadership that came from different regional offices to recruit from their different 'home bases', creating their own networks of coalitions. Seemingly the major issue was to create as strong an internal support base as possible. Officials advanced the following reasons:

> You would always appoint people that have your philosophy and ideology. You can't surround yourself with people that can sabotage your mission (Interview N, Grahamstown, 19 May 2004).

> …you don't want to be surrounded by new people that you cannot trust with your own behaviour. So if you were recruited from Transkei, you would rather surround yourself with Transkei people who know how to work with you and understand you and so we had such problems in our bureaucracy, the networks that were there – these are some of the issues when it comes to organisational structures in a transitional bureaucracy. People had wide networks, not in a positive sense (Interview To, Bisho, 19 May 2004).

That these managers opted to look for people who shared their values and ideologies is not a misnomer, since interpersonal networks by their nature focus on similarity (Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve and Tsai 2004). Furthermore, as Brass et al (2004: 796) explain, similarity eases 'communication, increases the predictability of behaviour and fosters trust and reciprocity'. By focusing on building their own support base in this way, it can be assumed that these managers were deriving comfort in familiarity in a context of rapid change. Also, it may be that the potential anxiety linked to making such a choice about who to work with lies in the unstated bureaucratic self-interests, which may drive the organisation in different directions. Nonetheless, this unco-ordinated process thus saw both the physical and symbolic transference of pre-packed Transkei, Ciskei, Department of Education and Training (DET), House of Representatives (HOR), House of Delegates (HOD) and House of Assembly (HOA) fragmented racial and ethnic identities into the new ECDE. Theoretically, this is depicted in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1 The Organisational Blocks of Dominant Coalitions



The Senior Management is perceived to be inclusive of all members of the Senior Executive of the Directors General, Chief Directors and Directors. The pillars reflect the imagined dominant coalitions of the Transkei, Ciskei, HOA, HOD, HOR and the DET. Metaphorically, they also represent all other identities inherent in them. The basic assumption then is that each block represents a coalition and thus has strong ties with its members for loyalty and protection. How each coalition relates to other coalitions depends on the nature of relations formed by those who control them, largely residing at the top of the hierarchy. Social network theory explains the difference between different types of network relations in organisations and possible fluidities that may exist as individuals cross into different and interactive spaces. While recognising this, it will be argued that such spaces of interaction would have been limited early in the transition due to the uncertainties that existed, as energy was directed to building power bases (Interview Be, Zwelitsha, 20 May 2004) and alliances.

Theoretically, what Figure 6.1 depicts, therefore, is an imagined imposed overlay of relations over the usual hierarchical official structure. This indicates that managers have a double responsibility to oversee not just their divisions, but also to manage their internal networks of relations and support, whose power and influence may even be greater than their officially sanctioned authority. Compared to normal bureaucracies where conflicts tend to be concentrated on expertise and the emergence of administrative silos, here managers have to contend with regional silos as well. As one official indicated at the start of the amalgamation, there was no-one dedicated to the unification, and as a result people remained as these separate cohesive groups with no relation to one another. Reflecting on this, one official explained:

> The first thing you could see is that there are people coming from the Transkei, it's a complete cohesive group. There are people coming from the Ciskei, it's a complete cohesive group. There are people coming from the DET and this had racial undertones. They have tribal and ethnic undertones which are at low intensity level which you can't see if you can't see things deeper. Because what you would see is that people coming from the Western Region like Port Elizabeth are white, historically advantaged, purported to be efficient and purported to be politically correct. In terms of the apartheid government systems, all of

> them you will find in Port Elizabeth, running smoothly and that was a legacy, purported to be South African and others not. They have been a provincial administration, a Cape Provincial Administration (CPA) of some kind. Everything you get in Port Elizabeth. Then the Transkei ones were a threat because they purported to once run a country and therefore understand how the systems of government work and on the other side understood how to trick government and government systems. A perception is that people from the Transkei are highly educated but highly incompetent, highly corrupt and that created a rift between people. People from the Ciskei were just administrators, we couldn't track their way of thinking even today (Interview Ng, Johannesburg, 10 November 2005).

All these perceptions had their grounding in the apartheid classifications of race and ethnicity, hence people were suspicious of each other. Indeed the lead word about the different cohesive groups had implications about the levels of permeability and influence these groups can have on each other. It is argued here that this regional, racial and ethnic cohesiveness became the major focus of fragmentation and antagonism in the organisation. This was exacerbated by the fact that coalitions by their nature tend to focus on member interests rather than the broader organisation. Riggs (1964) states that the clects [coalitions in this case] are not only recruited for support, they protect communal interests and also 'bar admission to members of the rival group' (Riggs, 1964:275). Rivalry in this case became synonymous with regional differences, their inherited credibility and history of reliability. Consequently, some regions like the Transkei suffered more in terms of image as they became associated with graft and corruption and extreme inefficiencies. Undoubtedly such perceptions became the basis of a lack of co-operation and mistrust.

6.3 Internal organisational dynamics

Chapter Five alluded to the broad external politics of regionalism, politics that were seen in the organisation as well. At stake were issues of collaboration and co-operation in a context of rapid change. Fullan (1994), writing on the deeper meaning of inside collaboration, talks about the notion to foster and embrace diversity. Although he writes for schools, his views on collaboration are relevant here. The point is that diversity, as embraced in the concept of regional

differences, became a key a factor in determining how the organisational members were going to work with each other. With some reflection from the interviewees, it became clear for many officials that this was an area that lacked attention, and that conflicts and battles for recognition and control had become the norm. One of the points of contestation was knowledge. As one of these officials indicated:

> Now there were two dominant features of that system [merger], it was like a kind of situation where some thought of themselves as much better and knowing almost all in terms of administration. Some believed that indeed if you come from the Western [Port Elizabeth] part you were the Mister or Miss Know-All, whereas I don't know much because I've not been working with systems in the Eastern part [refers to the Transkei region] of the province (Interview P, King William's Town, 20 November 2003).

Similarly, another official raised similar sentiments.

> *[Kwa]developa ne-regionalism osuka eBhayi u-clever kunosuka eMtata, obese-ex Ciskei uthatha ukuba yi territory yakhe le and ukhomba I-corruption kwela cala (laughs). Niza nala corruption kuba ningamasela ku-attackwana ngolo hlobo. I PE kudala I-live PERSAL kuba kaloku ibikwi DET ibisebenza ne-apartheid system. Ibi-operata phaya kanye kuyo so I-advance kunezi-homelands zabantu abamnyama kukhona basaphutha-phutahayo bafunda I-computer. Izinto bebezenza manual. Ifika I-clever ngoku. I regionalism yakhe yathi take its toll.*
>
> **Translation:**
>
> Regionalism became the order of the day. People from Port Elizabeth [thought] they are smarter than those from Umtata, those that came from the Ciskei see the new department as their territory and are pointing fingers at the corruption in the Transkei (laughs) saying: You want to bring corruption here! People are attacking each other that way. Port Elizabeth had been working on Persal for years as they were under DET, it was working with the apartheid system. It is advanced compared to the homelands which are now learning about computerised systems. They were doing their entries manually before. Port Elizabeth is cleverer because of this and regionalism took its toll (Interview Be, Zwelitsha, 20 May 2004).

The fundamental issue here is that whoever controlled the knowledge terrain had power over the transformation process. Specifically, such power could see specific interests occupy the space. Without any compromise, these deep sentiments of regional differences and their accompanying illusion of superiority

meant that the organisation remained in crisis most of the time due to the lack of co-operation. With the main dispute centred on who controlled expertise, Port Elizabeth as the former white city attracted a lot of negative perceptions. As indicated earlier, the major point is that indeed it had an advantage over other inherited administrations because of its developed systems and technological advancement due to apartheid benefits.

Without any coherent plan to transfer such expertise at the beginning of the transformation, the Port Elizabeth office remained a dominant force on its own with no interest in making such knowledge accessible to the broader organisation. This was in conflict with the fact that the new entrants coming into the ECDE had hoped the old state civil servants would show them how government works (ECSECC, 2000). Unfortunately, with the inherent disagreements there was less co-operation than envisaged as the 'expertise power games' (Mintzberg 1983) became a symbolic guarantee of continuity and survival in an undefined and unclear process of change. The situation was exacerbated by the lack of consistent leadership that could have pulled things together. Leonard (1995:63) quoted by Fullan (1994) asserted that collaboration must foster a degree of difference. As different ideas rubbed up against each other, it was to be expected that sparks would fly. While in a well-managed process, the sparks are creative, not personal, as Interview Ng, (Johannesburg, 10 November 2005) indicated, the process of integration lacked any form of management. As a result, instead of collaboration the process resembled 'bull-fighting' (Interview Be, Zwelitsha, 20 May 2004).

Lacking any grounding for effective collaboration, different sections of the department also engaged in various politics of sabotage. A case in point is when Port Elizabeth was assigned the responsibility to train some lower level staff on the adopted management systems. This turned out to be yet another power struggle as Port Elizabeth refused to transfer knowledge in a meaningful and empowering way. The former head of human resources related this story:

> We would send our people to Port Elizabeth for training; our people complained they were not being trained here. They are not showing us anything here. For instance, they say if you were working on a

> computer, they were teaching them Persal, you work, you work and then you get stuck; then one white fellow would just come and fix that thing, you don't know what he has done, and says its now okay, you can work and then you find hey! it's working but you don't know how this chap fixed this thing because you'll get stuck again. They were disgruntled, you know, they decided deliberately to sabotage the new department and we are still suffering from that sabotage and that is why we are still unable to pay teachers, we are still unable to terminate people who leave the system and we continue paying them for six months down the line when they have resigned, and some of them have died (Interview X, Zwelitsha, 11 November 2003).

Of course, Port Elizabeth had no specific loyalties to the organisation, and as this official went on to explain, they were already marginalised by the internal politics which saw most of their officials not appointed in senior positions. Theoretically, this could have been another strategy to limit their possible powerful influence in the new dispensation, as was the case with the Transkei. Whatever the case may be, such antagonistic behaviour became costly for the organisation as it remained with untrained people, despite having expertise within.

The point is that without addressing these regional silos, the organisation has remained trapped in conflicts and antagonisms that were part of the apartheid discourse and its inherited histories of division and exclusion. There are lessons to be learned from this experience. The first lesson is about the role of leadership in the context of radical change. This study reveals the inability of appointed leadership to negotiate a working environment for all. Instead of co-ordinating these different forces and creating a collective sense, they allowed interpersonal and inter-regional networks of power and politics to pull the organisation to different points of contestation, exacerbating the mistrust and lack of co-operation. The second lesson is about the importance of regionalism and ethnicity in organisational analysis. Usually the politics of regionalism and ethnicity tend to take a back seat in the management analysis of South Africa's transition. Where they are mentioned they are glossed over as just one of the problematic factors without any serious analysis (Radebe et al, 2004). This chapter contends that because of their antagonistic nature they contribute to the successes and failures of change processes and therefore need attention, since the struggles of

hegemony, continuity and survival are inherent in them. The point is that these perceptions of difference and their ensuing fragmentations reveal an underlying tension in the scramble to find hegemonic space in a changing context. Such tensions emerged from the inherited plural identities which were now asserting themselves in the change process. The outcome was the emergence of power contestations which were linked to illusions of knowledge and cultural superiority. The third lesson relates to the importance of relational trust and how this affects organisational success. There was very little done in this organisation to foster good relations across the different segments; instead the organisation has been dominated by different points of antagonism (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) where regionalism with all its undertones of ethnicity, tribalism and racism has been key in perpetuating differences. In retrospect this has made it difficult to negotiate a new working order within the plurality of interests that exist. Without relational trust, the organisation has thus remained vulnerable to different and separate interests of coalitions and networks that were part of the apartheid and Bantustan orientation.

6.4 The skills nightmare

As with all knowledge-intensive organisations, the ECDE relies on what Deetz calls the intellectual capital – the skills and knowledge unique to the employees. As it is, the organisation draws its professional managers largely from the education sector and particularly from the teaching sector. The good thing about this is that teachers know how the sector operates and have experience with schools which is the main point of service delivery. But then the question is: how much of that teaching knowledge is transferable to the management of an educational bureaucracy? While there are no clear answers, the evidence suggests that over the years this organisation has struggled to balance expertise and politics in acquiring skills. There may be many reasons for this, some of which were regulatory and some based on the bureaucratic choices made.

With regard to the regulatory mandates, evidence showed the ECDE has struggled over the years to build up strong managerial capacity since its inception in Bisho.

One such mandate includes a decision made early in the transition to rationalise posts across the provincial departments. Posts were distributed equally across the departments without any cognisance being taken of requirements or size (Godden, 2005). This is partly attributable to what is called the 'Chapter J prescriptions that standardised the management size for all departments in the Eastern Cape province' (ECSECC 2000) and also due to subsequent moratoriums during the 1997 financial crises (Godden, 2005) as discussed in the previous chapter. As a result, the department has literally operated with a minimal management complement when compared to other departments, both within and outside of the Eastern Cape Province. For instance, until 1997 there were only 22 managers in the department working with 70 000 employees (ECSECC 2000; Interview J, East London, 18 November 2003; Interview S, Port Elizabeth, 18 May 2004). Since 2003, this has increased to 50 after the intervention by the IMT. With the recommendations of the IMT, the department has since appointed additional managers to address the 62% of vacant posts that exist at this level. In spite of this, when compared to other departments of education nationally and other departments within the province, the department still lags behind, as shown by the recent IMT statistics in Table 6.1

Table 6.1 Statistics on Eastern Cape Provincial Administration

Department	**Employees (SMS excluded)**	**Senior Managers**	**Total Employees**	**Ratio**
Office of the Premier	319	32	351	1:9
Provincial Treasury	313	15	328	1:20
Education	77250	50	77300	1:1545
Health	28374	72	28446	1:394
Roads and Public Works	6151	19	6170	1:323
Social Development	1993	16	2009	1:124
Agriculture	5578	16	5594	1:348
Sport, Arts and Culture	1064	9	1073	1:118

Safety and Liaison	28	1	29	1:28
Economic Affairs and Tourism	1071	16	1087	1:67
Housing and Local Government	1524	14	1538	1:108
Transport	1132	11	1143	1:102
Total	124797	271	125068	1:460

Source: Radebe et al, IMT Report, November 2002-March 2004

The table clearly shows that the ECDE is the most affected with regard to the ratio of senior managers to employees. Of the 77 000 employees, 65 000 are teachers in 6 500 schools. It is important to emphasise the complexity of managing thousands of employees scattered throughout a largely rural province. Most of these schools are located within the jurisdiction of the two former homelands and the old apartheid provincial boundaries. This means that management faces enormous challenges with regard to access and distance to their employees.

Another regulatory issue relates to wider debates about the size of government. This operates in tandem with current global debates about state reform in developed countries. In South Africa, democracy and its subsequent equity drives resulted in a huge intake of employees from different sectors of the population to balance the former racial and ethnic inequalities in the public sector. Earlier massive recruitment then gave way to proposals for reducing the wage bill. The new intake was an addition to the existing personnel appointed in the apartheid era. For instance, in the case of Exchequer Personnel, there were already 1 022 385 people working for central government and the new government was set to add over 11 000 jobs to fulfil its affirmative action programme (Picard, 2002). However, broad criticisms from both the oppositional parties and the media led to this exercise being reviewed, as state effectiveness was brought into the spotlight due to reported inefficiencies and controversies over ghost employees in certain provinces, including the Eastern Cape (Picard, 2002).

Invariably, the WPTPS (1995) proposed strategies to manage the reduction of the state bill. It was also advocating for a leaner government. Some of the strategies that it proposed included (a) Right-sizing; (b) Efficiency savings and increased productivity; (c) Adjusting remuneration structures; (d) Retrenchment, early retirement and attrition; and (e) Redeployment and retraining. Of these, what received a lot of attention was the right-sizing. The state was already in a process of releasing the old white bureaucrats that volunteered to leave under golden handshake retrenchments (Picard, 2002). However, this was neither reducing the numbers nor making the posts available as anticipated. Right-sizing came though a process of Voluntary Severance Packages (VSP) being offered as the new mechanism to curb expansionism for equity and redress.

Besides public pressure, the state had adopted the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR) in 1996, which demanded tight fiscal policies. There was added pressure as a result of the Presidential Review Commission (PRC) that looked at the state of government in 1997. As part of its recommendations it advocated a relatively small but 'highly motivated, focused and well-paid public service' (PRC, 1998). The report in fact suggested a reduction of approximately 320 000 public service personnel, based on international trends for government employment. The VSP as the right-sizing strategy thus hit departments like the ECDE hard, with the most experienced civil servants being the first to leave. This was in large part due to the monetary incentive, which provided for large payouts to long-serving (and generally highly experienced) personnel. In the ECDE this included experienced homeland and apartheid-era administrators who took early retirement. The VSP process saw the approval of 1 453 applications at a cost of about R200 million (ECSECC, 2000). The consequences of this are expressed in the following comments:

> The expertise that was there, we just decided to jettison all that but at the same time without actually getting some of the experience. We put in people immediately who were not experienced and this is what has crippled us... they were given severance packages, you see, and I think that was the biggest mistake. My feeling is that we should have let them stay and then perhaps move in other people gradually, but it was

> so abrupt like this, it didn't flow nicely from the old to the new. As a result we encountered capacity problems where people didn't have the capacity, where we didn't even have the resources when we started and unfortunately we didn't retain the expertise and we didn't embark on a capacity-building programme (Interview X, Zwelitsha, 11 November 2003).

Such abrupt departures thus saw little or no transference of skills, let alone a handover to those who remained, but more importantly, as the PRC observed, the scheme resulted 'in the loss of competent staff and the retention of the dead wood' (PRC, 1998). This was managerialism gone wrong. While management studies, including the reinvention literature, advocate for rightsizing and downsizing of state personnel as a key reform strategy, they do not debate the circumstances under which this has to happen, or consider the consequences. For South Africa, this preoccupation with efficiency paradigms cost the state financially and lost scarce skills.

Now lacking in personnel, managers handled double portfolios, and were in certain cases expected to perform with little hope of full employment terms and benefits, since there were staffing moratoriums in force. The dynamics meant that managers could not take responsibility as expected. It also it created unnecessary competition for positions in an already unco-operative and antagonistic environment. For instance, as one official explained:

> …when there is a gap, you know forces want to close the gap. If there is one person in an acting position, there is a reluctance to help that person get the post. You will find that someone acting does not get the full support because there are people who feel that they might be the one to get the post. I think the IMT's [intervention task team] first task was to close those gaps. When I came here we used to say, there is "hole syndrome" where you find that there were so many gaps with acting director this, acting chief director that, which was not conducive for service delivery, because the people under you would be saying I want that post of a director. But I would say now 98% of the posts have been filled and people know that they have the job and are not acting, this is their job and they are expected to deliver at the end of the day (Interview K, Zwelitsha, 15 May 2004).

This indicates the vulnerability of managers in contested spaces. Such vulnerability is as much about the fact that the organisation has had no clear

mandates about career progression, as the fact that promotions had mostly been haphazard without any emphasis on competitive skills, competencies and experience. To act in any position did not therefore result in authority and control. Rather, such positions attracted competition and became a terrain for power and politics. Beyond that, as one official stated, anyone 'who is acting has no commitment to the organisation' (Interview Ng, Johannesburg, 10 November 2005). It may be that the lack of commitment is not as much of a problem as the lack of confidence to make decisions in the big spaces of power struggles and their resultant vulnerability.

Inherited personnel

Beyond the managerial level, the department, like all others in the public sector, inherited personnel from the Bantustans and apartheid South Africa whose continuity of service was guaranteed by the Interim Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1993). Specifically sections 236/237/238 of the constitution speak to this and these are popularly referred to as the "sunset clause" guarantees. Theoretically, these sunset clauses were intended to alleviate fears about job losses in the transitional period. Since this was still under the Government of National Unity (GNU) there was a strong focus on reconciliation and compromise at the time. However, such compromise had serious implications for public sector reform in general. For instance, the PRC commented in its report that:

> The so-called Sunset Clauses (in particular paras 236/7/8 of the Constitution of South Africa (1993)) were an additional constraint on transformation, forcing the state to carry many senior civil servants who were anxious, demotivated and in some instances hostile (PRC, 1998).

Of course, such reactions would differ with each department. While the skills base of the senior leadership is not verified, it would in all likelihood be constrained or limited, depending on where they served. The broad notion is that comparatively, the white personnel were better off due to their exposure to the better administrative systems of the apartheid era, while the former homelands personnel experienced problems as they had worked with outdated manual

systems. Going a level down to the middle managers, there was little improvement, with similar tendencies being seen, as explained by an official:

> Again, you know, the political decisions were made and one of them was the decision to locate the headquarters of the Eastern Cape in Bisho. What that meant was that you were taking over essentially in terms of head office operatives and the staff who were in the head office of the old Ciskei administration. Quite naturally, all the people who get appointed into the functionary positions are drawn almost entirely from the Ciskei with some exceptions. Two things happened in that process – one was that you had a lot of officials who didn't have particularly high levels of competence appointed into the head office of the new department. But secondly the process itself in hindsight appears to have been managed particularly poorly (Interview J, East London, 18 November 2003).

Another official commented further:

> When we did a skills audit was that there were people who knew nothing about money who were working in the finance section. Working in the finance section they knew nothing about money. There were posts advertised and the person applied for a post in provision, the post in HR, the post in finance and did not get this in HR and in provisioning, but got this one in finance. So that is the issue in terms of skills level, that's why this issue of skills development is very critical for us in the department. Now that's the kind of the negative side that is hampering what we are doing (Interview B, Zwelitsha, 19 November 2003).

While this skills limitation could be explained by the lack of a clear mechanism for recruitment, it is also true that some officials were promoted without approval. The White and Broudy Commission cited by ECSECC (2000) revealed instances of self-promotion and other corrupt tendencies.

The supranumeraries

Complicating this scenario were the supranumeraries. One official highlighted that before 1994, a group of unionised civil servants protested against the Gqozo regime for better salaries. As was the culture at that time, these civil servants were expelled from the public service. To replace them, school clerks were bussed in to fill the vacated posts. Most of these clerks were unskilled in management and had no knowledge of state systems and how these functioned. With the ANC government in place, these workers were reinstated into their jobs. While this was

guaranteed to deliver the next vote it added a further complexity to the organisation, where there were neither available vacancies nor new positions to accommodate an additional workforce. Workers thus found themselves in offices with no jobs to do. Their aim became to recapture their jobs from the clerks that replaced them. The battle for survival thus took a Darwinian turn as the two sets of workers jostled for space and positions. As an interviewee explained:

> *Kowu yangumlo, yangulowo esithi kwakuhlala mana kule ndawo. Phakama suka!* [Translation: It was fights everywhere as people claimed their desks and spaces] (Interview Be, Zwelitsha, 19 November 2003).

The bottom line is that the organisation had more people than the jobs available. The number of these supranumeraries is estimated at 3 000 people (ECSECC, 2000). Without any strategy to resolve this, the department kept all of them. Interestingly, they have learnt to find their own spaces in the organisation and to create their own meanings of what to do. For instance, one official commented on this group of workers this way:

> They did not meet the requirements of the posts that were there. But with time because "I've been associated with this section I end up being utilised and forgotten that I was a supernumerary, not having financial skills. But I've been able at least to use my calculator and count this gratuity. I've learnt on the job and therefore this is where I am. But if you go back and look at me I don't have that qualification of basic accounts practices, so I lack in that aspect". So I'm saying you are sitting with the situation where you don't have human resources to do the work (Interview P, King William's Town, 20 November 2003).

With the assimilation, they have learnt to draw less attention to themselves by becoming active participants in a smokescreen of activities. Theoretically, by doing this they get to be associated and assimilated into the revolving matrix of fluid workspaces. The whole idea of smokescreen participation thus gives the illusion that they are fulfilling some organisational obligations, which legitimises their stay even though they lack the skill to make any difference.

The political appointments

Added to these external processes is the appointment of MECs which the department has no control over. Sometimes such appointments do not take into consideration sectoral knowledge as it assumed that the Director General will administer basic departmental policies while the MEC plays the role of political oversight. Without debating the balance of roles at this level, as this is a contentious issue, the point is that sometimes MECs struggle to lead in contexts where the organisation is unstable, or where they have to surmise by themselves what needs to be done. As one former MEC stated:

> When I was appointed, I knew nothing about what needed to be done. All I knew was there are three things that you need to take responsibility for when you are an MEC for education. The first one is the bureaucracy that has to be changed such that its pace of development is in line with the policies that are ever-changing. If you don't take responsibility for that, whatever public pronouncements you make will be in vain. That is the first thing. And it is a huge task to do that because the majority of those people have been in education for more than ten years minimum, who are running that administration. The second responsibility is the upgrading of the actual skills of the people you are dealing with because the system may change but it will be run by people who are really …who know nothing. And the skills have to be both hard and soft. It has to be theoretical understanding of what needs to be done plus the how side, the technical side, how to do it. If you don't take responsibility for that, you are bound to run into problems because you might be theoretical, theoretical and nothing else. The third thing is the issue of resources. If you don't deal with the issue of resources, you are bound to run into problems (Interview S, Port Elizabeth, 18 May 2004).

Indeed, these three issues, namely the bureaucracy, resources and skills, turned out to be thorny issues for the organisation. Unfortunately for this MEC, he had to learn on the job about their significance. This meant therefore that instead of providing the political oversight, he became enmeshed in the basic operational issues of the department.

If the MEC did not know what to do, what does that say about the rest of the organisation? The answer to this is that at the time skills varied. The point to remember is that at the beginning of transformation the changing of organisations was a matter of faith rather than being based on any template. This meant that

who got to do it was a matter of who got appointed. As trial and error dominated, this meant that some officials were appointed in areas where they had no expertise. There is a sense that in the ECDE there was a lot of pressure from the teachers' union to have its members appointed into available positions (ECSECC, 1997). Nonetheless, the experience of the time was narrated by one official as follows:

> I was asked in 1995 to take on this job of being the Physical Resource Planning Director. At first I came in for an interview for a regional director in East London District. I was told that I performed well in that interview. Then I got a call two nights after that from the Head of Department (HoD) Dr Van Wyk at that time. He said to me, 'Man you did well but I am not going to appoint you in that post and I need somebody to take over the physical resource planning and I don't have anybody. I have seen you operating and I want you to take on this task. And remember I said listen my father is not an architect, he is not a quantity surveyor, he is a normal bedding attendant and I am just an ordinary Maths and Science teacher and I don't know anything about engineering and things. I haven't worked with quantity surveyors but if this is where I need to work, if this is going to be the calling I will take on the job.

He went on to say:

> I took on the job and to my shock when I arrived at the department on that particular day I went to meet the Head of the Department. He said 'man congratulations, go and look for an office and start working'. He didn't tell me where the office is, he didn't tell me where the people are. He did not give me a job description, he didn't give me papers. He just said go and find space somewhere and this is how we started. I went down in the corridor and knocked on the door to look which office is open. That is the time when I really got the shock and I said, what did I get myself into? The people just leave you, they give you the job and they drop you like that. And then I realised the monster that I was going to face. No systems in place, nothing, and then I was further hit the next day when I was told I had a budget of 300 million [Rands] and I was told I need to build [schools]. I didn't know that 300 million meant problems. So there were no systems in place. The fact was that we came here and we never really thought it through – that you had the Transkei, you had the Ciskei, you had the four other departments from the former government and now you are being hit by this thing. You had to jump in and swim and how I got my team was to walk in the passages and ask 'who are you, what did you do, don't you want to come and help me?'…This is how we had to get this thing off (Interview Fr, Zwelitsha, 20 May 2004).

While in other organisations this scenario is unlikely, since managers tend to move into already established structures, systems and spaces, here managers had to find their way in the muddle of things happening. Of course, that this manager was making a transition from a school environment to this high level of decision-making would have been overwhelming on its own, given that teachers tend to be the most marginalised group in terms of decision-making in education, if students are excluded. How this manager adjusted thereafter, is a long story of pain when things went wrong and sometimes of triumph when things went right. But fundamentally, he was meant to learn on the job like all other new appointees in a system desperate for redress, equity and change.

Added to this group were political appointees. While political appointees are a phenomenon of most governments around the world, here they attracted a lot of attention due to their lack of skills. Seemingly, unlike in developed contexts where political appointees tend to have much high levels of qualification and competence (Dolan, 2001) equivalent to their careerists counterparts, in this context their administrative skills varied but were mostly underdeveloped. Surprisingly, the politicians themselves were unhappy about this state of affairs:

> As politicians we were complicating our own problems because some of the political appointees did not have the technical ability. Some of them were even junior to those people that they were going to be senior to. So that also complicated the whole thing (Interview S, Port Elizabeth, 18 May 2004).

> I was still a college lecturer and a number of my colleagues who could hardly utter any constructive kind of academic argument in the staff room, let alone in the classroom, took positions of responsibility and were employed, some of them because they had political affiliations or people who they were close to who had an influence in the government of the day, you know what I am saying…You would look at those people who could hardly make any difference even in the institution [college] itself and now these people were suddenly your bosses (Interview Re, East London, 15 May 2004).

> The other problem whether we agree or not is that the inception of the new government was infested by the fact that you appoint activists not managers, and as a result those activists lacked technical competence to deal with issues… You can't just appoint people as if this is Zimbabwe. You appoint Zanu PF all the way even if MDC has got

> good technical competent people who are citizens of the country because of ideology? *Suka!* No! No! *Kwenzeke loo nto phaya MDC and ZANU PF* [translation] [That is what happened there] (Interview Ng, Johannesburg, 10 November 2005).

Basically all these views reflect in one way or another two major issues that lacked proper consideration in the transformation, namely (i) capacity and (ii) hierarchisation of expertise. There was no congruence and relationship between skill and hierarchy as the focus remained on changing the composition of state bureaucracies. Of course it would be an exaggeration to see this trend as only an Eastern Cape phenomenon. On the contrary, it was practiced in most government departments. Many new entrants, especially the affirmative action groups, had neither government-relevant skills nor experience in state systems. This meant that they could be incorrectly placed in positions they had little or no mastery of. Why did some systems progress and seem to have coped well with the change while places like the ECDE stalled? While the answer to this remains theoretical, this thesis argues that it was partly due to differences in the levels of modernisation of the inherited bureaucracies and their ability to remain functional in the context of radical change. For instance, if one uses the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) as an example, the department had highly modernised systems compared to the inherited homeland systems of the ECDE. It is therefore these levels of modernisation with their already established routine systems that could absorb new entries and still function while the incumbents were learning on the job. The GDE had a variety of skills to choose from due to the levels of competitive education that exist in the province, in contrast to the ECDE.

This thesis maintains that the bureaucratic structures and systems inherited from the Ciskei were weak and poorly developed and thus could not cope with radical change. If anything, the system itself needed radical modernisation to compete with bureaucracies in other contexts. It therefore did not help to staff such systems with people with poorly developed capacities, as neither the system nor the people could move things forward. This argument does not take away the fact of agency and the fact that interests also drive bureaucracies. Riggs (1964) identified that sometimes sala bureaucracies tend to focus more on loyalty and sustaining their

clects than efficiency. Nevertheless the dilemma in the ECDE has been perpetuated by their inability to answer the very question posed by one official in an interview: "… but how do you balance ideology and administrative competence?" (Interview Ng, Johannesburg, 10 November 2005). The answer to this, this study contends, remains with the leadership decisions and choices they make in terms of where they want to lead their organisations.

In the absence of skills development strategies and interventions for capacity development, the ECDE relies on consultants to fill the capacity gaps. This is not unique to them. The Radebe et al, (2004) reports found this to be a common phenomenon for most departments that find themselves experiencing capacity problems. The report states that:

> In the absence of capacity many provincial governments rely on the private sector for as much as 80% of their service delivery outputs… The departments themselves account for the remaining 20%, which at an output level is hugely disproportionate to their huge personnel (Radebe et al, 2004:39).

Consultants have become automated knowledge brokers for many organisations that lack capacity and skill. While they contribute to levels of productivity through either process or project management, it is also true that they are an expensive exercise. Hence there is a move to reduce their use in state departments where possible. Besides their expensive nature, one can argue that the over-reliance on consultants removes agency for managers to solve problems, as they are able to order express answers, thus increasing their dependency on outsiders. Implicitly, this limits learning, as the alternative is a hands-off approach. To some extent this had long-term consequences for service delivery improvement, as knowledge was never retained. The point is that consultants are never permanent features of any organisation. They are mobile entities whose availability and interests are as short -lived as the need and as the market lasts. But then how was the rest of the organisation complementing its lack of skills? Evidence shows that besides the early concentration on capacity-building that came with the RDP hype, very little capacity-building happened for middle managers in the public sector. This was equally the case here. Both the middle and lower levels hardly

received skills improvement (Interview Be, Zwelitsha, 20 May 2004). However, given that education is meant to be a knowledge-intensive bureaucracy (Deetz, 1998), this seems like a misnomer in the case of the ECDE as productivity depends on the intellectual capital that exists. Issues of skills and capacity are well-known debates as they are mentioned in most public sector review reports, including the Provincial Review Report (PRR) (1997), the Presidential Review Commission (PRC) (1998) and ECSECC reports (2000 and 2002). This thesis also confirms their necessity.

6.5 Organisational Consequences

Leadership instability

In a context where the organisation became characterised by fragmentation rather than unity and cohesiveness, it was no surprise to hear that the organisation lacked consistent leadership. Leadership is one of the most analysed factors in management theory. However, the emphasis tends to be on styles and behavioural traits. While leadership theories are useful in understanding how leadership behaviour is formed, it is very rare to see management research engage beyond their functionalist interpretations of this. Instead, leaders in organisations are assumed to have absolute power and control to determine what needs to happen where and when as determined by the hierarchy. Taking that the organisation studied hardly resembled the usually assumed order and stability seen in functionalist theories, it is essential then to examine how leadership behaves in other contexts of political contestation and complexities. The argument of this thesis is that in the absence of relational trust and with the dominance of inter-regional, ethnic and racial fragmentation, leadership here remained a point of pain with its high turnover and instability. For instance, in the period between 1995-2003 the organisation had had no less that six MECs, some of whom did not serve more than a year. Similarly, the Heads of Departments departed as frequently as the MECs that appointed them. Amongst many consequences of this instability was the discontinuity rather than continuity on projects as each change brought new directions. In the process, this created a lot of anxiety and frustration amongst the managers that were involved (Interviews Fr, Zwelitsha, 20 May 2004 and

Interview B, Zwelitsha, 19 November 2003) who had to constantly align themselves with the ever-changing strategies. Commenting on their frustrations about this, some officials stated:

> The other thing is instability at the level of the political head and the administrative head. The instability there affected us… We are in the fifth MEC now. It is our fifth in eight years. It's our fifth MEC and in terms of HOD, this is the fifth one also. But this one is acting for over a year now and it's not like when this MEC leaves, the HOD leaves. The MEC leaves, the HOD is there, but because there is a new MEC the HOD must also change direction. Sometimes the MEC is there, the HOD leaves, a new HOD comes with some ideas, sells those to the MEC and directions change again. You can imagine then it could be ten changes within eight years. That confuses the establishment and it is not good for stability in the organisation, for production, etc. (Interview B, Zwelitsha, 19 November 2003).

> It is so difficult because our environment is not stable. For instance, in the department of education, we have had within a period of how many years, five years or six years, we have had how many MECs, was it five? This one is the fifth one [he goes on to count and name various MECs and HODs]. There is no stability, this is another problem. These are the things that are crippling us. They are so obvious so much that we are amazed that nobody seems to be taking these things very seriously yet. They are so glaring can you see, so that is why it becomes very difficult to know what is being done properly because there is no head all the time. It is a serious disadvantage, you know, it's a really serious disadvantage (Interview X, Zwelitsha, 11 November 2003).

> … you had a high turnover of MECs in Education…Now you had *[name of MEC*] going, you had *[name of MEC]* who left and then you had *[name of MEC]* who left. Now you have *[name of MEC]*. I think we are the ones who have the highest turnover under pressure situation, including our heads of department *[name of HOD]* left, Caretaker *[name of HOD]* left, *[name of HOD]* came, left, *[name of HOD]* came and left and [*name of MEC*] is still there (Interview P, King William's Town, 20 November 2003).

Implicit in these quotations is the notion that heads of department create stability, provide direction and information for the organisation. Of course this confirms thoughts that exist in leadership and management research about the role of leadership. Actually scientific management was the first to highlight the task of managers at this level of the hierarchy with the famous Planning, Organising,

Staffing, Directing, Co-ordinating, Reporting and Budgeting (POSDCORB). While there is a now a shift towards more strategic, visionary and transformation types of leadership, there is still an overemphasis on direction and control. Without the leadership stability it is clear that the organisation suffers from unclear lines of communication and responsibility, lack of direction as programmes get disrupted and discontinued depending on who is in charge and for how long.

While there may be many reasons for this high leadership turnover, one of which includes public pressure due to poor performance (Interview P, King William's Town, 20 November 2003), the most subtle reasons are implied by comments on lack of unity and lack of co-operation, especially that MECs were prone to align themselves with existing camps (Interview B, Zwelitsha, 19 November 2003; Interview Ng, Johannesburg, 10 November 2005), the consequences of which fuelled staff conflicts. For instance, one official commented that:

> … we are carrying huge baggage as a result of the changing administrators, or head or political heads, you know. Where this one comes in and is seen to be favouring this and not that group and these others suffer and when this ones leaves, another one comes, maybe this one has another group and that other group complains, this one is closer to the HOD than this one, this one is looking at those as the ones that are out to get them you know, all that kind of thing (Interview B, Zwelitsha, 19 November 2003).

A former DDG of the department highlighted an experience that elucidates this he had been involved in the restructuring programme until his MEC resigned. The resignation as such became an opportunity for other forces within the organisation to regroup around the new MEC for support. He explained:

> When the [new] MEC came in, that Transkei culture came in. [The MEC at the time was from the Transkei region]. They grouped these Transkeians because we were still dealing with the inefficient managers. They briefed the MEC. I continued with my agenda [for change] then this person came with her personality in a fluid organisation and dealt with me and then I was expelled. The redundant managers then re-asserted themselves and then crisis started again. The organisation flopped again. The constant change of leadership has caused problems because people group around that person (Interview Ng, Johannesburg, 10 November 2005).

The quotations used reflect conditions in an environment where relations of trust were left to deteriorate while power struggles dominated. Coincidentally, this DG came from the former border region and the new MEC came from the Transkei. Politically these two areas had hardly any working relationship before 1994. It is therefore no surprise that Transkeians grouped around a fellow Transkei MEC appointee to consolidate support. What one sees then is that beyond uncertainty, this rapid change of MECs perpetuated internal battles for power and control. One of the reasons for this is that the leadership itself hardly maintained neutrality and objectivity. Rather it became susceptible to internal politics as a result of being easily swayed by different interests, pending the dominant coalitions that had access to it at the point of entry and presumably even before. Dixon, Kouzmin, Korac-Kakabadse (1998) argue that some of the organisational behavioural dysfunctionalities are due to anxiety and fear of change. Managerialist reforms need to consider those 'resultant anxiety-generating personal change implications', which could enhance fear and mistrust, and as a result would:

> … engender counter-productive, pathological responses from staff notably, paranoia; a siege mentality; turf protection; back-stabbing; dishonesty; sabotage and even 'organisational gangsterism' (Kobrak, 1992) – all of which may give rise to some of Caiden's (1991) all too numerous and identifiable bureau pathologies and may introduce dysfunctionality, rather than the hoped-for enhanced functional rationalities, into the administrative process (Dixon et al, 1998: 173).

The relevance of Dixon et al (1998) lies in their identification of change as an emotional process. In this regard, many interviewees referred frequently to their emotional attributes of anxiety, fear, anger, sabotage and trust. This is something that cannot be overlooked even though it tends to remain in the shadows of change management research. The point is that with the fragmented systems in place, organisational culture was equally fragmented as each regional entity kept its identity with little or no interference from Bisho. Even within Bisho, the coalitions ensured that there was little to share between groups; as a result the employees themselves could not transcend beyond the homeland and other apartheid spaces of location and identity, which resulted in regionalism, internal networks and cliques.

The ramifications of these different political battles were still felt in 2003. The managers interviewed were still frustrated by the domination of various turfs and lack of teamwork. The internal struggles were visible, as one senior manager discussed the newly conceptualised strategy to separate two divisions. For him, this was one way to create a balance of power in the organisation. In place was the newly proposed organogram that was meant to ensure such power shifts. Unfortunately he was suspended together with the opposition before the change could be realised. Nonetheless, the endemic nature of lack of unity in the ECDE was highlighted by the secretary of one of the DDGs who was about to be interviewed; who observed:

> … what is he going to tell you because they cannot agree on anything. They don't support each other and there is no unity amongst these people; if they are not united then they are not, and they just have to start working on that'.

Lack of supervision

The lack of stability emanating from the top echelons of the organisation filtered down to the rest of the organisation, with even line managers neglecting their supervisory roles. Part of the problem was that many managers lacked the knowledge and skills to undertake such responsibilities in a context where very little was defined. For instance, the ECSECC report identified that staff were not clear about their responsibilities due to the instability of the department. The department had no work plans developed for staff between 1994 and 1997. Under such circumstances, it was no surprise to hear that even managers reneged on basic performance management systems like supervision, as these officials indicated:

> People are just not willing to supervise and take decisions. If they take them it would be the dictator approach, the bureaucracy that is very stiff and not flexible in dealing with issues, not training people, not developing people – or just because I don't like you, you are fired. Somebody else will show the same type of conduct and that person is kept in the system because that person is being favoured (Interview To, Bisho, 19 May 2004).

> There was less supervision because people didn't want to be seen to be unpopular. Remember we are coming from an era of so much *toyi-*

> *toyi* [protest], so you don't want to be labelled. So people were scared of being labelled to an extent that they abdicated their responsibilities (Interview P, King William's Town, 20 November 2003).
>
> You need to deal with supervision, which is another weak point, supervision of work. We get too familiar with people, and in some cases we want to cover ourselves by being lax in terms of supervising, so that when my people see me doing something they don't complain or report me because I also allow them. It is not helpful (Interview B, Zwelitsha, 19 November 2003).
>
> There is too much *laissez-faire* attitude in terms of managers and this is not just from our observations, but from the IMT as well, which came in. One of the stronger points that they make in terms of general administrative issues is that managers are not willing to take up their responsibilities. There is too much of an attitude of passing the buck and not wanting to own up to the fact that this is my responsibility and I needed to put in place mechanisms that will see to it that things are done properly. So it is a ……. you don't want to say it is endemic, but it is certainly a very serious problem. It is a very worrisome problem that supervision is not done. Managers are to some extent not hands off, they are too aloof from the issues and in terms of permeating and reaching into the very core of the operations of the department, I don't think they have got a feel for it (Interview V, Grahamstown, 19 May 2004).

Traditionally, the world of management and supervision assumes that managers know what their roles and responsibilities are as these are usually tied to the vertical hierarchical responsibilities in the organisation. Managerial tasks and responsibilities range from direct control of subordinates' work to different facilitative processes that involve empowerment and capacity development. However, the difficulty with the ECDE is not just managers refusing to take responsibility for supervision, but that they themselves have unclear roles and responsibilities as a result of the constant change of different organisational structures, as indicated in Chapter Five. Theoretically, this lack of stability over basic structural function confuses the organisation, but more importantly, the constant revolving shifts at the top remove authority and responsibility from middle management to direct what needs to be done as they are also constantly caught in shifting spaces.

There is some sympathy for the situation in which the department found itself, where it also lacked physical space to accommodate its employees, which made supervision impossible. For instance, while in principle there was a new provincial department of education located in Bisho, in reality it was dispersed all over Bisho and King Williams Town because the initial building allocated to it was small and could not accommodate all the staff. Other divisions moved to rented homes in and around King Williams Town. In retrospect, this made co-ordination, communication and supervision almost impossible. As one interviewee stated:

> …we occupied at that time nine different buildings. We were provided with a set of offices in the main centre in Bisho which could accommodate less than half of the staff complement and the rest of the staff was scattered in rented houses, warehouses, private homes, scattered across Bisho, KWT, Zwelitsha, a complete hotchpotch. You can imagine that made effective management and supervision very difficult. You will have a chief director sitting in an office in Bisho where the directorates for whom he/she is responsible are in a house in KWT and another one is in a warehouse with inappropriate ventilation and unsafe buildings. I mean, just a nightmare. So one of the things we did initially was argue that this was untenable, I spent a long time fighting with Public Works about trying to get more office space assigned so that we could consolidate. You can imagine its not just the office space but we have had to have six or seven different telephone lines and fax addresses and [it was] impossible to put everybody on the same e-mail system (Interview J, East London, 18 November 2003).

Since 2003, however, the department has renovated and moved into a former Ciskei building in Zwelitsha, a township approximately 10 kilometres outside Bisho. Almost all the departments are now operating under the same roof. The point is that with the existing fragmentations the department could not afford further differentiations because theoretically such differentiations held the potential to isolate, marginalise and ghettoise particular projects and their managers. But more importantly the differentiated physical spaces could easily resemble platforms to negotiate the newly set values and norms of the transformation. This is due to the fact that spaces by their nature determine what gets translated and what discarded, depending on who is communicating what to whom.

Poor work cultures and practices

Amongst the many complexities of leadership and the lack of supervision, the change from hierarchical, secretive, rigid and rules-bound apartheid bureaucracy to the democratic, consultative, citizen-oriented bureaucratic systems favoured a more humane, public-oriented and team-based organisation. This was not an automatic switch from one cultural orientation to another. Instead this department's cultural orientations progressed with the different organisational orientations adopted, as discussed in Chapter Five. For instance, with the initial changes that saw a partial integration of the six regions into one department, there was very little cultural integration. Instead, as the organisation got thrown into crisis and confusion due to the lack of direction of the transformation project, it danced between Riggs (1964) descriptions of the sala type of bureaucracy found in most developing countries which tends to lack ground rules and Offe's notion of 'excessive' liberalism (Offe, 1996:209). As usually happens with all new bureaucracies, there were significant breakaways from the past which were communicated through symbolic factors like the change of the dress code. The early 1995 transitions also saw the era of formal suits and ties replaced by the new political elite who came to work in African prints and with the then popular 'Madiba' shirts. Through such symbols the stereotypes of the traditional bureaucrat were consciously and unconsciously being deconstructed. This was not unique to the EC, of course, since President Mandela had started this genre of dress code and for many it was interpreted in the way they wanted. One thing that was clear from one of the interviewees is that these types of symbolic gestures unsettled the long-serving conservatives, who subsequently took advantage of the severance packages being offered and left the system, knowing that a different era had begun. But more importantly, the erosion of the old conservative culture had no immediate substitutes. Instead, the new democratic culture became misinterpreted as a lack of application of rules and regulations.

Without any formal regulations on institutional performance in place the central, regional and district offices became authority to themselves without any clear

ground rules in place. This opened opportunities for lassies faire attitude to work as productivity became reduced to individual conscience and choice. Hence all the officials interviewed were unhappy about the levels of work ethic at all levels of management, as many managers stated in different ways:

> You know you go to salaries and ask for help on a particular thing or a particular aspect they would say: 'so and so is on leave and may not be back for the next two weeks'. And when you ask: who can help me in her absence? They would say: 'Nobody, uyabona nawe [Nobody! You can see as well]'. Sometimes you come in and its teatime. They tell you 'hayi bhuti yi-tea time khawuhambe wethu [Sir it's tea time, please go]'. So those kinds of situations, the attitude, the commitment, I don't think they know what this process is all about and my sense is that the very framework has not changed. The vision is not there and you talking about people who are dealing with peoples lives. If a person dies for two years there is no pension, no gratuity [payouts]. Their response is Ndisalindele i-approval, ilindele i-authorisation [Translation] [I am waiting for approval and for authorisation]. What do we expect, there is no sense of urgency and my sense was that you don't only need a change in [sic] strategy but you need a shock treatment and for me you just expel all of them and employ them afresh or outsource the whole of that function (Interview R, Zwelitsha, 19 November 2003).

> Just work ethic – to have a workforce that is not ready to work, and not willing to work. There was a phrase that was used in these homelands 'umcimbi uphethwe' [Translation] [the matter is still under review]. When you ask about a work application or benefits that needed to come to you, if you ask, where is my money? when am I being interviewed? 'Hayi umcimbi uphethwe, umcimbi usezandleni] [translation reads as above]. So, there was no sense of urgency, unless you could pay a bribe (Interview To, Bisho, 19 May 2004).

> The biggest difficulty is the work ethic is not there. Your work ethic has a serious impact, the lack of it, has serious impact on your turnaround time. You want this done today; it comes back to you a month later. By that time you may have been embarrassed in a situation or you may have been embarrassed at the legislature where you have to deliver. Or the quality of the work given to you is so poor, such that you are a laughing stock there (Interview S, Port Elizabeth, 18 May 2004).

> Otherwise there is too much relaxation, there is too much relaxation. Umntu wenza lo nto afuna ukuyenza ngexesha afuna ukuyenza ngalo. Ayikho la nto yokuba Yhu! I'm going to meet I-deadline. Umntu uqhutywa sisazela sakhe ne-commitment yakhe. The standing committee guy demands a document and it never comes, so (i) chain

> ihamba iphuka somewhere. [*Translation*] People tend to do things when they want at their own time. There is no sense of urgency to meet deadlines. You are persuaded by your own conscience and commitment. The standing committee demands a document and it never comes, so the chain keeps breaking somewhere (Interview Be, Zwelitsha, 20 May 2004a).

Although work ethics were a problem at all levels of management, they seemed worse in the lower levels as most complaints were targeted to this group. While this may be the bias of the managers interviewed, it was still no surprise that they took the most blame as they are at the coalface of the organisation and are responsible for greater output as they interact with the general public. This makes them more susceptible to complaints than any other group. But the most interesting aspect of this group is that they were assimilated from the Ciskei civil service. In terms of Figure 6.1 they make up the bottom rung of the diagram. Already a lot is written about the homelands and their lack of work ethic (Picard, 2002). Their assimilation into the new department was equally a transposition of the Ciskei practices. The point is that with the fluidity of the transformation many questionable practices found a fertile ground to germinate in a system that did not define work expectations, performance and accountability. Equally the ECDE had no definitions of roles and expectations. Instead, as Interview P (King William's Town, 20 November 2003) indicated, there was an element of being 'democrazy in approach' and 'nobody defined responsibilities for these people and ensured that they were properly integrated in terms of a very clear strategy'. This was because management was preoccupied with other crises in the early transformation. A consequence of this was that people created their own definitions of work in the new democracy.

Interestingly, none of the managers interviewed gave any indication of possibly resolving these issues, or addressing the deficient work ethic. This was despite labour relations, which provide guidelines on how to get rid of under-performing staff. In the meantime, the casual and impolite attitudes continued to entrench themselves as the norm, exhibited by staff at all levels, and personally experienced by the writer. This gives rise to speculation that the same culture of

lethargy is what schools experience, given the consistently disastrous Matric results in this province. Table 6.2 reflects rounded off performances in various years.

Table 6.2: The Eastern Cape Matric Examination Results, 1994-2003

Year	Candidates	Total Pass	%	Total Fail	%
1994	73 728	41 881	57	31 847	43
1996	66 809	32 639	49	34 170	51
1998	82 517	37 206	45	45 311	55
1999	79 749	32 029	40	47 720	60
2000	74 505	37 118	50	37 387	50
2001	63 204	28 825	46	34 350	54
2002	64 257	33 286	52	30 968	48
2003	62 457	37 468	60	24 985	40

Source: The Education Foundation - Examination Results

While there will always be the argument that Matric results are not the sole indicator for success, they are difficult to ignore in a context where performance and service delivery are points of contention, since such school performances are symptomatic of broad organisational inefficiencies. Without getting into much discussion about these results, the quotations on work ethics confirm Riggs' observation of the sala where the bureaucracy lays its terms for survival (Riggs, 1964). In this case, without any regulatory policies in force, the bureaucracy defined its terms of continuity as it dictated its work routines and speed for service delivery. The consequence of this was a cultural milieu infested with administrative inefficiency.

6.6 Living on the margins of managerialist tendencies: The post-1999 period

As indicated in the previous chapter, the ECDE has, since 2000, joined the reform bandwagon. At the centre of the change has been the general introduction of regulatory Acts like *Batho Pele* (1997) and the Public Finance Management Act

(1999), that are tighter and policy implementation-oriented. Accompanying this has been the introduction of the Senior Management Services (SMS). The SMS provides new policy guidelines for the professionalisation of management in the public sector. It addresses basic managerial responsibilities, conditions of employment and competencies required at this level. Its basic thesis is that improved service delivery cannot happen without a capable, committed, strong leadership and management. In recognition of this, it has changed management incentives to closely match those of the private sector. A basic interpretation of this is an act to retain good managers but also to create influence, credibility and legitimacy for public sector managers who are constantly compared to their private sector counterparts. In tandem with this glossy image, managers are expected to be custodians of performance and accountability in the public sector. The concept of SMS is not new to South Africa, and is practiced in both the United States and Australia (Ingraham, 1997). Linked to the South African SMS is the notion of a developmental performance appraisal system that is reviewed quarterly and annually. Although these reforms were still new at the time of conducting this research, this study maintains that while their introduction is a positive step towards shifting the existing culture of inefficiency, they remain another added layer of reforms in a context of frequent leadership change and inherent fragmentations.

The current reforms tend to have a managerialist orientation, possibly with the expectation that managers and their organisations will be inspired by them, but, if anything, as Paine (1999) states, these managerialist reforms assume that managers 'know what it takes to get things done'. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Rather, the question of organisational readiness tends to scream louder in other contexts than others, and where it does, the adopted reforms become an added burden within the complexity that exists. Actually, the ECDE officials are the first to acknowledge their inability to catch up on the reform process. For instance, the former MEC of the department commented on the reforms in the following way:

> [The] ANC policies are much ahead of the systems that we have in place in the bureaucracies; that is why you are unable to move as fast

> as you want to. When it comes to education, education takes much longer to change than the other areas. The legal system and education take ages before they change because it consists of set norms and values (Interview S, Port Elizabeth, 18 May 2004).

Although one may argue that there is no formula for transformation, it is indeed true that the reform programme has been fast-paced, highly sophisticated and even confusing for less developed bureaucracies with several mandates. Education bureaucracies are not only pursuing their own sectoral goals but have to conform to other national reform programmes as well. This undoubtedly stretches their capacity to respond and perform effectively. Unfortunately, managerialism does not accommodate multi-mandates and competing interests as discussed in Chapter Four, as its focus tends to be inward-looking and organisationally based. In the process, it ignores the external influences and their demands. It was no surprise, therefore, to hear these senior officials talking of reforms as an artificial exercise. A case in point has been the introduction of performance management contracts and evaluations. A former Director General commented:

> When you introduce reform here it is entirely a synthetic exercise. It's a game you play with people and there is no provision that says well we are not implementing this in the EC at the moment. The processes roll out exactly the same as anywhere else. We all sign performance agreements that we are going to do one, two, three, four, five, six, seven. We have no idea whether we will be able to do those things because we have no idea of what they are. The whole process of planning activity and budgeting accordingly and then measuring performance against your plan is completely undermined. It becomes an artificial exercise and what it does is undermine entirely in the heads of the civil servants this notion of planning, budgeting and accounting for the resources and reporting on performance. It becomes whatever you were doing, what did we get last year, what can we ask for in addition and what did we actually spend? So what I am saying is, as a result of that process the implementation of some of those really important reforms in the public service that have enabled other provinces to move forward significantly in terms of the performance of their managers, say at DDG, Chief Director and Director level, this simply hasn't been possible here and I think there is a real danger that you have done long-term damage in developing a culture in which people don't take seriously public service reforms. It becomes a thing that you do, you perform, you know. We participate in the process, we won't talk about it, we sign the performance

> agreements because you need to in order to get your salary increase or whatever the case may be. We even go through a performance assessment process but it is all artificial. There is the real danger of undermining very severely what you are trying to achieve and that is one of the downsides that is coming out (Interview J, East London, 18 November 2003).

Similarly, a former Deputy Director General who has since moved to the districts highlighted that the difficulty with performance management systems is that they are not integrated into the individual and organisational plans. His comments were based on the intervention by the IMT which tried to institutionalise these performance management requirements. He went on to say:

> They have prepared for us performance contracts…and you can't do that. You can't prepare for me a performance contract and expect me to do A B C D E and you just tell me sign here. One of the problems of that strategy is that its not built as part of the organisation. I am saying it is good, but you can see people interpret it that this thing is being pushed down our throats in a very bad manner and so there is no buy-in the organisation. But people are doing it for compliance and the problem with compliance is that if you want the report in three days, I will give you the report and continue to do what I was doing without taking cognisance of what is in the report. That is your business because you wanted the report because the things you put in the performance contract and monitoring and evaluation you have not explained. You have not built into the plan of the organisation. So there is a plan this side to turn things around, but there is another culture which is running its own way. Yonke into endala ihamba ngohlobo lwayo [Translation] [Everything continues to work the usual way]. But you come with the new thing but yonke enye into ihamba ngohlobo lwayo [things continue they way they do]. That then instils anxiety and fear into the employees and they are going to under-perform. Once your strategy is to instil fear and anxiety they are going to comply and not work and you will interpret that compliance as performance because in their corner they talk their language but in front of you they appease you (Interview Ng, Johannesburg, 10 November 2005).

Both quotations show the struggle of keeping up appearances in the new managerialist reforms of efficiency. Generally performance management aims to enforce individual and organisational accountability while maximising goal efficiency. Townley wrote about the politics of performance appraisals in organisations. Without getting into the debate about its value, what is clear from

these officials is that it is a problem tool that they are not prepared to engage with. If anything, even for them as senior managers, it is nothing but a conformity tool. To some extent, these managers reveal the downside of this tool. Usually managerialist tools tend to be applied in an unquestioned way, but what one sees here is that the usually acclaimed added value is perhaps presumptuous rather than real. The fact that they promote superficial behaviours is another point not usually debated in the management literature. Riggs (1964) warns against these formalistic tendencies in bureaucracies where actions depicted resemble fiction rather than reality. This is because with such actions one can never find the real essence or the heart of the organisation. Given the leadership fragmentation and culture that exists, it is not the quantity of efficiency programmes introduced that will create long-term and sustainable change here, largely because such programmes rely on intensive monitoring. Instead, in a context where leadership is unstable and even weak, it seems logical to target such leadership for change. Part of this will be to develop their capacity and ability to support change.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter explored the ECDE's internal organisational dynamics. It argued that unless the department works on the existing fragmentations, instability and capacity problems, it will continue to experience the efficiencies inherent in it. To support this argument it explored how the organisation functions through networks of coalitions and the subsequent consequences of lack of cohesiveness. Given that professional organisations rely on intellectual capital to survive, it looked at how skills are organised and how they influence the organisation and its effectiveness. Between these two themes, it emerged that organisational change is equally a matter of organisational unity and support without which the organisation becomes vulnerable to multi-interests which are likely to pull it in different directions depending on the powers that dominate. It also became clear that any affirmative action and equity programmes that are not accompanied by intensive capacity development equate to disempowerment. The ECDE is one of the organisations that followed these equity regulations but to its own detriment. It remains paralysed by internal lack of ability and competence to conceptualize

and translate the transformation project into a meaningful exercise. As a result, the organisational change project has been reduced to unending battles of power and politics which do little to enhance organisational performance. Instead, these battles exacerbate the differences and fragmentations that are a consequence of the apartheid ideology, seriously affecting co-operation and teamwork.

CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCLUSION

TOWARDS A RELATIONAL AND NETWORK ANALYSIS OF ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE AND EFFICIENCY

7.1 Introduction

This thesis set out to explore how and why the ECDE had arrived at a situation of inefficiency and poor service delivery. To recap, inefficiency in this thesis refers to the ECDE's inability to maximise on its organisational goals. Poor service delivery refers to the lack of institutional processes and practices to support the provision of services to the targeted stakeholders within the specified time period. Since this is a qualitative study, none of the goals was subjected to a particular testing; rather the thesis explored how the notion of organisational change had been used and managed in this context to support and facilitate service delivery. The point is that the department – like all others in the public sector – had undergone transformation to merge its six departments of education. The critical issue is that, compared to other recently structured departments of education, it was perceived as highly inefficient and unable to deliver the mandated services to schools and to its stakeholders. The key questions then were how and why the department was experiencing a crisis of poor service delivery and inefficiency?

The overarching observation is that the ECDE reflects the complexities of the transformation of the public sector in South Africa. Some of the complexities known about this process is that it was a rapid exercise, based on generic policies that lacked a broad based understanding of the types of bureaucracies that exist. Instead bureaucracies were treated in a homogeneous way. Such a lack of understanding had meant that while the transformation policies were highly modern and fitted well into international debates and trends they were highly advanced for some of the diversified South African context. The consequences of which have been mixed results of patchy performances and

poor service delivery across the different provinces. The key illumination from this study is that the way public sector reform happened, it assumed capacity and resources where they did not exist but more important it assumed that the nature of the bureaucracies that existed were highly matured to absorb and act on the speed of the transformation required. Seemingly, this could happen in other contexts like Gauteng and the Western Cape that have highly developed economies. However, the story reads different for poor contexts which hardly had the basic infrastructure to support the change. Instead the observation made about the ECDE is that, as the rapid transformation made demands on the existing structures, it could hardly cope with the change due to weak internal systems and lack of capacity. This led to different forms of dysfunctionality and structural inertia. The result of which is that the organisation still struggle to retain acceptable levels of performance and service delivery.

The key issue of course resides with the nature of change itself. The change that informed the bureaucratic reforms in South Africa was multifaceted, uncoordinated and fast paced. This lack of coordination thus meant organisations had to learn quickly about how to respond to the pressure for change. Many organisations like the ECDE seemingly, lacked the capacity to respond and align with the changes that were emanating from their external environment. As a result the department got pulled in different directions, without any systematic plan in place. This led to different forms of 'haemorrhaging', if one were to use the words of a former commissioner (Interview I, Hogsback, 17 May 2004). While the haemorrhaging has been controlled in many areas over the years, the department still struggles to close all the gaps as a result it continuous to be the focus of poor performance and service delivery. Nonetheless, what follows are reflections on doing this project, particularly reflecting on the theory used, the key implications that can be draw from this study, the limitations of the study and the directions for future research.

The usefulness of the theory adopted

Sometimes conducting studies like these, it is better to stick with tradition and what is known to save one from the pain of uncertainty. This is said in the context where one literally set out to do an exploratory type of research in a new field of knowledge and research. This did not just turn out to be challenge in terms of understanding the content and the field itself, the process became time consuming and exhausting. The first point of exhaustion came with the realisation that organisational change research had not developed far theoretically. Instead it relied on rational and managerial approaches as the basis to explore and analyse change managerialist approaches, as indicated in Chapter two, tends to subscribe to principle-based conceptions of organisations. While such theories are useful to some extent, they hardly deal with issues of rapid and radical transformations. This meant that one could not just rely on such theories to unravel the complexities of the departments like the ECDE as their changes had hardly any rational planning attached to it. Their changes were outside the frame of stability and order that is usually addressed by such research. Secondly, the choice to study organisational change in a system characterised by dysfunctionality and poor performance became another challenge, as there was limited research to learn from. As a result, the research process remained experimental rather than definite. But also studying dysfunctionality tends to be difficult as people tend to be less confident to speak to an outsider. Besides, even where they agree to speak to you, issues of poor performance tend to be emotional issues, and thus one has to always try to balance between different feelings of inadequacy, victimhood and possible exaggerated accounts of what happened for sympathy or heroism.

Nonetheless, in the long search for a relevant theory thus, a combination of theories informed the research. In the beginning there was a concentration on development administration which seemed to provide the necessary knowledge base to understand the dynamics of public management in developing context. Hence Riggs's theory of prismatic societies was seen at first as the answer in a broad theoretical vacuum that existed. But even so, it became clear as one hit

the field that such a theory would hardly work as the context of ECDE was different. Besides, the environment became too sensitive to explore some of his propositions. Contending with this is that the change itself was too rapid to rely on a specific theory. This on its own changed any pre-planned ideas of a neat theory and a neat research process.

Without any specific theory dominating the patterns of the research, research data became highly instrumental in shaping the direction of the study. For instance as the new themes emerged from the data, they got used to explore additional theories and frameworks for better interpretation and analysis. Hence there is no single theory that dominates instead the study used theory in an eclectic way. One of the theories that is used then is institutional theory. Institutional theory is predominantly used to study how a group of organisations within a particular field responds to different contextual changes at a given time. Although this study focused only on one organisation, it found some of the theoretical levers used by institutional theory relevant in this case as well particularly where one had to understand the nature of normative forces that directed the change.

By using institutional theory thus the study revealed the structural regulatory opportunities and challenges that have influenced South Africa's new public sector transformation. For instance, chapters four and five gave an account of the different macro and micro contextual factors that had a bearing on the department. At the macro level, it highlighted the basic parameters of the negotiated settlement and the subsequent re-organisation of the public sector to reflect the new democratic ethos of equity, redress and access. At the micro level it paid attention to how the new ECDE bureaucracy got to be conceptualised in the broad context of policy formulation and change. It got to illuminate on how the mergers of different departments came about and the subsequent challenges brought by such a process. But also it helped clarify why organisations at times hardly focus on their own core competencies as they chase nationally set political agendas. This was evident through the officials'

account of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which was poorly integrated and executed by the department. But more important in many ways, institutional theory gave insights into why public organisations, including the ECDE, tend to adopt similar structural templates despite their inherent differences. In this case it became evident that the ECDE was following national trends. National policies as such dictated both the trajectory and the pattern for change.

While this theory helped to explain the external and contextual dynamics, it lacked good analytical levers to examine the internal organisational dynamics. Again this is largely because its focus in general is on exogenous than endogenous factors of organisational change. Despite this, the study still found Greenwood and Hinings' (2002) notion of 'capacity for action' interesting as it points to the organisations ability to manage the transition process from one template to another. An interest in this had come out of the realisation that the change itself had been externally determined and negotiated. But more important is that the official's themselves reflected on the organisation's inability to recruit competent individuals. Again this was largely due to the transformation's emphasis on redress and equity and its subsequent unintended consequences which saw loyalty take precedence over competence in a divided and highly fragmented society.

The concept of capacity for action had suggested that radical change cannot occur unless there was (i) a sufficient understanding of the new conceptual destination, (ii) skills and competencies to support the change and (iii) an organisational ability to manage how to reach the new change (Greenwood and Hinings 1996). In an almost consistent way data had confirmed that the ECDE had lacked broadly in the three dimensions mentioned. Already the consequences of this have been illuminated to include instability, discontinuity and unpredictability. But more important the use of the 'concept of capacity for action' has revealed is that compared to the western modernised bureaucracy, the South African bureaucracies were still under reconstruction. They are

evolving bureaucracies with identities that are constantly being revised by the broad South African transformation and transition. They are thus organisations in transition. Of course one understands that some organisations have handled such transition better than others.

Notwithstanding, an organisation like the ECDE has shown that it is one of the organisations struggling to move from the old pre-1994 to the new post-1994 identity. Rather it is caught in various dualities of the pre 1994 homeland and apartheid era and its multifaceted cultural and political identities and the post 1994 transition. For instance while the post 1994 era has emphasised a reconciliatory agenda and stresses the need for the modernisation of the bureaucracies through newly adopted western models of public sector reform, this organisation is struggling to shed the inherited homeland practices, particularly the Ciskei practices. This is said for two reasons, one has to do with the choice of the capital Bisho which by its nature saw the Ciskeian cultural practices being imbued into the newly formed organisation. Again this is taken from the literature that identifies the significance of organisational embeddedness in a particular context. By its nature the concept of organisational embeddedness implies transference of norms and values between the organisation and its context. Two, the assimilation of the Ciskei civil servants at the operational core gave the organisation an added Ciskei identity. Already a number of scholars have commented on the history of public administration in the homelands which were based on patronage, clientelism and poor service ethic. This dominance of the Ciskei practices in particular was bound to have its own consequences for the organisation. Amongst such consequences is the known inability to create and sustain organisational change. Instead change tends to be faced with resistance as the dominant forces want to retain their power of influence and continuity. Of course the study revealed that while the Ciskeian civil servants form the largest group, there are other contending forces that have also formed their dominant coalitions to protect their interests in the broad context of resource competition and survival. Chapter six referred to such dominant coalitions. These coalitions remain as minorities.

Overall then the theory used has helped to explore both the external and the internal dynamics of organisational change. However unlike the mainstream management theory that looks at the broad generic principles of organisational change, the use of empirically based case study analysis has helped to illuminate on the cultural and political intricacies of organisational change. Actually, the eclectic nature in which the theory was used has helped identify that organisations are part of their own complex network of social political and cultural systems. They are often led and influenced by such systems. Unfortunately, this system has been made complex in South Africa by the shift from the apartheid state to a democratic state creating different bipolarities about the change. Such bipolarities thus found their way to the organisation as well. The organisation had inherited, as indicated earlier, a Ciskei type of social and cultural bureaucratic systems which was influenced by different norms and values. Mostly such norms were based on the mythical identity inscriptions of the Sebe regime that proscribed exclusion. But also they were bureaucratic systems that were known to serve the political interests of those in power perpetuating patronage and corruption. The tension thus is in how does this bureaucracy move from this history to become a new inclusive, collaborative and efficient bureaucracy that responds to its stakeholders.

Beyond these social and cultural issues, there are technical issues as well. The inherited bureaucracy hardly had any technical capacity to serve the Ciskei homeland pre 1994. It was almost a huge expectation to think it would provide better service delivery post 1994 when the organisation had grown from a few thousand Ciskei employees to a 70 000 workforce and 6 500 schools. This expansion of the bureaucracy created challenges in terms of skills and resources. Literally, without any resource expansion it lacked the capacities to serve the new emerging interests. Instead it suffered from a huge systems collapse that got riddled with corruption and opportunism.

To some extent this tells us something about the nature of the bureaucracy in general. Particularly, this study revealed that the notion of generic bureaucracies does not exist as managerialism tends to assume. Rather organisations experience different realities and thus are bound to be different and unique pending what acts on them. Implicitly, this would determine how they perform. For instance, in the most simplistic way, if one uses the number line scale of 1-10 as an indicator of good and poor performance, where 1 represents poor performance and 10 is for good performance, organisations are likely to spread within that continuum of 1-10. If this is not acknowledged, however, managerial technologies will continue to dominate as they assume generic organisational development levels. Their 'one-fits-all' approaches will hardly benefit organisations like the ECDE, since organisations like these lack basic skills, infrastructure and resources to run a functional bureaucracy.

On the contrary the pressure to perform means that such organisations are caught in a constant duality to build basic administration systems necessary for a functional bureaucracy while also they have to reflect themselves as highly modernised structures that understand the managerial trends suggested by policy. The consequences of this are smokescreen performances that result in poor service delivery. To understand these bureaucracies thus, it is important to focus on the micro analysis of such organisations and their contexts for a better understanding of organisations and their behaviour as they undergo change and transformation. For instance, some micro revelation from this study is that although the South African bureaucracies are guided by similar policy guidelines, they respond differently to them. But more importantly it revealed that organisational inefficiencies were not just a consequence of bad policy implementation and execution but were a product of a complex network of factors that resonate internally and externally to the organisation.

Juxtaposed to these structural limitations, there are bureaucrats themselves who are responsible to make the organisation work. Taking clues from the data thus, it became essential to find the nature of capacity that existed. Generally,

western theories do not engage with issues of skills and they take them as given. What this study revealed then is that the organisation lacked the capacity and skills to effect the change. Already, compromises were made with the assimilation of the Ciskei civil servants at the lower levels who lacked skills due to years of isolation and lack of investment in education and training in the homelands. Equally, the strategic positions had become burning spaces for various reasons leading to constant leadership flights. Unfortunately such instability contributed to the many discontinuities and inconsistencies in the reform programme. But also the officials themselves commented on the flaws of recruitment that saw recruitment and appointments made through loyalty rather than competence.

Broadly then the theory used helped to explore both the external and internal dynamics that had a bearing on the ECDE. In reality there is very little organisational change research that analyses both components. This is despite the calls made by researchers like Pettigrew (2001) who advocate for analysis of both the context and process of change. Without much progress in that direction, organisational change research continues to be imbued in technical rationality. But also there are still very few studies that are based on empirical investigations of organisations and how they work especially in South Africa. By incorporating both the external and internal factors as points of analysis thus, the theory illuminated that organisational change is a complex political and social phenomenon that is driven by both the technical aspirations of modernisation and by internal political interests inherent within the organisation. Of course the issue of political interests although they have since taken a back seat in current organisational research they are what old institutionalism through researchers like Selznick focused on in the 1960s' and what Riggs (1964) tried to address in his prismatic theory. This study thus validates their significance as well.

The key question then is: to what extent has the use of theory answered the student concerns about the use and relevance of western models in interpreting change in transitional African contexts. The answer to this is unfortunately

limited by lack of African scholarship in general. Because of the lack of such scholarship, organisations remain influenced by western theories and unfortunately these remain insufficient to unravel the complexities of working in developing contexts. This is in the sense that while western theories provide good analytical bases on how organisational bureaucracies function, they remain devoid of context. Instead they draw general principles as observed from highly developed administrative contexts. While such information is helpful to understand the broad contextual debates about organisational change it is limited to macro and sometimes generic perspectives of change. Also such theories tend to use highly modernised organisations as their point of reference and analysis. Unfortunately such organisations remain scarce in developing contexts. Even in South Africa, bureaucracies are unevenly developed and mostly they are at a developmental stage. To understand their dynamics thus means there is a need for combination of both the macro and micro analysis of these bureaucracies and their behaviour.

Overall then, while the western theories of organisational change are useful they are limited as well as they originate in stable and predictable environments and thus have limited analytical lenses for unstable, fluid and unpredictable contexts. Despite that, they helped illuminate on the different features of the ECDE. For instance, one understands that due to the unstable nature of context, this organisation was equally unlikely to find stability due to the revolving nature of the process of transition. But more important, the theory helped one understand that organisational efficiency and performance are a consequence of complex factors that cannot rely on simple managerial solutions but require multi-pronged strategies. In tandem this means that organisational analysis has to go beyond technical rationality to look at the micro politics that drive these organisations to illuminate on both their cultural and discursive practices which inform their social realities. For instance one of the key issues to emerge was the issue of poor relations that exist which are a result of the inherited social and political fragmentations. Of course whenever one speaks of relational politics, there is usually a question about what is unique in the ECDE compared to other

departments that have gone through the mergers of different ethnic and racial groups. While this question needs further empirical investigation beyond the scope of this study, there is no doubt that the depth of such politics differed with each region and territory. Unfortunately the Transkei and Ciskei identity battles had been stronger compared to other homelands. These at times resulted in different forms of violence. While these battles are no longer in the public domain, they cannot be assumed to have disappeared either. Rather they could have assumed a different sophistication that complicates the relational politics at this current juncture.

To make any theoretical propositions thus, this study sees the need to look at organisational change in a relational way. The concept of relational analysis is not new as there are few researchers that address it. For instance, Clegg et al (2002) recommends it for the study of organisational paradoxes, while Mutch et al (2006) apply it in the study of organisational action. The basis of a relational approach draws the need to see relations 'between units as pre-eminently dynamic in nature, as unfolding, ongoing processes rather than as static ties amongst inert substances' (Emirbayer, 1997:289, quoted by Mutch et al, 2006:613). For instance, while the ECDE can be seen to be inefficient, such inefficiency is a result of a conglomerate of factors that give a particular character to the organisation. To unravel, these factors thus, it is perhaps important to broaden organisational change analysis to include Bourdieu's concept of the field. Bourdieu (1990b) quoted by Everett (2002:60) defines a field as:

> networks of social relations, structured systems of social positions within which struggles or maneuvers take place over resources, stakes and access (Bourdieu, 1990b, quoted by Everett, 2002:60).

Of course such struggles as shown by this case exist at both the macro and micro levels, externally and internally. The critical theoretical gap for organisational theory thus is to develop a theory of change that recognises that public bureaucracies function beyond the assumed technical rationality. They are a product of various political, social and cultural networks of relations that exist which are defined by various interests and ideologies.

The key contribution of this research is in the identification of the structural and political networks that exist in South African public sector organisations. Various researchers have looked at the significance of these networks in different ways by analysing their structural patterns, the processes inherent in them and their political dynamics (Harrison, Laplante and St-Cyr 2001; De Wever, Martens and Vandenbempt 2005; Swan and Scarbrough 2005; Ho, Rousseau and Lesque 2006; Tagliaventi and Mattarelli 2006 and Antcliff, Saundry and Stuart 2007). For instance Swan and Scarbrough identified the co-ordination of networks as essential in networked innovation. Broadly this study also confirms the role of networks in organisations. It identified that their roles and influences extend inside and outside the organisation. Of course this study did not look at the intricacies of the ECDE coalition of networks per se, due to the limitations highlighted in chapter three. However, the identification of such networks contributes to the theory of organisational change and service delivery in South Africa by identifying that;

(a) Organisational change is not just a hierarchical top-down exercise it is conditional to the nature of coalitions and networks that exist which may support or mitigate the change.

(b) The more fragmented the networks of coalition are, the less likely the organisation is able to extend service delivery due to poor collaboration and divergent values and interests.

(c) The traditional Weberian bureaucracy is a misnomer in politically and ideologically fragmented environments. With South African bureaucracies demonstrating fragmented tendencies there is a need to theorise the public sector change beyond the traditional rational managerial conceptions to include the notion of networked bureaucracies and their consequences on service delivery. It is thus important to understand how networks internal and external operate and their consequences on service delivery.

(d) There is a need to look at how public organisations can move beyond the familiar bonded political, ethnic, racial and genderised networks to include the internal and external excluded sources of information and knowledge

which can enhance organisational performance. For instance how can public organisations create extended 'networks of practice' (Tagliaventi and Mattarelli 2006) outside their limited and possible saturated familiar network zones. Networks of practice are presumed to be organised around knowledge and resources more than loyalty ties.

Of course, networks of practice require open networked organisations that are able to trust the unknown and the unfamiliar. They require what Putnam (2000) calls the 'bridging capital' which is the ability to link beyond the known groups. As Antcliff (2007:23) states 'while the bonding capital is good for 'getting by' bridging capital is necessary for 'getting ahead''. The question is: To what extent are South African public sector organisations ready to extend their bridging capital to enhance the quality of work they do? An exploration of these type of issues and questions will give insight into how we manage South African complexities of service delivery moving forward.

Implications for policy and practice

Although this study looked at a single case study, there are a few implications that can be drawn for policy and practice. To manage the discussion though, I organised the discussion around the same themes that were used in the study namely context, internal organisational design and the challenges and complexities of skills and capacity.

Context

The observation made is that the ECDE operates in a context that is rapidly changing. The key issue though is that it struggles to create an alignment between what is happening externally and its broad organisational goals. As a result it finds itself always having to respond to government regulations without any considerations to streamline and control what it takes on. Partly, this is a result of the long history of an uneven relationship between the national and provincial systems of governance where the former always gives directives and cascades what needs to be implemented at each level down the hierarchy without any

thought about the consequences. For instance, at the time of conducting the research the ECDE was immersed in various programmes most of which were initiated outside the provincial department itself. While organisational responses to external initiatives are applauded, there is no doubt that such externally agendas reduce the ownership of the reform programme and even organisational accountability.

While talking about externally driven agendas, the study showed the unresolved tensions that exist between policy formulation and implementation. The reality is that South Africa's transformation has had to deal with the policy processes that were highly contested and interest-driven. But more important is that the policy process had multiple points of entry and exit that resulted in incompatible, contradictory and competing policy expectations. Partly, this was due to the fact that the policy processes were hardly informed by reality as they lacked adequate information systems that could inform them. But also as a task team- and consultant-based elite exercise the processes remained highly exploratory and resulting in the adoption of policies that were highly advanced in the context of local conditions, which had limited capital, infrastructure, resources and capacity to implement them. With very little knowledge of the challenges that beset policy implementation, there was a tendency to ignore the complex organisational arrangements that needed to be in place for any policy to be processed. The evidence in this case thus points to the need to interrogate the policy management chain.

Currently, policies formulators assume that there is ready-made capacity and resources that are always available in all organisations which are set aside for abrupt policy emergencies, which is hardly the reality of many organisations. Also they assume that policy implementation is the burden of decentralised regional systems hence their pronouncements are never accompanied by resources. Instead the organisations affected are expected to mobilise and shift their own internal budgetary arrangements to accommodate the new interests. The view of the thesis is that this disjuncture between policy formulation and

implementation is one of the major elements that affect service delivery. Partly, because this type of arrangement tends to decentralise responsibility and accountability while it holds on to the resources and other forms of capital that could assist the implementation process. Consequently, this does not only overburden the exhausted organisations, it also detracts them from their plans and goals. For the practitioner thus it might be better to suspend policies have no resources attached to them for better control and streamlining.

At a research level, the observation is that organisational change research does not really speak to policy. Instead, policy debates are relegated to policy disciplines. In this study it seemed difficult to ignore the contending policy goals that organisations have to deal with. This lack of analysis of policy goals and outcomes makes it difficult to understand the holist nature of public sector performance and efficiency. It also masks the fact that other contexts hardly have the competencies to conceptualise the competing policy goals that are cascaded as part of policy implementation. Partly, this is because the efficiency logic tends to assume implementation to be a straightforward exercise. On the contrary, organisations are sometimes unclear which goals matter for their effectiveness, as internal goals tend to compete with other external government agendas like poverty alleviation and other social and economic including HIV programmes. Indeed, as this thesis demonstrated in Chapter Four, the RDP was one example where social goals took precedence over other professional goals in the ECDE. In the process, the department found itself chasing elusive targets that had nothing to do with educational goals. Simply put, the study illuminated that where the policy environment is the driver of organisational change this could complicate the internal organisational goals, especially that policy goals tend to be value-based and fuzzier due to their political embeddeness. To enhance service delivery thus organisations need to empower themselves to negotiate with their sponsors and principals on what they are able to do at a given time. Juxtaposed to this is the need for flexibility as key to organisational change and educational reforms in general.

Organisational Design

One of the key issues in organisational studies is organisational design which speaks to issues of coordination and organisational alignment. With the current dominance of rational work practices, education bureaucracies, like other public sector organisations, are expected to implement managerialist tendencies for greater efficiency and effectiveness. While this means is left to the creativity of organisation. The major trend though around design is decentralisation of responsibility to the lower levels. Within the South African context this has happened at both the political and administrative levels. For instance, politically there are provincial structures that oversee similar responsibilities as the national offices. Administratively, organisations like the case study presented would also decentralise further. For instance the ECDE functions with the central office Bisho and about forty two districts. These districts had come as a result of a recent configuration that saw the middle layer of regions removed. While the logic for decentralisation is an international phenomenon, there is very little sense of what it has to achieve. Instead organisations are seen to implement as either for political reasons or as a managerial fashion trend. This is said in the context that decentralisation had been introduced in the department as partly to enhance service delivery, efficiency and for local empowerment. There is very little evidence that this happens as the centre Bisho also struggles with such mandates. Hence it continues to pull the authority and responsibility of these decentralised structures back and forth pending the nature of crisis at play. What this thesis has illuminated thus is that while decentralisation works well in other contexts especially in the developed worlds, it has struggled to create any fundamental change in this context. Hence the study sees it important to relook at the decentralisation theory by examining its purpose and its relevance in a context of poor resources allocation, adverse poverty, poor skills, poor competences and poor education and training.

Added to this is a need clarify issues of national interest which need to be separated from provincial mandates. For example, the building of school infrastructure cannot be the sole jurisdiction of provinces. This is one area where

the national department of education could help level the playing fields in resource allocation, especially in highly deprived contexts which are excluded by the efficiency logic. In any event, it is assumed that the involvement of the national department of education may enhance shared accountability and responsibility between the two levels of education. In many instances, this may help advance equity and redress and close the inequalities that exist between schools per province. The point is that without any clearly defined national mandates, some provinces left to create equitable societies, will always lag behind or even operate in the margins as they struggle to make sense of where to start and how, because of the overwhelming nature of the inherited apartheid debts and backlogs and the confusion of the transitional period. Usually, this affects the marginal societies as they depend on the state for their functional existence and improvement of their living conditions.

Besides issues of design, the study also illuminated that organisations like the ECDE are caught in a dual tension of servicing their professional mandates while responding to managerialist demands. For instance it became clear that this organisation has brought into the project based work programmes that outline quantifiable outputs and key performance areas as shown by the strategic documents. However, this reconfiguration and organisation of work practices cannot be the only way that organisations plan their work. This is largely because educational bureaucracies like hospitals, deal with additional qualitative and intangible factors as part their goals. This stress on the measurable thus may encourage a focus on only what counts thus relegating all the qualitative aspects of curriculum development, teacher development and school improvement to the margins. There is therefore a need to create a balance as certain sections of the work get quantified for accountability purposes while the organisation is left with the space to contribute in other ways based on its knowledge of context. What the thesis says thus this method of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) may create a new selfish culture and practices where the bureaucrats refuse to extend themselves beyond what is calculated.

Building working collaborative cultures

One of the major illuminations of this study is that organisations with fragmented cultures tend to be dysfunctional. These fragmented cultures were a result of the reconciliatory agenda that was initiated in 1994 which saw different departments of education merged into a single department of education. While this made political and administrative sense to save cots and enforced integration, there is no doubt such integration has remained a cultural nightmare as organisation struggle to create cultural cohesions and collaborative practices. Undoubtedly, there are many explanations for this some ranging from the leadership inability to change organisations to the dominance of personal interests that refute attempts of integration. To increase cultural co-operations thus may require more than the disciplinary processes of financial accountability and performance management to include ways to manage the cultural politics of interaction as these dictate the patterns by which work is arranged and gets done.

For instance, the revelation in this case study is that the ECDE is organised around strong identifies that make it difficult for the organisation to perform as expected. These strong and consolidated identities are a result of a general poor conceptualisation of the 1994 reconciliatory agenda that never took cognisance of the consequences of assimilation and the adoption of representative bureaucracies. To date the organisations suffers form consolidated network arrangements and coalition whose interests are incompatible to organisational goals. Hence it is no surprise that the leadership in this organisation struggles to create working communities that are based on trust and collaborative practices. Changing such organisations thus is equally a case of the eradication of these fragmented cultural spaces that create further differences than collaboration.

The significance of resources

This thesis has shown that organisational efficiency is equally conditional to the resource capacities that exist. This means that while it is possible to institutionalise programmes like the Public Finance Management Act and its budget-based planning cycles, these have to contend with the unequal

development in bureaucratic systems, which in this case were due to homeland disparities. As it is, places like the EC had very little resources on the table at the time of change, having previously inherited the arid homelands that had been excluded from development through almost thirty years of independence as part of the apartheid project. To close this gap thus, needs a call beyond the adoption of sophisticated managerial techniques that are seen to be of help in modernised organisations. The point is that the ECDE still lacks basic infrastructure, which makes it imperative therefore to introduce basic functional systems rather than rush for the new technocratic type of modernisation propagated by New Public Management and other similar management concepts. In retrospect, this thesis advocates for prioritisation based on contextual needs and also the staggering of the reform programme to accommodate resource limitations.

By advocating the need for resources, it equally acknowledges the current mismanagement and the corruption that is embedded within the system due to the inherited patronage practices. Nevertheless, it still contends that to create an effective change there is need for a clear consideration of local conditions and the struggles inherent in them. Where such consideration is a reality, this may help the policy planning cycles as well as organisations are helped to respond only to relevant local needs. Again this calls for variation and flexibility to accommodate the differentiations that exist in the country. Put differently, it is important that organisations have the autonomy to choose programmes they are able to implement in accordance with their particular contexts and resource capacities, rather than pursue generic tendencies across all provinces. The point is that public organisations in South Africa are too diverse for anyone to make any generic assumptions about them.

The significance of skills

The South African public organisations in general contend with issues of skills and capacity. Unfortunately, organisational change research tends to put this in the margins, unless one examines the human resources type of literature. For instance, even NPM, a popular ideology in the public sector, never questions the

issue of skills and competencies. Rather, it assumes managers have the training and the required competencies to lead and direct change. This makes such theories difficult to translate in conditions where skills are limited, as was the case in the ECDE. The issues of skills and competencies are in fact contentious issues in South Africa, partly because the politics of the negotiated settlement have led to schizophrenic types of organisations that depict high levels of mistrust of the unknown and marginalisation of the unfamiliar. By this, one refers to the complex politics of race and ethnicity inherited from the past, which still dominate most organisations; this may be why some organisations, including the ECDE, easily divert from their goals as the workforce becomes preoccupied with consolidating their positions and specific interests. The ECDE is an example of an organisation where the politics of reconciliation and compromise have remained superficial as it over-emphasised the politics of affiliation over skills and competence, leading to the marginalisation and exclusion of competent personnel.

This is not unique, as most organisations function within such a binary where either politics or skills and competence are used to staff the organisation. Unfortunately, such binaries tend to have race, ethnicity, gender and political connotations to them. While this may prove to be an advantage in consolidating managerial and personal loyalties, it is also be a platform that breeds other organisational dysfunctionalities, like corruption and patronage. Nonetheless, the lesson that can be derived in this case study is that loyalty-based organisations tend to do poorly, especially if loyalty is championed at the expense of skills and competence.

To change such systems, managers cannot have absolute liberty to determine the direction of public organisations based on stereotyped binaries without any recourse regarding their actions or even accountability. Such actions enhance organisational tensions, conflicts and intolerance amongst the workforce. This means that, besides the national programmes, there is a need for internal mechanisms that help to foster the necessary objectivity. To date, the national systems of accountability remain weak, with the result that the state struggles to

monitor policy compliance in general. Consequently, many organisations assume that individual ethics and conscience will be able to drive the national interest. On the contrary, however, the ECDE has shown that individuals do not necessarily identify themselves with national issues or organisational interests. Instead, self-interests tend to dominate. This means that in the context of weak national and provincial systems, it becomes imperative to create organisational processes that will institutionalise ethical managerial and governing principles that promote organisational goals and interests while they curb self-interest.

7.2 Directions for future research

This study contributes to the debate and research on organisational change in the following ways:

Firstly, through empirical research and an in depth case analysis it has shown the complexities that public organisations in South Africa face at the time of transition. *Secondly*, it has also shown that organisational change debates in South Africa need to go beyond the generic technical assumptions to include an analysis of internal and external networks and their micro cultural politics which may influence notions of service delivery. *Thirdly*, it has illuminated on the differentiated nature of the South African bureaucracy in a way that suggests the need to re-look at these bureaucracies as unique and complex entities than as generic single model institutions that require generic solutions of change. *Fourthly,* it has shown that there is a consistency in the flow of relations between the context, organizational configuration and its outcomes. This implies that it is insufficient to analyse organisations as entities separate from their environments. Rather, it is important to understand the nature of context, the structural limitations it brings and the type of agency that exists internally and externally, which all contribute to what gets negotiated and gets done.

With regard to future research, it may be interesting to:

- Theorise the networked bureaucracies and their consequences on change and service delivery.

- Conduct comparative studies to see how other public organisations in similar contexts manage change.
- Explore a range of successful organisations to see what makes them successful.
- Explore the concept of decentralisation and its relevance with the aim to examine ways to increase service delivery.
- Examine the emerging organisational cultures of the post 1994 bureaucracies.
- Examine the role played by unions in the reform programme.
- Explore how *Batho Pele* principles are understood and implemented to advance service delivery.

APPENDIX ONE

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APPENDIX TWO

INTERVIEWEES

No.	Name	Position	Department/ Organisation	Date & Place of Interview
1.	Mr S. Xhoseka	Director: Human Resource Development	ECDE	11/11/2003 Zwelitsha
2.	Mr C. Mangcu	Director: Early Childhood Development	ECDE	11/11/2003 Zwelitsha
3.	Mr J. Godden	Former Director-General, ECDE and former co-ordinator of Imbewu Project	Independent Consultant	18/11/2003 East London
4.	Mr B.T.M Mfenyana	Chief Director - District Development	ECDE	19/11/2003 Zwelitsha and 10/05/2004
5.	Mr. R Tywakadi	Chief Director: Curriculum Management	ECDE	19/11/2003 Zwelitsha
6.	Mr. P. Mfenyana	Director: Quality Assurance, assessment and examinations	ECDE	20/11/2003 King Williams Town
7.	Dr S. Muthwa	Director	Fort Hare Institute of Government	20/11/2003 Bisho
8.	Mr Mandla Mphahlwa	Chairman: Education Portfolio Committee Member	Provincial Legislature, Bisho	11/05/2004 Bisho
9.	Mr X. Manzi	Junior Manager	EC Provincial Treasury	11/05/2004 Bisho
10.	Mrs B. Maneli	Director	Department of Public Works, Bisho	11/05/2004 Bisho
11.	Rev. A. Fetsha	Educational Development Officer	District Office: Grahamstown	15/05/2004 East London
12.	Mr. Khaya Ngaso	Chief Director: Human Resources	ECDE	15/05/2004 Zwelitsha

13.	Mr J. Bartlet	Director	ECDE: Imbewu Project	15/05/2004 Zwelitsha
14.	Mr I. Wear	Former Provincial Commissioner	Independent Consultant	17/05/2004 Hogsback
15.	Mr Stone Sizani	Former MEC of the ECDE 2001/2	ANC: Port Elizabeth	18/05/2004 Port Elizabeth
16.	Mr. G. M. Naidoo	District Manager	District Office: Grahamstown	19/05/2004 Grahamstown
17.	Mr. V. Tetyana	Researcher: Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM)	Rhodes University	19/05/2004 Grahamstown
18.	Dr M. Tom	Director General	Office of the Premier, Bisho	19/05/2004 Bisho
19.	Mrs B. Kamana	Assistant Director: Human Resource Management and NEHAWU representative	ECDE	20/05/2004 Zwelitsha
20.	Mr. E. Fray	Director: EMIS and Physical Resource Planning	ECDE	20/05/2004 Zwelitsha
21.	Mr. E. Harris	Deputy Director General	ECDE	21/05/2004 Zwelitsha
22.	Mr. M. Ngonzo	District Manager	Cofimvaba	10/11/2005 Johannesburg
23.	Mr R. Kali	District Manager	Queenstown	15/11/2005 Telephone interview

APPENDIX THREE

INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

A: Interview Schedule for the Department of Education Provincial Officials.

1. History of Organisational Change in the Provincial Department

The Department has undergone through various transformational changes in the past eight years, can you share your experiences of the nature of changes that have taken place.

a) What has changed and how?

2. Perceptions about the Eastern Cape Department of Education

The department is currently perceived as the one of the inefficient public organisations to date.

b) Is this a perception or reality? Explain

c) What are the challenges that you have experienced in changing this organisation in the past eight years?

3. The Interim Management Task Team Intervention

The department is currently going through a change intervention through the Interim Management Task Team.

d) What are your views about this type of intervention?

e) Is the department in a state where it warrants an outside intervention?

4. Managing the Merger, Change and Culture

In any merger of different organisations there are always challenges that relate to creating a single vision and culture.

f) Can you comment on the management practices and culture of the organisation.

g) What have been the challenges of the merger?

h) How has the department managed them?

5. Challenges of the department

i) What do you consider to be the challenges for the department going forward?

6. Lessons about change

j) What lessons have you learnt over the years about managing change?

B. Interview Schedule for other researchers/ consultants/ departments

1. Experiences on working with the department

Generally, can you share your experiences on working with the department of education.

(a) how long have you worked with department? and

(b) in what role? Explain
(c) what has been the experience like?

2. The Interim Management Task Team Intervention

The department is currently going through a change intervention programme through the Interim Management Task Team.

(d) What are your views about this type of intervention?
(e) Is the department in a state where it warrants an outside intervention?

3. Challenges of the department

(f) What do you consider to be the challenges for the department going forward

4. Lessons about change

(g) What lessons have you learnt over the years about managing change in the public sector?