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Schools as learning organizations

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The 21st century is here. Where are schools as learning organizations?

> *The evidence is accumulating to suggest that higher performing schools are functioning as learning organizations (Fullan, 1995; Leithwood & Louis, 1998; Marks, Louis, & Print, 2000; Silins et al., 2000). Schools that engage in organizational learning enable staff at all levels to learn collaboratively and continuously and put these learnings to use in response to social needs and demands of their environment.*
>
> Silins, Mulford, and Zarins, 2002: 639

Introduction

This study examines the nature of learning in schools as organizations and how that learning is nurtured and sustained. In so doing, it addresses the question of whether and how the concept of learning organizations is applicable to schools in transition. This is achieved through an in-depth analysis of two South African schools in Gauteng Province.

In the last decade of the 20th Century, the concept of learning organizations (borrowed from the corporate world) came to be viewed as a solution to the problems caused by ever-changing educational reforms and as a better way of restructuring schools for the 21st Century (Fullan, 1993; Kerka, 1995; Cousins, 1996; Mulford, 1998; Riley, 2000; and Silins et al., 2002). As a result, support for the importance of organizational learning in schools has grown within a relatively short period of time (Silins et al., 2002; Mulford, 1998; Cousins; 1996).

Although there is no consensus on the definition of the term 'learning organization', there is wide agreement in the literature that learning organizations provide continuous learning opportunities; that they use learning to reach their goals; that they foster inquiry and dialogue, making it safe for people to share openly and take risks; that they embrace creative tension as a source of energy and renewal; and that they are continuously aware of and interact with the environment (Kerka, 1995). The idea of learning organizations is encouraged in schools in South Africa,

as elsewhere, as a way of adding value to the different forms of learning and to ensure more effective approaches to educational change. However, as much as the concept is lauded both in South Africa and elsewhere, it is not clear how it can be applied in schools where the core processes, procedures, and even programmes are often elusive.

This chapter serves as an introduction to the study. The *first* section focuses on the research problem - the trends related to a perceived growing need for schools to becoming learning organizations, especially in the South African context. The section also reflects areas of concern emerging from the growing literature on schools as learning organizations. The *second* section presents the aims, objectives, and specific research questions. These are followed by a brief discussion of the scope and limits of the study, as well as the assumptions that are for later scrutiny in the analysis chapters. This section also presents the context of the study, particularly the changing educational context in South Africa, which has implications for the extent to which schools may engage in the continuous process of learning. The last section provides an overview of the thesis and its chapters.

Statement of the problem

While there has been an explosion of books and journal articles on organizational learning and learning organizations, there seems to be no clear articulation of the nature of learning in schools as organizations or of the extent to which the concept of learning organizations can properly be applied in schools. A small but increasing number of educational writers have taken up the organizational learning 'baton' (Mulford, 1998) to explore the promises of the learning organization concept for schools. Educational authors interested in organizational learning include: Argyris and Schön, 1978; Cousins, 1994; Fullan, 1993; Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach, 1995; Louis, 1994; Miles, 1993; Mitchell, 1995; Watkins and Marsick, 1993; and Mitchell, 1995. Most of the work on organizational learning is 'theoretical in nature, based on literature reviews and anecdotal reports' (Mitchell, 1995: 47). This raises a host of questions about what

is required if the concept is to fulfil its promise of improving organizational effectiveness in schools.

As much as it is clear that treating schools as learning organizations is now considered important in helping schools to be more proactive and effective in the changes they face, the applicability of this concept is still fuzzy, especially in the South African context where the political factors that shape the purposes and processes of educational change are still in transition. Even although ten years have passed since the advent of formal democracy, South Africa is in transition after a long period of anti-democratic rule under the apartheid regime which gave public schools limited opportunities to act independently of what was prescribed for them at government level. Now South African schools are required to respond to new policies, for example, in the areas of curriculum and school governance. In this respect, too, schools are in transition and still contain elements of lack of focus, energy, commitment, and creativity in the way they address some of the required changes (Nsibande, 2002).

What does it mean to think of a school as a learning organization and how, if at all, might this concept be used for guiding and understanding school change in a South African context? DiBella and Nevis (1998) draw from a variety of literature and argue that the concept can be viewed from three perspectives: the *normative perspective,* the *developmental perspective*, and the *capability perspective*. The normative perspective focuses on the ideal type of learning in organizations and the belief that organizations need to have certain attributes to be considered learning organizations. The developmental perspective focuses on the stage of development of an organization so as to determine its ability for further development. This perspective assumes that the age and size of an organization determine the extent to which it can learn. Those who advocate the capability perspective argue that learning is like breathing as it happens all the time. It presupposes that learning is indigenous to organizational life. According to this perspective, schools do not have to *become* learning organizations. In theory, as Watkins and Marsik (1993:3) neatly put it, 'the learning organization concept is appealing, everyone is talking about [it] but few are living it'. On the same note,

Calvert et al. (1994) argue, 'We know a lot about learning organizations but less about how to apply it' (sic) (p.40).

According to Hoffman and Withers (1995), the concept has been sloganized, jargonized and watered down and many organizations profess to be learning organizations but, upon closer scrutiny, fall short of the ideal. On the one hand, the learning organization paradigm cannot be ignored because understanding how schools learn is likely to dominate any future work to bring both their effectiveness and improvement efforts to the fore. On the other hand, we cannot ignore the idea that schools are a different kind of organization and there is a need to understand the discords between corporate values and school-oriented realities and practices. Corporate values include: collaborative work cultures with strong networks; competition that help each other to excel; doing things that are distinctive and hard to copy; and institutionalizing breakthrough thinking (Senge, 1990).

With the new concept of self-managing schools, collaborative work cultures have become a major challenge for school principals working in bureaucracies; yet the nature of teaching and learning is such that teachers work in isolation and their profession remains a lonely one (Hargreaves, 1998). Some schools still rely heavily on directives from external authorities like the districts (Sharan et al., 1999), conformity to rules oppresses teachers and restricts breakthrough thinking, and schooling continues to be both fragmented and stratified (O'Neil, 1995). In schools, leadership is appointed rather than earned which results in it being exclusive and often authoritarian. These are only a few examples of the differences between corporate and school values. Part of the purpose of this thesis is to scrutinise the differences as a way of exploring possibilities for promoting learning organization values in schools.

Although a lot has been written about the benefits to schools of becoming learning organizations, such literature is relatively young and creates confusion in the ways schools are defined (Kerka, 1995; Mulford, 1998). Much of it is based more on anecdotal reports than on empirical evidence (Mulford, 1998; Kerka, 1995). Since

the present educational system is continually changing, it is important for teachers to keep thinking about how they can continually work in their individual organizations to improve their practice and, in turn, benefit their learners. According to Mulford (1998), organizational learning offers the potential of stability for change which is an opportunity for schools to move ahead without losing their roots. If so then, organizational learning is 'a change strategy worthy of further development and analysis' (Mulford, 1998: 637). This is the starting assumption for my thesis.

Research aims, questions, and objectives

The aim of the study

The central *aim* of this thesis is to examine the nature of organizational learning practices in two Gauteng secondary schools in order to identify the tensions, gaps, and contradictions between the learning organization model and its applicability in schools in general, but with specific reference to the South African context. Through an investigation of the tensions between corporate and school values, gaps in participants' world views, and contradictions in the way schools as organizations interpret their learning practices, the thesis aims to examine the kinds of learning that individuals, groups, and schools as organizations consider desirable in order for them to adapt to the changing educational environments. The thesis will also examine the motivating factors for learning practices at individual, group and organizational level. Finally, since leadership is at the heart of learning organizations, the thesis also examines the interface between schools as learning organizations and how school leaders nurture and promote, or sometimes inhibit, the process of learning to change and learning to learn.

Specific research questions

In order to accomplish the aims of the study, I have addressed four sets of questions. These are set out below.

(i) What is the nature of learning practices in schools as a response to the educational changes that confront schools?

(ii) What do individuals bring to their organizations that contribute to or inhibit the process of organizational learning?
(iii) What are the tensions between the corporate conception of learning organizations and its applicability to schools, and why?
(iv) How does school leadership nourish or malnourish the existing learning patterns?

The questions are listed here in the order in which they are addressed in the thesis. Chapters Four and Five address the first question through a descriptive analysis of the organizational learning practices at two schools. Each of these two chapters is a case study. Chapter Six provides a detailed analysis of individual stories of learning. The third question is addressed in the synthesis chapter, Chapter Seven, which reveals the tensions of the learning organization concept in its relationship to school practices. Leadership in nurturing values of learning is interwoven in all the analysis chapters and it becomes more explicit in the conclusion, Chapter Eight.

Research objectives

Each of the research questions is linked to a set of objectives, with some degree of overlap. The objectives are to:

- provide rich descriptions of schools' learning orientations and learning practices at two Gauteng schools that seem to be proactive in their learning in the face of the changes faced by South African schools (Questions 1, 2 and 3);
- provide information on the contextual 'triggers' that make school members re-position themselves in ways that seem to characterize learning organizations using different forms of learning (Question 1, 2, and 3);
- elicit discords between corporate values and school-oriented practices and realities by analyzing data for tensions and contradictions in viewing schools as learning organizations, as well as gaps in school leaders' understanding of what it means for a school to be a learning organization (Question 3);

- discover positive and negative influencing factors towards schools as learning organizations and the main challenges of schools in becoming learning organizations, especially South African schools with diverse contexts (Question 1, 2, 3, and 4); and
- investigate the extent to which school leaders, especially principals, provide rich conditions under which the people in the schools can transform and flourish in the transition period leading from the previous apartheid government (Question 4);

Focus and scope of the study

Although I selected three perspectives for the literature on learning organizations (namely, the developmental, the capability and the normative) the study focuses primarily on the *normative perspective*, which is mostly used to explain learning organizations and their characteristics. The normative perspective is concerned with ideals and was selected because most of the literature advocating for schools to be learning organizations focuses on what is considered as ideal learning in an organization. This perspective resembles putting schools into a template and examining what they do in relation to what is expected of them as learning organizations. The study acknowledges that schools are expected to implement many reforms while also operating in complex environments. This means that in order for people to survive in the changing educational context, schools need to engage in the learning process irrespective of size, history or their capabilities that may be untapped.

The questions addressed in the study have the potential of answering how and why some schools have the capacity of successfully engaging in individual, team and organizational learning practices for the whole organization to learn while some have not. It would have been appropriate to include parents as direct participants but I decided to focus on those that experience the school environment on a day-to-day basis. That thinking also influenced the decision to

limit the scope of the study to only two schools and only those that appear to be attempting to respond proactively to change.

Research assumptions

Any research project starts with a number of assumptions, many of which may be revised, confirmed or disconfirmed during the course of the investigation. Recognising the fuzziness of the concept of learning organisations and with due regard for the central research questions to be addressed, this study was built on the following assumptions, which will later be subjected to closer scrutiny in the analysis chapters (Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven):

- Like individuals, organizations have *multiple ways in which they learn*. People's personal lives and their experiences in different phases of their lives are what influence their learning, even in schools as organizations (Hargreaves, 1998; Mulford, 1998).
- There are specific *transition points* in the life of individuals and organizations that trigger the shifts in values that serve as mechanisms for the adoption of new values and attitudes (Huber, 1996; Van der Merwe in Senge et al., 1999). These individual and organizational triggers may provide or may fail to provide a new kind of learning due to a lack of relevant technologies to elevate the learning into organizational learning.
- Turbulence in the form of unexpected change may open *new forms of learning* and learning to change. Although the change may be uncomfortable, it may further open up new forms of social life where people begin to experiment with new ways of organizing themselves (Kirkbridge et al., 1994).
- As schools are confronted with a plethora of reforms, school leaders tend to resort to '*quick fixes*' without a proper conceptualisation of the implications of the changes.
- *Rigid cultures and structures* are an impediment to schools becoming learning organizations.

The study context

South Africa is an especially rich context in which to examine the notion of schools as learning organizations. Since 1994 South Africa has not only gone through political transition but also economic and social transition (Moloi, 2002). As part of responding to the global context and the commitments of a new democratic dispensation, the South African government has introduced a range of educational reforms to overcome the legacy of the apartheid education. Under apartheid, the majority of schools, especially black schools, produced passive learners with little say on what they learnt, how and why. Parents were regarded as outsiders to the school community and were distanced from matters pertaining to the school. Members of the school community (teachers and school leaders) relied heavily on state dictates on what should be taught in their schools, irrespective of the differences between schools. In many cases, collaborative cultures that encouraged learning in organizations were unknown or even discouraged.

The reforms which I discuss in this section are in line with the broader framework of socio-economic goals intended to enable South Africa to compete in the global world. Within the education sector the speed of change, at least at the level of policy, has been remarkable. The study captures the school realities in relation to the policies, particularly from the eve of democracy in the mid-1990s. The discussion of policies in the thesis illustrates the challenges of learning to learn at school level, particularly to those at the sharp edge of implementing the changes.

The White Paper on Education and Training (Department of Education, 1995) marked the start of education policy development for a post-apartheid state. This was followed in quick succession by a line of policy and legal instruments for achieving the vision of White Paper 1 at school level. The South African Schools Act of 1996 helped to establish democratic governance structures within schools, with greater parental and student participation in decision-making. The Schools' Act also dramatically strengthened the importance of support and development at school level within the concept of self-managing schools. In the same year (1996),

the Education Department embarked on a 'right-sizing' exercise. According to Christie (1999), the exercise was part of developing norms and standards for class sizes for distributing teachers and reducing salary costs by sending teachers to schools where there was a greater need for their services. In 2001, the *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* (Department of Education, 2001) called on schools, teachers and curriculum developers to engender and reflect the values enshrined in the Bill of Rights. In July 2001, a Whole-school Evaluation Policy was introduced according to which every school would be evaluated through school self-evaluation, followed by external evaluation by registered supervisors (Quality Assurance Directorate, 2001). All these educational reforms were introduced when schools were grappling with the introduction of Curriculum 2005 (C2005) and Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) and, subsequently, with the revised national curriculum for General Education and Training (GET) (Department of Education, 2001).

The new curriculum, in keeping with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), suggested a shift in the way in which children learn and a change in their motives and attitudes which, in turn, meant teachers had to abandon traditional approaches (Department of Education, 1996a). Like all other post-apartheid education policy reforms, the curriculum is premised on and promotes the principles of equity and redress as a means of overcoming past inequities. Critical thought and more active styles of learning are central features of the post-apartheid curriculum.

This array of policy developments has been fraught with challenges at the level of implementation. Some of the main challenges are set out below.

- Since the South African Schools Act (SASA) requires schools to be self-managed, they have had to learn to use their resources efficiently and effectively and to implement distributed forms of leadership. At the same time, formal leaders like principals are required to be even more accountable than ever to other school bodies and external authorities (Department of Education, 1996b);

- ‘Right sizing’, which is about the efficient use of resources, was left to the discretion of schools as the departments did not have a database of teachers employed, their qualifications, and their expertise (Christie, 1999). This exercise led to conflicts at school level as the micro politics of schools were ignored. The idea of white teachers being redeployed was not welcome by most white teachers as it involved some of them being appointed to teach in township schools, which many of them regarded as unsafe and poorly run. According to Christie (1999), the government spent more than one billion rand instead of the anticipated six million. Qualified white teachers opted for their severance packages, costing the education system a loss of skills and experience.
- Although one of the major concerns in schools has been the professional development of educators, most of the programmes designed to improve schools’ capabilities have proved to be ineffective as a result of poor co-ordination at national, provincial, or district level (Nsibande, 2002). Despite the revision of the national curriculum in 2001 and interventions such as staff development workshops, teachers still find outcomes-based education overwhelming and confusing.
- In some respects, the values in the *Manifesto* appear to be a ‘ragbag’ which reflects ‘a politics of accommodation in which stakeholders’ views are given credence even if together they do not constitute a coherent picture’ (Nsibande and Pendlebury, 2001). Nonetheless the *Manifesto* is strongly linked to the Bill of Rights and is important in attempting to respond to persisting ills that ravage South African schools and communities, such as school violence, sexual abuse, the HIV-AIDS pandemic, and ugly forms of racism.
- Although Whole School Evaluation is already taking place, school teachers still do not understand its rationale and purpose. Some feel that it is not meant to benefit them but, instead, is ′out to get them′.

These challenges show that radical shifts, at the level of systems, school governance and curriculum, have called upon the innovative capacities of schools. There is still insufficient acknowledgement of the role played by teachers in the

implementation of the changes. Yet, in order to respond to the changes adequately, the major focus must be on improving the quality of learning using strategies of change at the school and classroom levels – a task in which teachers are crucial (Department of Education, 1996c). One of the Task Team's recommendations on education management and management development was that schools should become learning organizations. However, the report lacks details on how this can be done. Instead it offers some examples of strategies such as management training, staff development, and organizational development, the last of which needs to be closely linked to individual development.

The rationale for the study

Despite the growing prevalence of the view that schools can structure themselves in ways that characterize learning organizations, very little is known about this form of learning in practice and of the kind of leadership that is needed to create environments conducive to learning in schools as organizations. In South Africa, for example, very little or no empirical work has been done in schools to ensure the applicability of the learning organization model. Most of the ideas about learning organizations have been drawn extensively from the literature of organizations outside of education, a literature that is lacking in examples of the successful application of the concept in schools. In the business sector, there are volumes and volumes of books, journals, and articles about learning organizations and those organizations that practise learning organization principles.

A number of authors have raised important issues that need to be taken into consideration if organizational learning is to be taken seriously as a change strategy for education (Davidoff and Lazarus, 1997; Fullan, 1993; Kerka, 1995; Mulford, 1998). Issues include an understanding of why people in schools need to develop systemic understanding of how they should work together, and of how they can do so to maximise learner achievement despite complex and ongoing change. One of the strategies suggested by Fullan (1993) is a 'reculturation' of organizations. Part of the reculturation process is the necessity for leadership to

create conditions suitable for learning and to identify and overcome practices retarding organizational growth and change. The study presented in this thesis provides substantial examples of reculturation at two South African schools. In the current South African context there are very few accounts of school leaders that can serve as models that could help others to change their present leadership practices. One of the purposes of this thesis is to fill this gap.

The study is also significant because most of the literature tends to focus on the 'what' of learning organizations and avoids, indeed obscures, deeper and the more difficult 'how-to' and 'why' questions. For example, from the normative perspective of viewing organizations, it would be interesting to discover why schools may profess to be learning organizations yet fall far short of that ideal. From the literature on schools as learning organizations so far, the normative approach is usually adopted to provide the answers and yet there are other learning organization perspectives that are neglected in the process (Fullan, 1993; Argyris and Schön, 1996; DiBella and Nevis, 1998). Moloi (2002), who locates her work within the South African context, also provides a conceptual tool for understanding schools as learning organizations using Senge's (1990) five disciplines. Her attempt can help us understand how the concept can transform schools in a changing context but her literature is lacking in practical examples of schools that are able to apply the concept.

Actual school practices are hardly addressed, through empirical evidence, to help us understand why it may be difficult for a school to apply those disciplines especially in the South African context. This study examines the contexts within which learning takes place in South African schools and the idea of schools as learning organizations is critically examined for a deeper level of understanding of the 'why' questions about schools as learning organizations or even 'why' schools are not learning organizations. An understanding of what these schools are like, for example, helps us to understand why it is difficult for schools to learn the new 'tricks' of organizational learning relevant to the changing times or why some schools as organizations are able to learn 'smarter' than others. The study adds to the body of knowledge and theory about the contexts within which learning

organization practices are promoted and the extent to which the learning may be sustained in schools or even transferable to other schools that are lacking in the way they learn and adapt to relevant changes.

Very few authors have explicitly acknowledged that the concept of learning organizations can be viewed from a variety of perspectives. Most of the research on learning organizations emphasizes one perspective, with its roots in Senge (1990) and his Five Disciplines. It has become a common assumption to then label schools as learning organizations based on one perspective and simply ignore other ways of looking at schools as learning organizations. It is my belief that an adequate understanding of how schools learn and why they learn the way they do rests on the appreciation of more than one perspective which, in turn, will help us avoid some taken-for-granted assumptions about schools as learning organizations.

There is very little, if any, research that focuses on school leadership and learning organizations in South African schools. Therefore, we still know very little about how school leaders nurture changes in schools, especially in a context as diverse as South African schools. It has become a taken-for-granted assumption that some schools are learning organizations. In my school development work with several schools, most of the participating schools regarded themselves as 'learning organizations' without changing much of their practice. Studies, especially in the business sector, show that there is a lot of 'lip service' in many organizations to the notion of being learning organizations (Kerka, 1995; Argyris and Schön, 1996). I believe that this study is important in that it may challenge schools, educationists and policy makers, as well as school leaders, to confront the ideological basis of what schools are engaged in in terms of their learning to change. By so doing, the myths and realities of learning in schools as organizations are revealed. The significance of the study is its coming at a time when Silins et al. (2002) have concluded in their study in Australia that the conditions for organizational learning are very much the conditions that are associated with the three school leadership variables: principal transformational leadership; actively involved administrative teams; and distributed leadership.

Although there is a lot to learn from Silins and her colleagues' empirical work, this study is useful for our context in particular, where we are caught between great disproportions in our society as a result of South Africa's apartheid past.

The research is timely in developing a shared understanding of what the schools of the future should look like and, in turn, reveal challenges, problems and dilemmas involved in the school learning processes. Leadership keeps emerging as a key characteristic of outstanding schools if the essence of learning organizations is to have schools that will survive the twenty-first century. The social, political and economic freedom that now prevails in South Africa has provided for the emergence of new leaders in all sectors of the society. There has been an attempt in the change of the leadership role in the South African schools as a result of the devolution of power to schools.

This study is especially significant in a country like South Africa where there is very little research on the kind of leadership suitable for the changing times, since 'South Africa is a country which has experienced one form of leadership for most of the twentieth century as a result of anti-democratic rule under the guise of apartheid' (April et al., 2000, p.iii). Internationally, school leadership has shifted away from leadership of the past where a great amount of attention in schools was been devoted to the person at the top of the hierarchical structure (Fullan, 1996). Today's school leaders are change agents who are expected to provide conditions for their people to constantly move ahead without losing their roots. The study will be useful in understanding the shift in thinking about professional learning and how it can be nurtured by school leaders as they take schools through the twenty-first century.

Organization of the thesis

Like a map, this overview of the chapters is meant to serve as a guide to the reader. There are nine chapters. *Chapter One* has set the context for the study. *Chapter Two* combines the theoretical framework and the literature review. The theoretical framework draws heavily on theories that help in a conceptualisation of

why organizational learning may go well in some organizations and not in others. The framework integrates three segments: organizational memory; organizational learning; and organizational change. The review of the literature builds on the definitions different authors have offered for learning organizations from different perspectives. The chapter also reviews literature on schools as learning organizations and leadership implications.

Chapter Three presents the research design and the methodology of the study. In this chapter I justify how the study is unique and how it merits a qualitative approach. I discuss how the sample of schools and the participants were selected and how interviews, observations, documentary data, and individuals' personal histories were used as contexts. The theoretical and methodological problems and challenges to guard against as a researcher are highlighted.

Chapters Four and *Five* present the case studies of the two schools involved in the study. A description of school contexts and backgrounds introduces each case study to provide some insights into where the schools come from, where they are going, and how they try to reposition themselves in changing educational environments. Examples, quotations and anecdotes are used to illustrate the conditions within which organizational practices take place. The school systems, structures and cultures serve as examples that are helpful in understanding where schools are in terms of their development towards becoming learning organizations and if they are moving in that direction at all. Apart from principals and professional learners, learners' voices are also taken into consideration in these chapters as the schools' practices are also reflected in their values, beliefs and attitudes. The chapters reveal group and organizational pathways which are mainly about how schools invest their time, resources and energy and their orientations when confronted with something new.

Chapter Six follows a similar pattern to that in Chapter Four and Five, but here the 'cases' are of individual learning or unlearning, presented through brief biographies of a selection of teachers at each of the two schools. This is to understand the people in organizations – who they are, where they come from,

what they have learnt and where they think they are going in terms of their personal and professional evolution and their contributions to the schools as learning organizations. The analysis considers the steps taken by individuals, especially in one of the schools where poverty could be an inhibiting factor, to make schools become learning organizations, and their attempts at remedying the ills of poverty. Individual cases from both schools also portray socio-economic conditions within which individual learning is linked to emotional challenges and dysfunctional experiences and circumstances in which learning takes place. Since leadership is at the core of the learning organization, the creation and nurturing patterns of reflection and development and renewal, or even the lack of that nurturing, is traced in the individuals' stories, biographical accounts, or life histories. In this study, I have observed that, against the background of theory and practice that has been widely studied, the voices of leaders and role-players are often left out of the professional dialogue, and yet they form an integral part of the leadership landscape. Again and again, the learners confirmed this observation.

Chapter Seven moves to a deeper level of analysis following the patterns that have emerged in Chapter Four, Chapter Five and Chapter Six. Emerging themes are discussed at length and the focus is on the tensions and contradictions between school-oriented practices and realities, on the one hand, and the learning organization model with many frames, on the other. The strength of the chapter is in the development of new constructs and the refinement of old frames of looking at schools. Insights into school realities and their discords reveal the complex role of school leadership in influencing schools' responses to a changing environment as part of a process of learning to change. This is crucial to understanding what is involved in developing schools as learning organizations. The chapter also reveals the disabling tendencies of schools as organizations.

Chapter Eight concludes the findings and attempts to provide a new language for looking at organizational learning, its sustenance, and the kind of leadership that will be needed for the twenty-first century schools. In this chapter I try to locate a theoretical space based on the data so that the study contributes to research about schools and the way they can sustain the learning habit while not losing

sight of what schools' purposes are in the face of ever-changing educational reforms.

Chapter Nine is a reflective chapter that illuminates the challenges of researching schools in South Africa. In this chapter, I acknowledge that the study ended up taking a slightly different direction from the intended research design. I hope that other researchers may learn from my reflections on my field work experiences.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

What are learning organizations? What do the definitions mean for schools?

> *Change is the constant. The only way to survive is a learning organization - to continually adapt, learn, and be change-responsive, to reinvent the reality and the future, to transform organizations that excel in the future will be those that understand how to gain commitment of people at all levels and continually expand their capacity to learn.*
>
> Rolls, 1995: 102

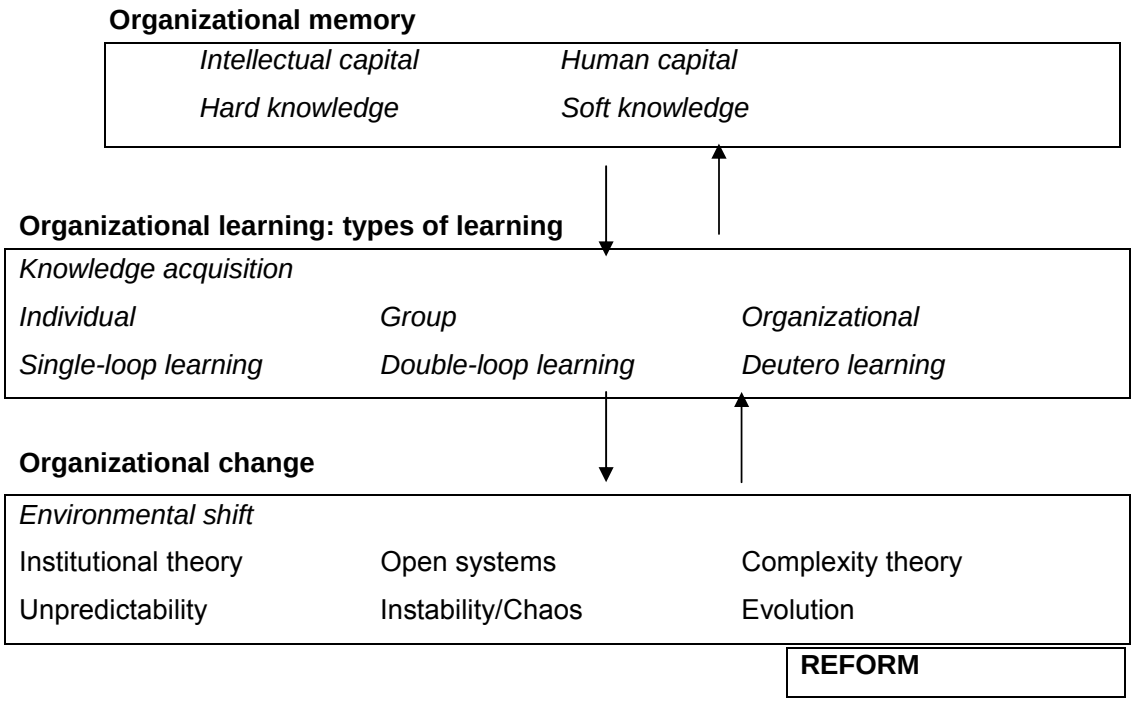
The concept of learning organizations is complex and there are multiple meanings attached to it. This is evident in the difficulties that various theorists have in providing a clear and agreed upon definition. Researchers such as March and Olsen (1975); Argyris and Schön (1996); Senge (1990); March (1996); DiBella and Nevis (1998); and Marsik et al. (2000) have all sought to understand how organizations learn over time from experience. Even at an educational level, theorists have found the concept of learning organization difficult to pin down (Fullan, 1993; Kerka, 1995; and Mulford, 1998).

Although many people have formulated various definitions of the term 'learning organization', the starting place in this study is with Hanson's (2001) work on how organizations differ in their capacity to learn. This chapter thus begins, in the *first section,* with a theoretical framework drawn from Hanson (2001). The *second section* tries to make sense of ambiguities in the literature on the learning organization by looking at different perspectives on learning organizations and at the sort of questions raised and answered within each perspective. This section also presents tensions in models of practice, tracing the tensions from dysfunctional learning experiences that individuals have experienced at different points in their lives. Individuals are important because organizations themselves do not learn; individuals learn on behalf of their organizations. Also critical in the discussion is the focus on leadership which, according to recent management thinking, is the wellspring of a learning organization. Since the study investigates the applicability of the learning organization model in schools, the end of section two lays a foundation for understanding the realities and practices that may promote or inhibit learning in schools as organizations.

Theoretical framework

The framework for the study integrates three segments of research literature into an overall conceptual framework which is mainly drawn from the work of Hanson (2001). Hanson's framework is enriched by the ideas of Silins et al. (2002); Marsik et al. (2000); Mulford 1998; Argyris and Schön (1996), and others. The three segments are: organizational memory; organizational learning; and organizational change. This is a preferred framework as it 'lends insight into three progressively comprehensive types of change: homogenization (where one school adjusts its composition to look like other schools); evolution (where the first steps into unknown territory are taken), and reform (where significant transfiguration takes place)' (Hanson, 2001: 637). The framework is useful in explaining how schools learn in the analysis chapters. The framework is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Theoretical framework



Organizational memory

Like any organization, schools must possess a sound holding environment of past experiences. If they fail, they are destined to drift along repeated errors (Hanson, 2001). Hanson defines this holding environment as the organizational memory. Knowledge-based organizations and educational systems, Hanson argues, need to accumulate progressively the intellectual capital of acquired knowledge in terms of which decisions are made, as well as the human capital of people with the necessary expertise for effective deployment of intellectual capital. But this seems to suggest that human and intellectual capital are different. Marsick (2000) and her colleagues observe that intellectual capital has three components: human capital, structural capital and customer capital, defined as follows:

> Human capital resides in the people who work in a system themselves with all their knowledge, experience, capacity to grow and innovate. Structural capital is what remains behind when people leave premises: systems, policies, processes, tools, or intellectual property that become property of the system itself. Customer capital is the system of relationships that an organization has with clients irrespective of the people who work there or the structural capital that is in place (Marsick et al., 2000: 8)

The literature on knowledge as a product in organizations is relatively new. Marsik et al. (2000) maintain that it grew out of dissatisfaction with conventional economic measures of value. These days, many of the assets brought to an organization reside in intangibles as they reside in people or the systems and products people create. Intangibles in the past were identified as “good will” but now there is more value in knowledge management, as is evident in the intellectual capital literature which underpins the creation of “the balanced scoreboard” that measures human, structural, and customer capital with financial capital and intangibles (Marsik et al, 2000). This form of organizational learning encourages conformity and suppresses diversity. Outside these boundaries, there is literature on innovation, which emphasizes the value of creativity. This is ironical since the literature on innovation is what gave birth to the idea of intellectual capital. Hanson (2001), quoting Levitt and March (1996: 526), argues that ′unless the implications of experience can be transferred from those who experienced it to those who did not, the lessons of history are likely to be lost through turnover in personnel′

(Levitt and March, 1996: 638), thus the programmes and policies of the future are extensions of past experiences as recorded in memory.

People's memories differ and so do the memories of organizations (Hanson, 2001). Some organizations have better memories than others. Educational institutions are particularly proficient in establishing and pursuing hard knowledge in the way of firm policies, procedures, and routines but have poor memories when it comes to soft knowledge. Hanson (2001) attributes this weakness to badly indexed and stored records, minutes not being taken in meetings, blackboards getting erased too quickly, 'old hands' being transferred, and departure of experienced teachers (p. 639). In the case of teachers, the special qualities of individual students get lost as students move through their classrooms on a yearly basis. As a result, teachers' unique insights about those learners' special qualities are lost as learners move to new teachers. Staff turnover results in a similar loss of soft knowledge memory.

Organizational learning

The concept of learning organizations is inextricably bound to that of organizational learning and sometimes the terms "learning organization" and "organizational learning" are used interchangeably. According to Argyris and Schön (1996) and DiBella and Nevis (1998), these are related but distinct ideas:

> Organizational learning is a term used to describe certain types of activities or processes that may occur at any one of several levels of analysis or as part of an organizational change process. Thus it is something that takes place in all organizations, whereas the learning organization is a particular type or form of organization in and of itself (p.6).

Argyris and Schön (1996) are widely credited for producing the first serious treatment of organizational learning as a conceptual framework for organizational reform. Organizational learning occurs when individuals within an organization experience a problematic situation and inquire into it on the organization's behalf (Argyris and Schön, 1996). This means that organizational learning occurs when individuals experience a mismatch between expected and actual results of action and respond to that mismatch through a process of thought and further action.

That process leads individuals 'to modify their images of organization or their understanding of organizational phenomena and to restructure their activities so as to bring outcomes and expectations into line, thereby changing theory-in-use' (p. 16).

Organizational learning and the school as a learning organization have been encouraged in view of the many educational reform initiatives to improve schools (Mulford, 1998; Silins et al., 2002). Why is there such a push for organizational learning? According to Hargreaves (1998), organizational learning is seen as cutting-edge for the implementation of the educational reform initiatives. Mulford (1998) and Cousins (1996) maintain that there is great value in applying the organizational learning theory in schools. Theories of organizational learning help in understanding why restructuring may proceed well in some schools and not in others. Louis (1994, in Cousins, 1996) argues that such theories are able to do so in ways that are overlooked by the 'managed change' literature. Mulford (1998) observes that organizational learning is relevant at a time of unprecedented change, paradox, and deep societal concerns over schooling. This is because the learning organization framework emphasizes the cognitive and behavioural transformations that occur in individuals as part of the emergence of new organizational patterns. However, Louis (1994) admits that the frame is poorly developed in educational studies. Louis (1994) also argues that organizational learning theories help us 'to think about how the problem of how schools change basic assumptions about "what is it we do here" when demands for significant reform are made' (p.8). According to Louis (1994), organizational learning offers stability for change as it is a strategy with the potential to address current change agendas (p.637).

Cook and Yanow (1996) maintain that organizational learning can be done only by a group and not an individual. An example of this, provided by Hanson (2001) is that of a basketball team where, no matter how brilliant a player is, he cannot play the game alone. In another example, an orchestra becomes an orchestra only when the artistry of the winds and strings blend together.

Organizational learning and developmental pathways

Organizational learning as a form of knowledge acquisition that applies at different levels of analysis: the individual, teams, and companies (Mulford, 1998). This sub-section examines the different types of learning by focusing on how what is learnt is required either by individuals, teams or organizations as a whole. First, is a discussion of the different pathways or forms of organizational inquiry significant to organizational learning. Second, are the different forms of learning which determine the extent to which an organization can learn.

Individual pathways

The individual pathway is based on the premise that understanding the individual's development stages can help to clarify the larger motives behind the investments of time, money and energy by many educational personnel (Mulford, 1998). Such an understanding 'can show us the more fundamental purposes that underlie undertaking further education, the pursuit of promotion, or a career change, the desire to meet new persons, read more widely, explore new ideas and interests' (p.620). He adds that it is useful to understand the individuals' career stages to understand if they are planning for retirement or school improvement. Using the works of Huberman (1995), Mulford (1998) maintains that the implications for individual pathways of learning can also be linked to teacher satisfaction in times of change – to their perceptions, feelings and motivations, as well as their behaviour and performance when facing something new. For example, teachers are likely to be reluctant to work collaboratively until they have personally mastered what has to be changed. Mulford (1998) argues that transformations require greater input of people's energy and time to bring meaning, values and skills to a conscious level where they can examine them thoroughly. Also, new behaviours need to be tested out in a safe situation before being put into use in daily life.

In everyday conversation, and even in scholarly discourse, it is common to find people attributing to teams, departments, or whole organizations activities such as thinking, reasoning, learning, or remembering (Argyris and Schön, 1996). When

the idea of organizational learning started in the 1970s, some social scientists disputed the idea that learning could be attributed to the organization (Argyris and Schön, 1996). To them, it seemed paradoxical, if not perverse, to attribute learning to organizations and ignore the individual who learns, thinks, reasons and hold opinions. Godfrey Vickers, as cited by Argyris and Schön (1996), argues that if the term "organizational learning" means anything, it means learning on the part of the individuals. Kerka (1995) cites the problem of not acknowledging individuals as the agents that learn for the organizations as one of the barriers organisational learning. She argues that organizations do not learn but individuals do and individual learning may go on all the time. The difference with a learning organization is that 'it promotes a culture of learning, a community of learners, and it ensures that individual learning enriches and enhances the organization as a whole' (Kerka, 1995:1).

There is an apparent contradiction about learning organization views from different authors. For example, Cook and Yanow (1996) emphasise the importance of learning in organizations by making sure that the various 'voices' are brought together meaningfully. Kerka (1995) rejects Cook and Yanow's claim as she starts from the premise that organizations do not learn but rather individuals in organizations do. Kerka (1995) sees value in individual learning especially if the learning contributes effectively to the learning of individual groups that make up the organization.

Group pathways

Greater learning occurs when organization members and units acquire knowledge that can change the range of potential behaviours of the organization (Huber, 1991, in Cousins, 1996). For Cousins, external stimuli seem more likely to be realistic when informed by multiple perspectives from within the organization. However, it is not often the reality that matters but the team's model of reality (p.612). Some groups may be robust in bringing about school change but unfortunately, 'hot groups' (those who see a challenge to succeed, and establish high performance work standards) are often a minority and sometimes they can emerge as a negative force (Hanson, 2001: 652).

Mulford (1998) suggests that the best way to understand group pathways of development is to focus attention on the stages of staff and group development, with greater attention to the stages involving conflict and then task accomplishment. On the issue of group pathways to learning and staff development, Leiberman (1995, in Mulford, 1998) argues that people learn best through active involvement and through thinking about and becoming articulate about what they have learnt (p.623). Mulford provides an example of group learning in a study conducted by Hamilton and Richardson in 1995. Hamilton and Richardson examined staff development in two schools implementing a new reading program and found that as the staff development processes proceeded, the people involved were following certain stages, each stage taking different lengths in the two schools. For example, in the first stage, teachers were familiarizing themselves with each other, talking and listening politely to one another; the second stage was a 'breakthrough phase' characterized by a new way of thinking, with, for example, "Do you?" questions; the third stage was when teachers claimed ownership of the staff development and dominated the conversation. According to Mulford (1998), proceeding through the different stages is possible where social norms within the school encourage teachers to discuss their beliefs. This is often effective if teachers engage in such activities as teams or groups.

Organizational pathways

Changes in organizations occur as organizations get older, bigger or even when they find themselves in higher growth rates. Quinn and Cameron (1983, in Mulford, 1998: 628) constructed a summary model of cycle stages that reflect a series of organizational life cycles. Each model is seen to contain:

- an entrepreneurial stage (early innovation, niche formation, creativity);
- a collective stage (high cohesion, commitment);
- a formalization and control stage (stability and institutionalisation; and
- a structure elaboration and adaptation stage (domain expansion and decentralization).

An examination and understanding of the organizational models of development is crucial to a better understanding of the intricacies in moving any organization such as a school or part of a school from where it presently is to effective organizational learning (Mulford, 1998). This approach to understanding organizations is also helpful when embarking on educational programmes that require a certain number of school interventions.

Levitt and March (1996) build their interpretation of organizational learning on at least two classical observations drawn from behavioural studies of organizations. First is the behaviour in organizations based on routines. Action stems from logic of appropriateness or legitimacy and not necessarily on logic of consequentiality or intention. This means that choices are not often calculated. Second is the observation that organizational actions are history-dependent. Routines are based on the actions of the past more than on anticipations of the future.

The different pathways suggested earlier are not possible if those in leadership and management positions do not nurture them. Recognizing and understanding these stages are needed for appropriate action to be taken. Even the way an organization is evaluated needs to be based on the stages organizations have reached.

Types of learning

Marsik, Bitterman and Van der Veen (2000) present three key features of the framework of self-organizing systems: (i) they are open systems that respond constantly to outside influences, as such they are in a state that is far from equilibrium; (ii) they can create new structures and new modes of behaviour; (iii) they develop in a non-linear, multi-causal manner that is catalysed by feedback loops (Capra, 1996). Argyris and Schön (1996) articulate this concept in the form of a dichotomy of “single-loop” versus “double loop” learning. Double loop learning is related to an organization’s frame of reference. Deutero learning, which is scarcely discussed in the literature, is also a type of learning encouraged by Argyris and Schön (1994 and 1996).

Single-loop learning occurs when errors are detected and corrected or when there is a mismatch between action and expectations. Argyris and Schön (1996) define single-loop learning as instrumental learning that changes strategies of action or assumptions underlying strategies (p.20). This kind of learning leaves the values of a theory of action unchanged. According to April et al. (2000), single loop learning may be equated to activities that add to the organization's knowledge base or routines, without altering the fundamental nature of the organizational activities. Senge (1990, in April et al., 2000) refers to single-loop learning as 'adaptive learning'. *Double-loop learning* occurs when 'in addition to detection and correction of errors, the organization is involved in the questioning and modification of existing norms, procedures, policies, and objectives' (April et al., p.49). April and his colleagues view this type of learning as involving the organization's knowledge base, competencies and routines. This is what is called 'generative learning' or 'learning to expand the organization's capabilities' (Senge, 1990, in April et al. 2000, p.49). *Deutero learning* occurs when organizations learn how to carry out single and double loop learning (Argyris and Schön, 1996; April et al., 2000). This involves the organization's awareness that learning must occur. According to Brown and Duguid (1986, in April et al., 2000), an awareness of ignorance motivates learning. That awareness occurs when the organization identifies its learning styles, and the processes and structures (facilitating factors) required to promote learning (p. 49). The argument posed by April et al. is that double-loop learning and deutero learning are concerned with the 'why' and 'how' to change the organization, while single-loop learning is about accepting change without questioning underlying assumptions and core beliefs.

Organizational change

The theory of organizational change builds on the assumption that it is possible to have educational systems that have better memories than others and educational systems that are better at organizational learning than others. Organizational change theory can be used to enable an understanding of the core difficulties involved in organizational change and learning. It may also offer insights into how people resolve the grand and messy circumstances of everyday life. People's beliefs about reality support different processes of change that may, in turn, lead

to inconsistency, paradox, dilemma or contradiction. Change is about altering both practice and individuals' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities. Organizational change is best understood by understanding the rapidly growing body of literature on *institutional theory* (Hanson, 2001). In the last section of this chapter, I have also made an attempt to address the research questions by first examining complexity theory to further understand the complexity of the environments within which institutions such as schools operate.

Institutional theory

Hanson (2001) uses institutional theory to answer the following questions: (i) What are institutions? (ii) Why does the institutional environment produce organizational rigidities? (iii) How do groups in schools contribute to organizational stability? (iv) Are there institutional constraints on individuals? Scott (1995), in Hanson (2001), provides the following definition as a starting point to understanding institutions:

> Institutions consist of cognitive, normative, and regulative structures and activities that provide stability and meaning to social behaviour. Institutions are transported by various carriers, structures, and routines – and they operate at multiple levels of jurisdiction (Scott, 1995, in Hanson, 2001: 646).

According to Hanson (2001), the *regulative pillar* plays a stabilizing role by prescribing actions through formal and/or informal rules for establishing, monitoring and sanctioning activities. For example, teachers' and administrators' actions are governed by school rules, state laws, court decisions and professional standards. *The normative* pillar emphasizes values and norms about how teachers as professionals pursue valued ends. Hanson (2001) cites an example of coaches who should teach good sportsmanship over winning at any cost. The *cognitive pillar* is what 'shapes the filters through which people view reality and gives meaning to them as they interpret their world' (Hanson, 2001: 646).

The notion of organizations as open systems interacting with the internal and external environment is helpful in understanding how organizations work (Marsik et al., 2000; and Hanson, 2001). The open systems model with its input, throughput, output and feedback emphasis portrays the organization as inextricably tied to its environment as if it is its life support system. From an

educational point of view, the external environment is seen as providing *inputs* such as teachers, instructional materials and state laws. Examples of outputs are educated students heading for the workplace or higher education. Feedback comes in many forms such as acquired experience, test score information, new tax 'dollars', parental support (or even lack of it), and many other examples (Hanson, 2001). The open systems model has evolved from the 1960s where it was a model narrow in focus, as it focused on the technical facets and resource flows necessary to support the production process necessary to turn inputs into outputs. From this emerged an institutional theory that contributed to the reconceptualization of the open systems theory and focused on environmental constraints that limit an organization's ability to change (Hanson, 2001: 646-647).

In the school context, the reconceptualization started with the awareness of a school's organizational field. Examples include accreditation agencies, teacher training programmes, states board of education, state legislatures, universities, parent groups, and textbook producers. However, as Hanson (2001) puts it, 'it cannot be assumed that the fields are not problematic and unchanging, as the field surrounding an educational' system has new players who often exhibit their own rules and their expectations (p.647). Using the arguments by Scott et al. (2000, p.26) in Hanson, 2001) argues:

> The formal and informal expectations, regulations, information flows, myths, values, laws, and so forth impacting on schools tend to develop structuration, which is a form of connectedness. That is, interaction between organizations becomes patterned through such means as information sharing, contractual relationships, formal and informal agreements, and mutual awareness of government procedures (p. 647).

In other words, schools know the players sitting around the table and the rules of the game. They are also aware that they cannot violate the rules of the game. Within this metaphor, Hanson (2001) observes that the game gets even more interesting when all players sit down with their own set of rules and expect the school to play the game their way. In the case of teachers playing the game, Hanson points out that teachers or professionals often choose the projects they work on as well as the strategies to employ. They are also driven by different

forms of motivation or evaluation depending on the judgement of their unique set of circumstances. For legitimazation, schools seek a *replication* process which is about looking for guidance about what highly regarded schools are doing. This is irrespective of whether they have the necessary resources or not and, as Hanson (2001), quoting Rowan and Miskel (1999: 364; Scott, 1981: 126), neatly puts it: 'An unintended consequence of this struggle for legitimacy is that educational organizations are all-too-often rewarded and preserved for their conformity to "correct" structures, programs, and processes rather than the quality of the product' (in Hanson, 2001: 650).

Organizations exist in layered form and those layers may either be formal or informal (Scott, 1995, in Hanson, 2001: 651). In schools, like other organizations, the degrees of conformity, or fit, between the layers determine the degree of school stability. The degree of fit in schools is often attributed to teachers and administrators who are keen to preserve the *status quo* by not being inventive or even willing to challenge what many outsiders see as moribund routines.

Institutional theorists also argue that the existence of a top-down field of forces may constrain the independence of individual layers and groups. The constraints may not only shape their patterns of work but also their thinking about work (Hanson, 2001). March and Olsen (1996: p.249, in Hanson, 2001: 652), lament: ′Even the conception of an autonomous agent with a particularistic way of feeling, acting, and expression is an acquired identity, a socialized understanding of self and others′. A continuing complaint from outsiders about educational leaders and their supposed inability to introduce genuine change across America is that 'they tend to be cut out with the same cookie cutters' (Hanson, 2001: 652).

Educational change and complexity/chaos theory

To talk about chaos in the education system has become commonplace. On the school front, educational change presents educators and school leaders with changes that are complex and often contradictory. Multiple changes may be experienced as chaotic by those involved in the everyday life of schools. As a result, chaos is used as a general way of complaining about the many changes in

education that often seem uncoordinated (Cockett, 1998). The people who see the changes as chaotic are those who are often expected to implement those changes. Chaos theory, which authors like Bush (1995) and Fullan (19930 often use interchangeably with the complexity theory, has its roots in astronomy as a way of modelling the movement of a body subject to two strong gravitational fields often with unpredictable and unpatterned movements (Cockett, 1998). Marsik (1990) argues there are three types of chaos: i) conventional chaos which occurs in rapid and erratic alterations in systems of interacting components which are poorly understood; ii) patterned chaos: after some successful aggressive or highly intensity (organizational) diagnosis has taken place, some kinds of pattern emerge, but the pattern may be unstable, may relapse, fade away and thus needs continuous redefinition, and iii) ultimate chaos: not clear and is a total mess, literally and figuratively.

Kirkbridge et al. (1994) maintain that a key feature of chaos is instability and turbulence, which implies that the future cannot be predicted. However, there are some boundaries around the instability. Kirkbridge et al. (1994) link chaos theory with post-modern thinking about (i) change as characterized by randomness, chaos and lack of certainty making it difficult for organizations to deal with change; (ii) change as difficult and sometimes difficult to define as it can occur in any direction at anytime; (iii) change leading to rejection of reason and rationality as well as rejection of universal truths; (iv) jobs (in post-modern times) as highly de-differentiated, de-demarcated and multi-skilled; size matters and subcontracting and networking as the norm; and (v) where the author cannot claim any assertions since there are many competing views and voices (pp.157-158).

The position adopted in the study is that schools operate in complex conditions and constantly changing contexts. This is based on the general agreement in the literature that the ‘managed change’ paradigm has fallen into disfavour in the face of contradictory results (Hargreaves et al., 1998). Fullan (1992) locates the loss of confidence in the managed changed paradigm in the failure of implementation even in well designed and well resourced programmes. In this study I examine the version of chaos theory sometimes called ′complexity theory′ to find some

answers on why schools have problems adapting to educational change (which is part of educational learning).

Cockett (1998) provides three useful ideas that link chaos with negative and positive feedback. Negative feedback occurs when a system operates to maintain equilibrium in a way that a pendulum, damped by air resistance, gradually comes to rest. Positive feedback occurs when a system is driven further and further and further from the point of equilibrium as when a microphone is placed too near a loudspeaker. This is well captured in the quotation that follows:

> Schools, as with all organizations, depend on negative feedback in order to maintain a sense of order and common purpose. Deviations from the norm demand remedial action; for example, when a child misbehaves, the teacher reprimands. The child may challenge the reprimand and the teacher imposes a sanction, not so much for the misdemeanour but for the challenge. The child feels that the punishment is unfair and refuses to accept it. The teacher appeals to higher authority and the punishment is enforced. The child may feel that the punishment is unfair but recognizes that further resistance is useless and submits. Equilibrium is restored (Cockett, 1998: 57).

Cockett (1998) does not use the ordinary language meaning of positive feedback and this is illustrated by the example he further makes when he maintains that during positive feedback, the child may refuse punishment. The idea about this kind of feedback is the assumption that a crisis may lead to desired changes. In the case where the parents do not support the child, the matter may end with external authorities, local media and so on. In that case, the school may get into a situation spiralling out of control. These are the feedback loop processes that serve as mechanisms by which a culture and values are maintained and challenged. The kind of chaos that one sees happening in schools seems, at first, to be without order but at some point one can see a pattern from that chaos. For example, change, or even the lack of it in education, depends on what Argyris and Schön (1996) call “positive and negative feedback”. Unfortunately, the change is often not appreciated because it comes with chaos. Whenever change takes place, there is often a struggle to maintain order. As schools operate in such complex environments, perhaps it is worth learning from Flood’s critical praise of complexity theory. Flood (1999) argues that complexity theory ‘appreciates the

world as a whole, comprising many, many interrelationships expressed in endless occurrences of spontaneous self-organisation' (p.2).

To understand the conflict between the desire to learn and the forces that inhibit learning, consider the paradox of learning in the light of Thaw's (1998) comment: 'Chaos and order live together, contain each other,...and stability is never guaranteed' (p.48). Similarly, Fullan (1998) makes a case that chaos theory is not linear but gives us opportunity to learn. In *Change Forces*, Fullan (1993) describes chaos theory as a process whereby an individual and the group in the learning organization and learning society grapple with dilemmas of managing change and making a difference in the lives others as well in their own lives.

In circumstances like those described by Fullan (1998), Cockett (1998) and Thaw (1998), Bush (1995) warns practitioners against shunning theory. He observes that teachers sometimes explain their decisions as just ′common sense′, which he considers implicit theories unrecognized limitations as he further observes:

> When a teacher or a manager takes a decision it reflects in part that person's view of the organization. Such views or preconceptions are coloured by experience. Such views are coloured by experience and by the attitudes engendered by that experience. These attitudes take on the character of frames of reference or the theories which inevitably influence the decisions making process (Bush, 1995: 18).

Bush (1995), uses the works of Landers and Myers (1977), in his acknowledgement of the relationship between theory and day-to-day experiences by also reminding us of the idea that there is nothing more practical than a good theory as it helps the practitioner to unify and focus his or her views on an organization and his or her role in an organization. In a nutshell, Bush (1995) maintains that theory serves 'to provide a rationale for decision-making' (p.18).

Chaos theory (as complexity theory) takes us beyond the technicist world to look beyond technical solutions and rational boxing to help in the understanding of the roots for organizational learning and in defining the role of leadership. It is relevant

to organizations that are expected to learn despite the tensions and influences that inhibit learning during periods of rapid and sometimes chaotic change.

Perspectives on learning organizations

The literature on learning organizations is characterized by different perspectives (DiBella and Nevis, 1998). In this thesis, learning organizations are examined according to three distinct, but interrelated perspectives: (i) the *normative perspective*; (ii) the *developmental perspective*; and (iii) the *capability perspective*. An understanding of how schools learn in a changing school context such as ours requires some knowledge of all of the three perspectives, although this study emphasises the normative perspective because of its relevance to postmodern thinking. The three perspectives assist in providing an interpretive framework for understanding the challenges faced by schools as they respond to educational demands. Each perspective delineates factors that are responsible for the extent to which schools engage in the process of learning. For example, one could frame schools as learning organizations from a developmental perspective considering that learning is context specific, while another possibility could be to frame schools from a normative perspective, as all of them are affected by globalization, for instance.

The concepts of learning organization and organizational organization are often used interchangeably as reflected in the introductory statement by Silins, Mulford, and Zarins (2002) of Chapter One of this study (p. 1). The concept of the learning organization is characterized as having the capacity to adapt to a changing environment and to respond to lessons of experience by altering organizational behaviour. According to Dodgson (1996), a learning organization is an organization that purposefully constructs structures and strategies so as to enhance organizational learning. Organizational learning is used to describe activities or processes that may occur at any one levels of analysis or part of the organizational change processes (DiBella and Nevis, 1998). However, the two intersect at key points: their conceptions of what makes organizational learning

′desirable′ or ′productive′; their views of the nature of threats to productive organizational learning; and how they such threats may be overcome (p. 180).

The following table presents the names of some relevant authors associated with the different perspectives:

Table 1: Selected authors of the three perspectives of learning organizations

Normative	Developmental	Capability
Senge (1990)	Argyris and Schön (1978)	Levitt and March (1996)
Pedler, Burgoyne and Boyden (1997)	Huber (1996)	Cousins (1996)
Hargreaves (1998)	DiBella et al (1998)	DiBella and Nervis 1998
Kerka (1995)	Mulford (1998)	
Rolls (1995)	Robbins and Finley (1998)	
April et al. (2000)	Van der Merwe (1999)	
Marsick et al (2000)		

The discussion below provides an analysis of the central features of the different perspectives and how different authors have understood and/or disagreed with the central features of learning organizations.

The normative perspective

The premise of this perspective is that learning is a collective activity that takes place under certain conditions. The advocates of this perspective view the learning organization as an organization characterized by a specific set of internal conditions (DiBella and Nevis, 1998) in which learning is not an accident but a deliberate attempt. This means that people make strategic choices, especially at the management level as a way of increasing the organization's chances to succeed. DiBella and Nevis (1998) argue that without disciplined action or intervention, organizations fail to learn because of the many forces that constrain learning. In the normative approach, organizations are presumed to reflect an ideal form and those moving toward it are presumed to increase their chances for organizational success (DiBella and Nevis, 1998).

> The “normative” label applies to these approaches because they specify a set of prescriptive conditions, or best practices, that function as a template to evaluate organizations. Organizations that fail to look like or operate like the learning organization (however that is defined) are considered to be suboptimal or dysfunctional (p.9).

Senge’s (1990) work has led to a shift in the way organizational learning is discussed and has succeeded in popularizing this learning organization model. *The Fifth Discipline* named an idea that had been current for some time. It was then that he came up with the five disciplines or learning capabilities. But more than twelve years earlier, Argyris and Schön (1978) had argued that those intervening in organizations have to recognize that their main challenge is to help an organization become more effective at the performance of a stable task in the face of a changing environment (Mulford, 1998). This similarly means that Argyris and Schön (1976) see organizational learning as being able to adapt in a changing environment. Argyris and Schön (1996) further maintain that primary importance should be given to organizational inquiry or learning to open up for innovations and understanding of people’s limits of their capacities while being in a position to detect errors. Senge’s five disciplines, as briefly described in Chapter One: systems thinking; personal mastery; mental models; shared vision; and team learning form the core of learning organizations.

Systems thinking underlies the other four disciplines and is thus the most important (Senge, 1990; Kerka, 1995; Rolls, 1995). Systems thinking is based on the new management thinking, which is about seeing things in wholes. This means ‘seeing patterns of relationships, rather than seeing incidents, events or things in isolation’ (April, Macdonald and Vriessendorp, 2000: 51). Robbins and Finley (1998) argue that the "big picture," systems thinking, takes us beyond absorbing raw data, beyond syllogisms, until we can see ideas as "stories" the drama of what we know, and where we intend to go. The idea behind systems thinking is that people need to learn new ways of learning and re-learning in order to develop new ways of thinking and feeling. This is why systems thinking requires people to see linkages and feedback loops (April et al., 2000).

Building *personal mastery* is about understanding that teams are groups of individuals performing first as individuals for their own reasons (Robbins and Finley, 1998). According to Robbins and Finley (1998), when a person learns, he or she expands the ability to see, communicate, and understand. Proponents of personal mastery argue that purposiveness and commitment result from people's power to articulate what they want to be and do (Rolls, 1995; and Robbins and Finley, 1998). This kind of learning implies continuous learning at a systems level. Individuals are expected to learn frequently and to share their learning in ways that enable the larger system to learn. This involves more than one level of learning for individuals, teams and, organizational learning as a whole (Marsik et al., 2000).

Senge (1990) defines mental models as deep-seated notions and assumptions sometimes unknown to oneself and yet which are important in influencing one's perceptions and behaviour. According to Senge (1990), there is a difference between what people say they believe and what they really believe. April et al (2000) take Senge's idea of *building mental models* by arguing that for people to learn, their minds must be free from the clutter of assumptions and paradigms that bog them down in repeating the same old errors. This means that in order for people to learn, those assumptions need to be surfaced, challenged, and their influences need to be understood (April et al., 2000: 51).

Building a learning organization also involves *building shared vision* (Senge, 1990; Rolls, 1995). It is vital to move beyond "the vision thing", namely - the conventional team leader furnishing a vision, and everyone else marching in step. The entire team must take part in fashioning a new kind of idea, one in which we tell one another what we want to create together, as individuals and as team members. Our shared pictures of the future become our organizational vision. New ideas need to be supported and rewarded from the top through the various systems. Increased accountability often emerges where new learning takes place. This means that people should be allowed to take calculated risks, experiment, learn from mistakes, and share information freely about the learning experiences across the organization (Handy, 1995; Hoffman and Withers, 1995; Kofman and

Senge, 1995; and Hargreaves, 1998). Ideas and information should emerge from those who have something to contribute regardless of their positions in the organization.

Rolls (1995) argues that while personal mastery is good, *team learning* (or team mastery) is becoming a more crucial goal for learning organizations. This means that individual learning, which includes awareness, motivation, action, and feedback should also influence team learning.

Handy (1995) provides a range of characteristics that also falls within the normative perspective. Learning organizations are those with a learning habit that enables them to 'dream the dream' let alone manage that dream (Handy, 1995: 45). In order for organizations to be considered learning organizations, they need to engage in a wheel of learning that has four quadrants which rotate in sequence as the wheel moves. The first quadrant contains the *questions* that may be triggered by problems or needs that require solutions. The second contains the *ideas* that are prompted by the search for possible answers. Ideas have to pass a *series of tests* to see if they can work in practice and they are subjected to *reflections* through which the best solutions are found. Only when this organization process is complete that people can claim they have learnt something (Handy, 1995). Handy sees managing a learning organization as similar to managing change and sustaining it. He compares managing organizational learning with managing a wheel and its constant movement. Handy provides five concepts of keeping the wheel moving and these include: giving away power and providing space for initiative; and providing opportunities for talking, for meeting and for greeting. This concept is useful for encouraging personal and informal communications or for basically 'keeping in touch'; rewarding competent professional people; self-enlightenment or making each individual responsible for his/her own learning; and moving from self-enlightenment to incidental learning (not accidental learning). Handy describes this as treating every opportunity as a case study from which one can learn (pp.49-53). Handy concludes his arguments by maintaining that the learning organization theory provides 'opportunities to exercise responsibility, to learn from

experience, to take risks and to gain satisfaction from results and lessons learnt' (p.55).

While Handy's (1995) emphasis is on keeping the wheel of learning moving, Pedler et al. (1997) have different views as they focus on the importance of linking a learning climate with flexible structures. The features of the proposed structures include (i) a learning approach to strategy and participative policy-making; (ii) the way the organization aims to empower through spreading information as widely as possible; (iii) reward and flexibility as parts of the relevant systems; inter-organization learning; (iv) and learning opportunities that focus on the learning climate and 'self development for all'. The learning climate and enabling structures depend on how rigid or flexible the structures are. Pedler (1997) and his colleagues argue strongly that enabling structures are central in a learning organization because they determine responsiveness, learning, and the extent to which people are able to deal with change.

In order for organizations to engage effectively in organizational learning processes, a useful model for understanding learning organizations and how organizations respond to change is captured in Marsik et al. (2000), who use the definition developed by Gephart, Marsik and van Buren (1997) as the basis for explaining how organizations respond to change. The emphasis is on the following: continuous learning at a systems level; knowledge generation and sharing; systemic thinking capacity; greater participation and accountability by a larger percentage of employees; and culture and structure of rapid communication and learning (pp. 5-6).

Continuous learning at the systems level is a process whereby individuals are expected to learn frequently and to share their learning in ways that enable the larger system to learn. Such a process involves more than one level of learning (individuals, teams and organizations as a whole). According to Robbins and Finley (1998), the systems-oriented proactive approach is about shaping sustainable development through an innate appreciation for systems particularly

the mutually sustaining interdependent causal relationships among the economic, environmental, and social spheres.

The developmental perspective

As a second framing, the developmental perspective places the learning organization within the context of an organization's history and the cycles of its stages of development. Advocates of this approach argue that the organization's age, size, experience or life cycle determine the extent to which it develops. The development phase also determines the characteristics or style of learning. Like individuals, according to this perspective, organizations may also be transformed by their own experiences of crises and failure. This means that organizations may, for example, establish processes to learn incrementally from small failures (Sitkin, 1992, in DiBella and Nevis, 1998) and can learn from crises or events that are discontinuous with past experience. Learning opportunities may occur in the process whereby the organization attempts to reinterpret its own history over time to further provide multiple learning opportunities from a single event (March and Levitt, 1996). The extent to which organizations learn depends mainly on the stage of organization development as well as the perceived value of information and the perceived relevance of experience (DiBella and Nevis, 1998).

Argyris and Schön (1996) argue that learning processes evolve in a series of the organization's development. The literature on the learning organization suggests a range of desirable features: notions of organizational adaptability, flexibility, avoidance of stability traps, propensity to experiment, readiness to rethink means and ends, inquiry orientation and realization of human potential (Argyris an Schön, p.180). As a sign of growth in organizations, attention is paid to ideas of systematic experimentation, movement from superficial knowledge to deep understanding, and the development of comprehensive frameworks for the evaluation of progress.

Robbins and Finley (1998) suggest *four* stages of team development that teams undergo in the process. The first stage, *forming,* is a time when a group is just learning to deal with one another, time in which minimal work gets accomplished.

The storming stage is a time of stressful negotiation of the terms under which the team will work together; a trial-by-fire. *The norming stage* is a time in which roles are accepted, team feeling develops, and information is freely shared. *The reforming stage* is when optimal levels are finally realised in productivity, quality, decision-making, allocation of resources, and interpersonal interdependence.

The developmental perspective can be linked with the learning circumstances describe by Van der Merwe (1999) as "watershed events". He describes such learning as vehicles for deeper individual learning through some kind of group or organizational experience. These organizational learning experiences adopt a new set of special transition points in the organizational life cycle. Van der Merwe (in Senge et al., 1999) uses the initiation ceremony as a example of the watershed events. The ritual events help to trigger the shifts in values and attitudes that family members will need and, in a similar way, ‘during periods of great organizational and community transition, people become more receptive to new ways of thinking, as long as there is some ceremonial "watershed event" to provide a visible acknowledgement and symbol of the emotional nature of the shift' (Van der Merwe, 1999: 481). The point to watershed events and their relationship to organizational leaders is that:

> When you invite people to a *watershed event,* you are a host: inviting people in to a transcendent space. Issues will rise about ethics, power, life purpose, issues that people relegate to spiritual realm. People will be creative together. They may feel elated and uplifted, just from the opportunity to contemplate the future and the role in it together (sic). For the heart of this practice is celebration: recognizing the joy and awe embodied in the cycles of life (Van der Merwe, 1999:481).

The point is that watershed events can be simple meetings or talk about a new curriculum in the case of schools, or complex issues in the case of a drop in performance when students write public examinations. Organizational watershed events provide an infrastructure where *"moments of truth"* may occasionally occur and 'these are the moments of heightened awareness, when "things come together" and in sharp relief people walk away saying things like ′My gosh! I never saw clearly until this moment′ (p.481). Van der Merve warns against a manipulation of watershed events but notes that people can learn to develop such

events and be prepared for the moments that do emerge. The two types of watershed events are: '*organizational rites of passage* which occur throughout the organization's life cycle and *one-time spontaneous events* whose timing cannot be predicted' (pp.481-482). Organizational rites of passage could be periodic strategic conversations looking to the future, reviews of accountability and performance, leadership development (for example, in school management teams) and redeployment issues.

The capability perspective

The normative and developmental perspectives 'presuppose that learning is not indigenous to organizational life, that it happens only under certain prescribed conditions, and that it is a goal or vision toward which all organizations should strive' (DiBella and Nevis, 1998: 12). The capability model sees the concept of learning organizations as redundant as the notion of a breathing mammal: 'organizations as social systems are by their very nature environments in which learning takes place at multiple levels of analysis' (DiBella an Nevis, 1998:12). This perspective is based on the premise that organizations do not *become* learning organizations because learning is an ongoing process. Viewed in this way, the focus is not on some future vision but on the learning processes that already exist. DiBella and Nevis (1998), who also form part of the advocates for this perspective, argue that the notion of learning organizations suggests that learning and organizations are mutually independent. According to the capability perspective, all organizations, as social systems, have learning characteristics. The very term 'learning organization' implies the possibility of nonlearning organizations.

On what grounds can organizations claim to involve learning as an integral and ongoing process? DiBella and Nevis (1998) argue that as organizations develop and solve survival problems, they create a culture that becomes a repository for lessons learned. In the process they develop core competencies that represent collective learning. Perhaps the best way to understand this process is via Huber's (1996) account of how knowledge is acquired, distributed and used in organizations.

Knowledge acquisition

Huber divides knowledge-acquisition into five sub-constructs: congenital learning, experiential learning, vicarious learning, grafting, and searching. Each of these is important for understanding the process of organizational learning. *Congenital or inherited knowledge* is what the founders of an organization bring into a new organization. This kind of knowledge becomes institutionalised and context specific (Huber, 1996). Once organizations are born, they acquire some knowledge through direct experience. *Experiential learning* may be enhanced by the availability an analysis of feedback. Such a process enhances the accuracy of cause-effects relationships between organizational actions and outcomes. *Vicarious learning* is the process of acquiring second-hand experience as a result of poorly understood and ambiguous goals. It is acquired through learning about the strategies, administrative practices and technologies of other organizations (Huber, 1996). Learning by imitating other organizations is also seen as a way of minimizing sanctions from a variety of stakeholders (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Zucker, 1987, in Huber, 1996). The process through which an organization acquires and grafts its new knowledge from new members who possess knowledge previously not available to the organization is called *grafting.* This form of acquiring knowledge is valued in cases where expert and complex knowledge is acquired. *Searching* may occur in three forms: (a) scanning, (b) focused search, and (c) performance monitoring. Scanning refers to the relatively wide-ranging sensing of the organization's external environment. The premise of environmental scanning is that organizational environments change; therefore, organizations scan their environments for information about changes; on one hand, focused search often occurs when there are "loud" signals from multiple sources about a problem to be searched and addressed; on the other hand, recognition of a problem may serve as an impetus for search (Huber, 1996:139).

The process of information and knowledge acquisition provided by Huber (1996) provides a balanced view on knowledge acquisition with some processes more effective than others. For example, vicarious learning may not be effective, particularly as contexts keep changing. Huber (1996) admits that empirical work on grafting is scarce. However, he predicts that in an environment where there is

an increasing need for assimilating new knowledge, the need for grafting will be greater as it is a quicker method of acquiring new knowledge than many others. In a constantly changing educational context, where expert and complex knowledge becomes a priority, grafting can be of great value.

Organizational learning depends not only on these five categories of knowledge acquisition. How knowledge or information is distributed is also crucial. Huber (1996) casts doubts on the earlier idea that information distribution leads to *new* organizational learning. According to Huber, one of the problems is that:

> Organizational units with potentially synergistic information are often not aware of where such information could serve, and so do not route it to these destinations. Also, units, which might be able to use information synergistically often, do not know of its existence or whereabouts. How those who possess nonroutine information and those who need this information find each other is relatively unstudied, but deserves the attention of researchers interested in organizational learning (Huber, 1996: 142).

The way in which an organization uses information will depend not only on how it is disseminated but also how it is interpreted. The difficulty lies in how to understand information interpretation at an organizational level. Can we say that more organizational learning has taken place when all organizational units develop a common interpretation about an item? Or would organizational learning be considered as having taken place if different units interpret information differently? Huber concludes that more learning would be considered as having occurred when more varied interpretations have been developed for a change of potential behaviours (which is more congruent to the definition of learning) and for more cooperation.

A number of factors may affect information interpretation. Huber (1996) proposes four sub-constructs for these factors: cognitive maps, framing, media richness, information overload and unlearning. A person's belief structure (or cognitive map) shapes his or her interpretation of information. Organizational interpretations will be affected by the key degree of uniformity in prior *cognitive maps* possessed by organizational units. Similarly, the degree of uniformity in the *framing* of information as it is communicated will affect its uptake. Here Huber recognizes

that knowledge is socially constructed and that the construction of meaning will depend on the richness of the media used to convey the information. *Information overload* may impair an organizational unit's capacity to process information adequately. Finally, precisely because prior cognitive maps shape people's interpretations, a substantial amount of unlearning may be necessary to enable a new interpretation. Unlearning is a process of discarding misleading or obsolete knowledge and is thus both functional and intentional (Huber, 1996). Unlearning in an organization may involve such radical approaches as 'discarding' employees, particularly managers stuck in old ways, and socializing new members who bring in new kinds of knowledge.

In the discussion of the competing perspectives on learning organizations, I have identified commonalities and differences among authors within the same perspective to provide a coherent and critical account of each perspective. The normative perspective dominates the literature on learning organizations, especially because it is associated with changing organizational environments. Such an acknowledgement is important for the analysis of the case studies selected in different contexts and where the normative perspective can be challenged. The discussion above shows that focusing on a single dimension can be misleading, particularly in understanding school realities, which are complex. Since each of the different perspectives has strengths and limitations, such an analysis is helpful in understanding the kind of interventions strategies, if any of the perspectives is dominating the school literature.

Tensions in the models of practice

The section develops the challenges of learning organizations presented in a form of dysfunctional experiences. The dysfunctional experiences are viewed in the study as paradoxes as they may prevent organizational learning cultures. Part of understanding the concept of learning organizations is acknowledging the problems underlying most organizations today, which show a lot to be desired for organizations that profess to be learning organizations. DiBella and Nevis (1998) continue to argue that barriers to learning occur because of the fundamental,

conflicting ways in which individuals have been trained to think and act and from organizational barriers to discovering and using solutions to organizational problems.

Dysfunctional learning experiences

Unlike children, adults' learning is difficult and adults tend to respond differently in relation to new possibilities, other points of view and feedback. Thompson (1995) traces this poverty in learning through our ′personal paradigm′ which is accumulated over years and through family influences. As people grow, they begin to exhibit automatic behaviour which demonstrates a shift from exploratory behaviour. When dominant figures in the family begin to exert their powers, people, especially children begin to be defensive rather than open and are less curious and creative. Creativity becomes suppressed as there is a gap between the child's reality and that of his or her parents. That reality of the relationship, in turn, tends to narrow the relationship between cause and effect as it is prescribed within the parent's view of the world (Kofman and Senge, 1995 and Thompson, 1995).

Like family influences, the school system has contributed further to the poverty of organizational learning. What a child encounters at home is further eroded upon the child's entry to school. The focus of school systems in South Africa, for example, has not been on true learning – to the neglect of those fundamental driving forces in learning organizations that can provide creative processes of experimentation and where members of schools can share knowledge. This can be traced even in the way children learn. Children are taught, sometimes in harsh ways, to memorise facts and are not given the opportunity to share what they have learnt with their colleagues. Experimentation and curiosity should go hand in hand with forgiveness when mistakes occur as these are part of a learning process (Senge, 1990; Rolls; 1995; and Handy, 1995). The same goes for success; it should be celebrated. However, where there is no trust, there are no opportunities for experimentation. But the problem in most organizations is that it is difficult to know a person well enough to trust that person to take risks. The

implication to this is not to learn in isolation but to create synergy in which people can collaborate.

Kofman and Senge (1995) argue that the attitude and behaviour towards learning further manifest themselves when people enter the world of work. Because the school system, for instance, has traditionally discouraged wrong answers, people begin to shy away from situations that will reveal their ignorance as they do not want to be seen as less intelligent than their peers. At the same time, they do not want to ask questions or challenge the *status quo,* as they do not want to challenge authority figures. They do not want to experiment because they fear they will make mistakes, and that will also divert them from their prescribed tasks. All these beliefs are contrary to those expected in organizations that aim at increasing their capabilities to learn. Similarly, Hoffman and Withers (1995) observe that the method of bringing up a child also manifests itself in the way leaders or managers treat their staff or employees. They apply the same principles of being dominant figures in the organization (the mother or father, depending on their experiences of being parented) and function in a way they believe to be the proper way to treat a subordinate. Rewards and punishments are extended or exerted for desired behaviour. The point to organizational learning and for a learning organization to grow is to avoid making people accountable for 'mistake-free performance' but hold them accountable for learning from their mistakes. As opposed to the performance management approach, Hoffman and Withers (1995) argue that:

> The learning organization approach encourages not only the making of mistakes but the *sharing* of them for the benefit of the organization. The key is putting a visible "safety net" in place and allowing everyone to see it work (p.470).

However, there are conflicts in the way different models of learning organizations are operationalized. The idea of continuous learning at a systems level means people learn continuously throughout their lifespan. It also means that work should be structured in such a way that it allows for experimentation and learning from mistakes within reasonable limits of safety and risk (Marsik et.al, 2000). This also means focusing on the shift from viewing change as an external process

whereby one steps back and seek to control. Instead, it means recognizing that one is part of the process which one can influence and control. Marsik and her colleagues continue to argue that the organizational learning process disagrees with how much responsibility lies with the individual or organization for initiation, resource allocation, planning and assessment. There is also disagreement about degrees of emphasis placed on learning versus performance and the way in which people help each other to learn on the job.

System blindness

According to Kofman and Senge (1995), one of the problems confronting learning organizations today is *system blindness.* Despite the rapid changes that are taking place in the world and in societies, systemic interactions in most organizations are ignored. Systems thinking play a crucial role especially in times of managing change initiatives as it leads to better understanding of the long-term consequences of decisions made and to reflect on the assumptions of those decisions (Kofman and Senge, 1995). This theory is useful in an educational context as it allows senior managers to anticipate both immediate and far-reaching consequences of organizational changes. However, Rolls (1995) observes that most leaders fail to meet this ideal as they fail to engage in the inner journey and question their own assumptions, develop greater awareness of what they do not have that others have. Because people are blind to the system and fail to see the interconnectedness of the system, problems are dealt with in isolation. As a result, problems are solved through 'quick-fixes' leading to short-term solutions. That way, people are eventually convinced that the knowledge is accumulated bits of information and that learning has little to do with people's capacity for effective action, or people's sense of self, and their sense of existence. Another problem with the 'quick-fixes' is their tendency 'to treat the symptoms' and to rarely inquire into deeper causes of the underlying problems. Management experts have very little ability to influence organizational health. All too often, their solutions contribute to a vicious pattern of "programmes of the month" that fail to get replaced by the next programme of the month (Kofman and Senge, 1995).

Skilled incompetence

The concept of learning organizations emphasizes cooperation and working together of people in an organization as teams. In most cases, people in organizations find themselves competing with the very people they are supposed to be collaboratively working with. This collaboration means working together in terms of sharing knowledge, expertise and skills. Such learning fails to acknowledge that there is something new to be learnt and that there is something people need to know that others may know. In order to successfully perform activities that they are not good at, they need to come together and share that knowledge and, in the process, exploit other people's knowledge which, in turn, can be shared in the organization. However, people have been brought up to think that ignorance is a sign of weakness and that temporary incompetence is a sign of low intelligence. This problem is blamed on schooling. When a child learns to walk, he or she is not afraid of falling just because people will laugh. If this was the case, children would not learn to walk at all. According to Kofman and Senge (1995), schools made us foolish when we make mistakes, thus leading to what Argyris and Schön call 'skilled incompetence'. Thompson (1995), who sees this as denial and delusional thinking, takes this point further by arguing that such people are incompetent in certain areas that are crucial to organizational innovation and are unaware of their own incompetence. When there is no awareness of incompetence, motivation to learn in that area is missing. This is explained in how we as learners become skilful at protecting ourselves from the threat and pain that comes with learning. This also means the difficulty of coming to terms with our ignorance and incompetence.

Tapping implicit knowledge

One of the challenges or problems is the difficulty of tapping implicit knowledge, which is the experiential knowledge locked in someone's head. Brownie (1997) argues that unlike explicit knowledge, which can be captured in a data base, the challenge is to foster the necessary interactions to mine implicit knowledge and capture the information the organization needs to be able to use both explicit and implicit knowledge repeatedly. It might be easy to record the actual data in the case of explicit knowledge but with implicit knowledge, it means keeping a record

of the people who have the know-how to solve a problem so that others can use this knowledge when the appropriate time arises.

External pressures

External or outside pressures have a tendency of putting pressures on organizations so that people become conditioned to reacting to the directions imposed on them by outside others (Hargreaves, 1998). As much as there is nothing particularly wrong with responding to external forces, such pressures tend to undermine the organization's drive to learn. This tension can also be attributed to school experiences. In order to feel accepted and be comfortable in a school situation, people have to be reactive to what is imposed on them. The main focus of one's learning in school centres around responding to teachers' questions, tests and assignments, and all those do not come from the learner but from a teacher as Kofman and Senge (1995) put it: 'We solved problems identified by others, read what was assigned, wrote what was required. Gradually, reactiveness became a way of life' (p.21). This type of learning also comes with fear of making mistakes. Where the atmosphere is dominated by fear, there will be very little learning that can take place let alone reflecting on what everyday learning means in organizations.

Learning organizations as a leadership challenge

Mulford (1998) sees the biggest challenge to organizational learning as the maintenance of stability while adapting in a changing environment. Similarly, Marsik et al. (2000) argue that the concept of learning organizations can be viewed as a response to changes that organizations and the people in them experience. They maintain that the success of learning depends on the way in which individuals, teams and groups are prepared to shift in the ways they think and interact. Rolls (1995) and Senge (1996) also see the success of organizational learning as the ability for individuals to surface their mental models. Fullan (1993) adopts the learning organizational theory as a basis for a proposed 'changed mindset' for organizational reform as well as leadership (Cousins, 1996). In the case of schools, Cousins (1996) sees learning schools as self-renewing

organizational entities where innovation is not passed down through a hierarchy but ‘formulated by individual scholar teachers and as faculties under a canopy of technical support woven by a cadre and designed to enhance learning for all members of the organization, including themselves as cadre members’ (p.10).

Mulford (1998) tries to develop some indicators for points of convergence in the literature on organizational learning. Indicators include: developing trust, common understanding and a shared vision; sharing information openly and honestly, engaging in collaborative practices; engaging in professional learning and growth; using reflective self-analysis to raise awareness of assumptions and beliefs; understanding the inevitability of conflict; engaging in dialogue so as to understand the frames of reference for others if warranted; managing differences of opinion through inquiry and problem-solving; understanding systemic influence and relationships; and correcting disruptive power imbalances (p. 619). Despite the paucity of research on organizational learning in education, there is some consistency of definition in terms of which characteristics make a school a learning organization and, in those characteristics, one can see the interrelationships in the way schools can learn to learn (Mulford, 1996). In understanding the characteristics, one begins to see organizational learning as a journey rather than as a destination. The first stage of organizational learning largely focuses on developing common understanding, honesty, and trust through dialogue, sharing, and managing the inevitable conflict involved. These learning processes are then employed to make links to the outside, to examine current practice critically, to develop shared values as well as a common vision for the school. The challenge is building those relationships either externally or externally and between individuals. Leadership is often regarded as a systemic variable for establishing the conditions for organizational learning and how those organizations learn (Leithwood, 1992; Kerka, 1995; Senge, 1995; Fullan, 1996; DiBella and Nevis, 1998). According to DiBella and Nevis (1998), to avoid having what they term ‘learning disabilities’, leadership can enhance the competencies of individual members of the organization, change the organizational culture, or redesign the structure. However, the emphasis of the success of this approach is

at the top management level. The focus of the normative approach is the link between learning and design.

Kerka (1995) brings a slightly different view to the idea of schools as learning organizations. On the basis of empirical evidence, she concludes that it should be a given that schools are 'learning organizations'. She uses an example of how Sullivan Elementary School in Tallahassee applied learning organization principles and a vision statement to transform itself. The school's core values included the following: individuals are valued, teachers are professionals; parents are partners; decision making is shared. These values were applied equally to the workplace by substituting 'worker', 'manager', 'customer', for 'individual'. Teacher approval ratings were expected to be up by 20%, test scores to remain high, and parents more involved. Despite such success stories like Sullivan Elementary School, Kerka (1995) still maintains that the vision of the learning organization concept is 'an emperor without clothes'. She cites critics like Jacobs (1995) and West (1994) who observe a lack of critical analysis of the theoretical framework of the learning organization. Jacob and West both argue that few studies support the relationship between individual and organizational learning and there is little discussion on how the individual benefits. The key challenge is what happens when this model is imposed on those who are unwilling to be part of a learning organization. Viewed in this way, the concept is oversold and is seen as a universal remedy for a wide variety of problems.

Another example that further reveals the gap between myth and reality concerning schools as organizations is the study conducted by Shields and Newton in 1994. Kerka (1995) uses an example Shields and Newton used to analyze schools participating in the Saskatchewan School Improvement Program (SSIP). Senge's five disciplines were used but the following happened,

> (1) *personal mastery* - SSIP focused on action, not learning, and staff development activities were few; (2) *mental modes* - little discussion of concepts such as school climate of leadership; (3) *shared vision* - some schools had mission statements but goals were not identified and impact students was unclear; (4) *team learning* - teachers paid lip service, but were not team players; and

> (5) *systems thinking* - there was more compartmentalization, with the "them" versus "us" (p.2).

Isaacson and Bamburg (1992) also sized up schools along similar lines. They concluded that it is a stinging experience to read about LOs (learning organizations) and realize how few schools and districts fit the definition. Similar findings were made by May in 1995 in a Canadian university, where secretarial support staff felt their learning opportunities were restricted and learning efforts were undervalued. They did not have adequate opportunities, funding or time for learning. May (1995) concludes by observing that it is a sad paradox that the institutions clearly dedicated to helping adult learners to learn are such slow learners themselves.

For the purposes of my study, it is important to try to understand the applicability of the learning organization concept in schools by focusing on the way leadership would nurture this kind of learning. Christie et al. (1997) conducted a study to determine what made some South African schools succeed even in difficult circumstances and unpromising environments and identified the role of the leader as the most critical factor. In their conclusion, Christie et al. (1997) argued, ′Our research supports other findings that leadership is an important ingredient in successful schools′ (p.14). Christie and her colleagues identified seven characteristic features of leadership that are likely to help schools succeed against all odds:

- adaptability: reflected in the willingness on the part of principals to change what seems not to be working;
- flexibility of approach: a willingness to try different things, which is contrary to bureaucratic or mechanistic approaches;
- the willingness or preparedness to consult with staff at least to some degree;
- concern for the well being of the school rather than their own careers;
- commitment to staff, students, teaching and learning and the school community;
- sense of purpose, mainly stemming from religious or social commitment as well as educational purpose; and

- courage: a willingness to take risks. This means taking risks that could make one unpopular with staff or students on matters of principle or strong belief.

(Christie et al., 1997: 13-14).

To reiterate the value of individuals in organizational learning, Kerka (1996) argues that organizations do not learn but the people in them do and that there cannot be any organizational learning without individual learning. Kerka's point is important in understanding the roots of dysfunctional learning. Part of understanding the concept of learning organizations is acknowledging the problems underlying most organizations today, which raise a lot to be desired in organizations that profess to be learning organizations.

The literature review in this chapter has revealed that there are problems with the current paradigm that shows that there are still dysfunctional cultures in organizations that, in turn, affect organizational learning which, it is assumed, may lead to school reform as a whole. I have tried to critique organizational learning by bringing the challenges, problems and dilemmas to the fore.

The sections just discussed provide different organizational settings that are most influential in shaping the way people learn and what they do to show that they are learning, unlearning or/and re-learning. The literature also exposes us to the perspectives of the authors who advocate a particular kind of thinking about learning organizations and how learning organizations are developed. DiBella and Nevis (1998) argue that each perspective has certain strengths and unique ways of looking at or explaining organizational learning and the new phenomenon of the "learning organization" (p.3). DiBella and Nevis (1995) continue to argue that this integrated approach builds on the academic management literature in a unique way that is both intellectually compelling and practical. However, the broadly shared ideals include notions of organizational adaptability, flexibility, avoidance of stability traps, propensity of experiment, readiness to rethink means and ends, inquiry orientation, realization of human potential in the service of organizational purposes, and creation of organizational settings for human development (Argyris

and Schön, 1996). The value of examining the different perspectives is well captured in DiBella and Nevis (1998):

> The presence of these multiple perspectives suggests that the learning organization is, and probably will remain, a chameleon-like target. It means different things to different people…By recognizing the assumptions made by a writer, a reader can more easily comprehend that writer's point of view. It is also easier to see the connections to the works of others and build a more comprehensive framework that integrates these paths (DiBella and Nevus, 1998: 18).

The literature on processes, theories and models of learning organizations reveals some problems and complexities for schools in engaging in the process of learning by organizations. Organizational learning has almost become an imperative in the fast-changing world for organizations to quickly adapt to the ever-changing nature of contexts (Handy, 1995; Rolls; 1995; Fullan, 1996; Riley; 2001). Schools are no exception. New contexts demand new learning. The demand for learning is even greater as the world becomes more uncertain. Individuals and organizations engage in the process to improve their adaptability and efficiency in an environment that is increasingly dynamic. The literature revealing conflicts in the models of practice illustrates the way the fundamental driving forces of innovation are further eroded.

I conclude the chapter by trying to link the ideas in the theoretical framework and the different perspectives of looking at the concept of learning organizations. As discussed in the theoretical framework of this study, the concept of schools as learning organizations and the idea of organizational learning in schools is linked to school reform (Hanson, 2001). That linkage helps us to understand why it is possible for some schools to learn better than others. House and McQuillan (1998) argue that for an adequate understanding of school reform, there is a need for an adequate understanding of different perspectives. Drawing from a vast amount of scholarly literature, they discuss three perspectives that they consider critical: the technical, political, and cultural. According to House and McQuillan (1998), the *technical* perspective takes production as its root image or metaphor. The technical perspective includes concepts like input-output, specification of goals and tasks, flow diagrams, incentives, and performance assessment. The *political*

perspective takes negotiation as its underlying image. Key concepts in this perspective include power, authority, and competing interests. The *cultural* perspective rests on an image of community. Central concepts of this perspective include culture, values, shared meanings, and social relationships. One powerful argument from House and McQuillan (1998) is that school reform fails because it fails to control, or it neglects the forces identified in the other perspective. Perspectives serve as a guide to social action and this is irrespective of how one frames the learning processes in schools as organizations. It is critical to understand that accepting the same perspective does not mean that scholars or reformers necessarily agree with one another. Therefore, an incomplete analysis of the different dimensions of school reform and school learning processes may lead to a partial understanding of school realities and how they can succeed in the constantly changing educational environment.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Towards understanding South African schools as learning organizations

> *Social science textbooks on methodology usually provide an idealized conceptualization of how social research ought to be designed and executed…As most field researchers would admit, the so-called rules and canons of fieldwork frequently are bent and twisted to accommodate the particular demands and requirements of the fieldwork situation and the personal characteristics of the researcher.*
>
> Shaffir and Stebbins, 1991: 22

Initially, the intention in this study was to adopt an action-research approach, as one of the original objectives of the research was to see how the learning organization model could be used to move towards a more proactive approach to researching schools. However, the study was conducted at a time when schools were confronted with many educational changes as a result of South Africa's changed political and social circumstances. Doing action research with the participants meant taking more of their time, which many already complained was a scarce resource. Action research at its best ideally involves 'all stakeholders both in the questioning and sense making that informs the research, and in the action which is its focus' (Reason and Bradbury, 2001: 10). As this was not possible under the circumstances, I decided to undertake a multiple case study of two schools that were striving to be learning organizations.

In this chapter, I first discuss briefly why I consider a qualitative approach relevant to the study. I then discuss the case study in particular and its appropriateness for coming to a richer understanding of organizational learning. Following is a discussion of the instruments used and the samples of schools and participants selected, as well as the criteria for the sample selection. The chapter also includes an account of data collection and triangulation procedures and of data processing and analysis. I conclude with a brief account of the limitations of the study and issues related to research ethics.

Research methodology and approach

Qualitative methodology

Qualitative research is loosely defined by Buskens (2002) as a form of research traditionally known for 'its agenda of discovery and construction of knowledge based on respondents' perceptions and conceptualizations' (p.7). Qualitative research involves an investigation of the quality of relationships, activities, situations, or materials (Maxwell (1996). Understanding schools as learning organizations entails, in part, understanding the meaning and values that members of the organization attach to the events, situations, and actions in their daily lives in the process of learning in a context of educational change (see, for example, Maxwell, 1996). This is why a qualitative approach was chosen for the study.

Other approaches, such as experimental or survey research, are poor at identifying values, motives and meaning in relation to processes. A standard criticism of qualitative research is that it cannot establish causal connections and thus cannot provide genuine explanations. However, the standard criticism has been challenged by researchers such as Maxwell (1990), who argue that field research is far better than purely quantitative approaches at developing explanations of human institutions. Whereas *variance theory* focuses on the *extent to which* x causes y; *process theory* is concerned with *how* x causes y. Thus, with qualitative data, one can 'preserve the flow, assess local causality and derive fruitful explanations' (Huberman and Miles, 1984:15). My case studies of two schools aimed to do precisely this.

Qualitative case studies

In this research, I followed Merriam's (1998) approach to qualitative case studies. According to Merriam, a qualitative case study is 'an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit' (p.27). She positions her account of case studies in relation to other influential work on the topic, such as that of Smith (1978), Stake (1995), and Yin (1994). Yin (1994) defines case study in terms of the research process – an empirical inquiry that

investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomena and context are not clearly evident. Contrary to seeing a case study as a strategy or method, Walcott (1992, in Merriam, 1998) defines it as an end-product of field-oriented research. Stake (1994, 1995) focuses on the unit of study often referred to as 'the case'.

This study is a nested case study design as each school is a case and the selected individuals are considered cases within a case (the school). Within the two case studies were 'cases' of selected individuals that had made significant contributions to their schools. A case study focuses on a bounded system, namely, a case, which has a specific character and is a complex dynamic system (Stake, 1995). This study considered the bounded system of how school practices and their complexities promote or inhibit schools in becoming learning organizations. It is this system that constituted the case for my study. The units of study, the case, are the principals in the two schools, heads of departments, teachers, and the learners.

I used a multi-method approach to data collection, with observations and documentary analysis as well as narrative accounts of events and actions. This enabled a deep probing of the multifarious nature of the sample schools' life cycles and of key individuals in them. An understanding of each case study's complexity in the process of building a learning organization was considered critical for mapping similarities and differences among individual cases in the two representative school cases. The literature review has revealed that the concept of learning organizations and issues relating to the way learning in organizations is enhanced are contested terrains. Qualitative data in a case study can identify and explore the micro-politics and the values in an organization like a school when it is experiencing changes. This can help to chart the dynamics and deeply complex characteristics of educational change.

Sampling

In its approach to sampling, the study was both purposive and opportunistic. Purposive or judgemental sampling is based on the researcher's judgement 'regarding the characteristics of a representative sample' (Bless and Achola, 1988: 75). Opportunistic sampling, as its name implies, is based on the opportunities presented by close contacts with schools or some of their staff. In selecting the two study sites, I looked for schools that I considered as resilient while working in challenging circumstances.

The two schools are operating in challenging circumstances irrespective of the differences in their contexts and socio-economic status. For example, School A is located in a poor community and School B is in one of the richest suburbs in Johannesburg. Challenges they face take different forms and manifest themselves differently and this is what this study will show, especially in their attempt of learning to learn often as a result of internal and external pressures to change. I use the term 'resilience' to describe the two schools I selected. *Resilience* means 1) The ability to recover quickly from illness, change, misfortune; 2) The property of a material that enables it to resume its original shape or position after being bent, stretched, or compressed' (The American Dictionary of the English Language, 2000). The selected schools were schools that appeared to maximize learner achievement irrespective of how they are stretched by challenging conditions in their diverse contexts. Christie (2001) describes resilient schools as schools overwhelmed by the difficulties of their own environments and their histories or those that are able to survive and develop in contexts of extreme adversity. In the case of School A and B, I am using resilience to acknowledge what the schools go through and still survive. The chapter helps in questioning the assumption that schools that are often facing challenging circumstances are, for example, those in poor conditions.

For practical reasons, I also took account of the accessibility and proximity of the schools. As a rough guide, I looked for schools that seemed to be doing well when judged by the public eye. I was also interested in schools whose key team players

contributed to the reputation of doing well. From these criteria, I selected two schools from sharply contrasting contexts. In the interests of anonymity and agreement with the staff and school authorities, the schools were designated School A and School B.

School A is a public school in a squatter camp, about 35 kilometres away from the city of Johannesburg, where poverty is a dominant feature of community life. Although most of the learners come from informal settlements, learner achievement continued to be high in the final year of schooling. Between 1994 and 2001, in particular, the success of the school despite the odds reflected in the Grade 12 results attracted the attention of the general public, educationists, businesses, and the media. In Christie's (2001) terms, this school could be termed a 'resilient school' as it operates in conditions directly affected by 'poverty, material deprivation and disruption of communities characteristic of apartheid' and yet function very well where neighbouring schools show symptoms of crisis (Christie, 2001:40). School B is an independent school that also has a reputation of producing quality learning. The school is also located in the Gauteng Province in the richest suburb of Johannesburg, called Sandton. It is within the radius of 15 kilometres of central Johannesburg. Many of the learners who attend School B come with a wealth of cultural capital.

The following people were selected for the study in the two secondary schools: two principals, one of whom was an executive director; four heads of departments (including a curriculum director in School B); ten teachers; and fourteen learners.

The selected participants were among those that significantly contributed to the school's learning either as individuals or as part of teams or groups. Principals, including executive principals, are key informants as they play a major role in the process of educational change (Dalin and Rof, 1993; Davidoff and Lazarus, 1997; Fullan, 1992; Southworth, 1998; and Stein et al., 1999). Heads of Departments (HoDs) play a critical role in supporting both the principals and educators in the process of professional learning. Teachers are the people affected most by changes. They are the ones whose values, assumptions and beliefs are shaken in

the process of change, thus demanding them to keep learning. Learners' participation in the study was also considered important because whatever the other key role players bring to the school, it should have an impact on the learners. Initially the number of targeted participants in the two schools was thirty, with fifteen per school.

Additional participants were learners who were selected to write essays about their schools. Ten learners were to be selected randomly in each school to write the essays. In School A, the teachers of English in Grades 8, 10 and 12 assisted in the selection. From the larger pool which they selected, I made the final selection of ten. In School B, I was advised to ask a Catholic Brother who teaches religious education to help me with the students' writing of essays. Unfortunately, it was towards the end of the year and the students were too involved with examinations and could not write the requested essays. Instead, I relied on responses to the School Climate Survey Report undertaken by the Catholic Institute of Education in 2001.

The research phases

Viewing this research synthetically, there were three phases of fieldwork. The first phase was a theoretical-authentic apprenticeship, involving formal and informal interviews, asking participants and learners to write stories about themselves and their schools. This was to give me background information about the schools I was dealing with. During this phase, I would visit the staff rooms and chat with those people I already knew in the schools. The second phase was at the level of understanding the learning practices, which was, naturally a longer phase as it involved visiting schools at precise moments when they were involved in worthwhile activities and relevant to the study. During that phase, I had the opportunity to identify additional interviewees to enable me to achieve a deeper understanding of school learning practices and their enabling and inhibiting conditions. Most of the fieldwork was done in 2001 in both schools, although unavoidable delays resulted in this phase continuing until towards the end of 2002, a time when teachers and learners were busy because of year

examinations. The third phase was for further interviews where gaps had been identified. This was particularly important with the teachers in School A, as I realized that they had raised interesting issues in their stories of learning.

Data-collecting techniques

In-depth interviews, story-telling, questionnaires, observations, climate mapping and a range of documents were used to collect data. The entire multi-method and the sequence in which I used the techniques is illustrated in Table 2 that follows:

Table 2: Selected data-collection techniques, participants, and related issues

Techniques Employed	Participants	Issues Addressed
Focus Group Interviews	Learners (School A)	• Likes and dislikes in the school • Source of motivation • Support from school • Support from home • School achievements • What they would like to see done differently
Narrative Interviews	Principal (School A and B)	• Personal and professional history • School history and innovations • School achievements/failures • Personal growth plan • Support for individual, team, and organizational learning • Challenges
	Heads of Departments and Teachers (School B)	• Biographical details • Professional preparation • Contributions to school successes • Lifelong learning practices • Future plans • Personal and professional challenges
Biographies	Teachers and Heads of Departments (School A)	• Where they come from • Where they are now • Where they want to be and • How to get there • Possible challenges • Special contributions to individual schools
Essays	Learners (School A)	• Likes/Dislikes about school • Likes/dislikes about teachers • Likes/Dislikes about principal • School achievements

		• "If I were a principal…"
Documentary Sources: School Climate Survey; School Magazines; Principal's Annual Reports	Learners (School B)	• Learners' responses in a focus interview during School Climate Survey about: - Likes, dislikes about the school, - what they would like done differently in the school
	Principal (School B)	• School developments • Acknowledging individual, group, and school achievements

The table shows the links between selected techniques employed, the participants, and the issues addressed.

Interviews

Interviews were central to this multi-method approach, as they enabled me to penetrate participants' knowledge, likes and dislikes (values and preferences), and beliefs in relation to the way they were learning as members of an organization, namely, the school. In taking the interview as central, I was influenced by Maxwell's (1992) approach to discovering how individuals interpret their social world and how they use those interpretations as a basis for their actions. Semi-structured narrative individual interviews were conducted with principals, heads of departments and educators (see Appendix 2, 2A, 3, 3A, 3B and 4). Semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted with the learners in School A and in School B, I relied on the focus group interview already conducted by the Catholic Institute of Education for the School Climate Survey in 2001. Principals were interviewed in their offices for about one hour and thirty minutes each. Interviews with teachers took about an hour each. The focus group interview with the learners took about an hour during a lunch break. Where appropriate, I took a clinical approach and probed for a deeper insight into how participants experienced learning. The emotional aspects of their responses contributed to my understanding of the extent to which they felt supported in the process of learning.

Focus group interviews

The learners in School A were the first participants to be interviewed, as I believed that they were the best people to provide me with forthright opinions about the relevant information on the general school practices and learning practices and to help me to target other relevant sources. From the data I was able to determine what critical issues may be promoting or inhibiting learning in schools as organizations. Eight learners were selected for a focus group interview in School A. The principal assigned the Career Guidance Head of Department to identify learners who would be part of the interview panel. I was worried that if I identified the learners randomly, I might select who might be inhibited to talk as a result of the cultural responses to authority that often prevail in rural schools. The questions were to provide an understanding of the contexts within which the learners learnt. The questions sought learners' views on what their school is like and what they like about the school; significant people in their learning experiences; what they appreciate about their principal, teachers, parents and community; and what they dislike about their school (see Appendix 4).

In School B, a similar study had already been carried out by the Catholic Institute of Education (CIE). I was thus able to use the data from the final report of the *School Climate Survey* (Catholic Institute of Education, 2000). The focus groups interviews conducted in School B by the Catholic Institute of Education helped me in balancing learners' responses from both schools and I was able to gain insight into learners' perceptions of their school as well as insights of other stakeholders. The questions asked in the School Climate Survey were: the best things that go on in the school; the worst things that go on in the school; and what the interviewee would change if he or she were principal of the school. This process revealed learners' perceptions about their schools and the people from whom they are to benefit as a result of their learning.

Narrative interviews

Part of the aim of this study was trying to address was to investigate the contextual triggers of learning in schools as organizations and an investigation of inhibiting factors in the process of learning in a school context. The assumption

was that before one understands how people learn, it is important to understand who these people are, where they come from, and what they have learned. Narrative interviewing was a preferred approach because I wanted to strengthen the participants' voices and their lived experiences. A narrative is considered as an authentic and trustworthy research inquiry tool, both in collecting and analysing data (Conley, 2001). This approach is also useful for bridging when one tries to bridge the gap between the researcher and the researched.

According to Pedler et al. (1991), organizations, like people, are unique and have a developing identity. Again, like individuals, this identity develops and focuses. It is for that reason that Pedler (1991) and his colleagues write: ′My past is not an archive; it is a living memory of my development′ (p.12). The initial intention of using the approach was to examine the extent to which people have evolved to become leaders, not in a hierarchical sense but because they have chosen to lead in serving their organizations. In the context of learning organizations, when an individual learns, it is assumed that the whole community benefits from that learning. The method was helpful in understanding the frames people use for their learning and if what they learn is helpful in fulfilling the school goals.

My use of narrative interviews was also influenced by Boje (1998) who sees stories as a postmodern turn in qualitative research and distinguishes between ′stories-as-objects′ and ′stories-in-context′ research. Like Boje (1998), my preferred approach is the latter which is about viewing stories as constitutive of organizational realities. The stories were analysed as situated performances rather than surrogate measures such as culture, climate, or knowledge. Boje (1998) argues that the methodological consequences of this method are to see organizations as storytelling areas. This approach was useful in the development of the case study and the individual 'cases'.

The focus of the narrative interviews was similar for principals and teachers, namely: biographical details (personal and professional background); special contributions to the school's successes; triumphs/successes; where they come from, what they have learnt, where they are, where they are going; and their

future plans as part of their engagement in the continuous process of learning. Although the research did not provide an opportunity for participants to conceptualise their own narratives, the narrative approach was helpful in revealing what happens in individual, group, and organizational learning processes.

I started using this approach with the principal in School A, who is known for having helped his school become one of the most talked about schools not only in Gauteng but also in South Africa as a whole. He has always been considered a 'driving force' in the way the learners in his school have managed to qualify for tertiary education in spite of their material poverty. Some of the questions addressed to the learners about their principal were helpful in refining the questionnaire for the interview with the principal. Learners' responses helped to provide background information about the principal whom they seemed to admire so much. Although there were some similarities in the way the questions were framed for different participants, principals' questions also focused on critical incidents in the schools' life cycles, lessons learnt as part of the organizational learning processes at a school level.

After having successfully used the narrative approach with Principal A, I decided to use the same approach with all participants in School B, with the exception of the learners. In the case of teachers, the narrative approach not only helped me to capture some of their lived experience, but also aimed to enable them to reflect on their own practices. In the process of reflection, I was hoping participants would reveal, for example, their triumphs and what made the triumphs possible; what crises they faced, what led to them and how they had responded to the crises; and what they had learnt over the years. In the process of such interviews, I realized that people take pleasure in talking about themselves – an opportunity that is rare in a school setting. Unfortunately, no follow-up on the reflections was possible as that was beyond the scope of the study.

Although this method is used mainly in historical research, I found it relevant to my aims in this case study because one of the questions, for example, concerned the professionals' experiences of those moments where they had to reposition

themselves in the process of change and begin to learn new things. This involved reflection on the teachers' personal and professional histories. There were critical issues which I decided should be discussed at individual level, as group interviews may deny people with different opinions the opportunity to come out with critical information to the study such as watershed events (Cohen and Manion, 1989).

In this approach, the researcher had to be a good listener and the interviewee a story-teller rather than a respondent. The agenda in a narrative interview is open to development and change, depending on the narrator's experiences. However, interview questions were specific, asking after concrete incidents based on concrete evidence, wherever possible. The effort to remain close to the story-teller's own experiences was assisted by interjections during story-telling such as: asking the story-teller about what happened to try and follow the sequence of the events; asking about what they did in certain circumstances; and how they felt during those moments. To avoid generalizations, interviewees were asked whether their feelings changed with the passage of time. Because this research was trying to tap into the particular history of individuals and other members of schools that were striving to be learning organizations, interviewees would be asked what any 'relevant others' did and felt each time.

Biographies

Cory and Underwood (1995) maintain that 'stories are capsules of time-released learning' (p. 129). On a similar note, Boje (1998) argues that humans are storytelling animals who act toward their organization and environments in the light of their storied interpretations of self, other, organization, and environment. The stories were important in that after the story has been completed, participants would reflect on the story and draw out what they had learnt over the years about leadership practices and their own learning practices, what they still had to learn and how they could still go about learning and strengthening themselves and their organizations.

In addition to narrative interviews, teachers in School A were asked to write personal professional narratives according to the following guidelines: where they have come from in terms of their personal and professional lives; where they are and how they got there; their triumphs and failures; where they want to go in terms of their career; what they would do to get there and the possible challenges they would have to overcome.

After the teachers in this study had written their stories, they were asked to reflect on them and to draw out what they had learnt over the years about leadership practices and their own learning, on what they still had to learn and their own learning, and what they still had to learn and how they could go on strengthening themselves and their organizations. A follow-up questionnaire was designed for this purpose and enabled me to fill the gaps in the teachers' biographies.

Observations

Observation took place mainly during staff development workshops. In School A, I observed a strategic planning workshop organized by the Science, Mathematics and Technology Department. In School B, at the beginning of each term, a staff development workshop was organized for both the primary and secondary school. I attended two of these workshops. In School B, the selected staff development workshop was on Stephen Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. As an observer during the sessions, I was able to select six of the active participants and those that I felt played a significant role in the staff development process.

Through these observations, I hoped to gain insights into how staff development programmes contributed to professional learning. Another purpose of observations was to acquire an understanding of how school members interact and communicate and about the general atmosphere pertaining to the everyday practices in the schools. To this end, I spent time in the staff rooms, and chatting with members of staff who had become familiar with my presence in the schools. My role was understood in both schools. Informal discussions about the day-to-day happenings helped to fill some of the gaps in the data for the study.

Observation enable me, as a 'non-participant' observer, to follow up on responses about how school leaders support or fail to support the school as a learning community. I was able to observe the general running of the school and see instances of how the culture in each school and school leaders enhance the development of continuous learning. Observation encompassed all the different aspects that may characterize a learning community, such as teachers' and learners' behaviour and interactions, ethos and relationships.

Self-administered questionnaire

Two self-administered questionnaires were designed to supplement the data from observations, interviews and biographies. One was distributed to a selected number of teachers, including heads of departments, in both schools as a follow up during staff development workshops or strategic meetings/workshops. The other was a follow-up on some of the issues that individual stories had revealed in School A. This was after the realization that there were still some gaps, especially in relation to answering the questions about possible inhibiting factors to individual learning that, in turn, affect learning in schools as a whole. The questionnaires were useful in the process of investigating the learning practices through staff development sessions in both schools.

This form of data collection was also useful in understanding the objectives of the collaborative inquiry, how it served the participants' needs, and its relation to the vision of teaching and learning. Characteristics of the teachers involved were also revealed in the observation during the learning processes. So, too, were the extent to which the objectives of their practices were useful in improving the vision of teaching and learning, and the extent to which the vision would be made a reality. As one of the key areas is to examine the way school leaders support school learning, it was important to investigate how the educators perceived the leaders' efforts in creating cultures of collaborative inquiry.

Although the questionnaires were designed to be self-administered, circumstances called for a change of plans. Since most of the participants were

busy preparing for the end-of-year examinations, we agreed that the questionnaires could be completed in the presence of the researcher. This worked to my advantage as participants would ask for some questions to be clarified and there were comprehensive responses as a result of my asking participants, in some instances, to elaborate on their responses. For example, one teacher in School A revealed his bitterness about a lack of recognition from his school where he felt he had contributed so much. I gained more by sitting with him and filling in the gaps. School B participants welcomed this approach as they were reluctant to be interviewed and preferred such a questionnaire or to be interviewed some time after school, as a result of time pressures.

Documentary sources

The documentary data sources are important because they reflect the changes that schools are grappling with. For the purposes of analysis, I grouped the documents into three main categories. The first was a category of policies; the second category was about documents that were related innovative practices; and the one included reports that were informative about the everyday practices in the two schools.

Policies were examined in four overlapping categories. In the first category were enabling organizational learning policies (local and national). These included mission statements that reflect school values following, for example, the South African Schools Act of 1996, the Values Manifesto of 2001, codes of conduct, and so on. These policies were helpful in understanding contextual factors associated with learning and the implications for its sustainability and transferability, as well as for other aspects of policy. In the second category were inhibiting policies (answering the same questions in 'enabling policies'). Staff development policies (e.g. in-house, the resources utilized, incentives e.g. subsidized incentives (if not in-house) formed the third category; and facility access policies (such as resource centres, computer laboratories and other centres that benefit learners) the fourth.

Evidence of innovative practices was drawn from school magazines, which described a range of activities from which I was able to judge teacher practices,

learning orientations by both learners and staff. The documents also revealed innovative practices in relation to students' benefits; how the innovations impact on curriculum goals and content and; what the practices have on students' competencies, attitudes and other outcomes. Such documents complimented the findings from interviews and narratives. Speeches during special events (such as farewell functions, prize-giving days), the students' written essays, and media statements about individual or school achievements were also used to identify innovative practices and to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of learning in the two schools.

The School Climate Survey Report of 2000 was the key document for identifying learners' perceptions of School B.

Data presentation, analysis and interpretation

A multi-method approach was used, within an interpretive frame, for analyzing the data. *Units of meaning* were developed as a result of reading carefully through transcripts, field notes, and documents (Maykut and Morehouse, 1997). Transcribed interviews and field notes were coded, using bracketing. Bracketing is the process of tracing preconceived ideas within brackets when reading through transcripts and field notes for the first time (Poggenpoel, 1996: 337). This approach to data analysis was helpful in highlighting key issues that I could revisit when doing the actual write-up.

A constant comparative method was used, which led to a thematic analysis as well as open coding to analyze transcripts and questionnaires respectively and to compare and categorize the data. Similarities and differences were identified to develop themes and, in turn, similar sub-themes were developed. In developing explanations, *process theory* was preferred since it helps in understanding how, for example *x* plays a role in causing *y* (Maxwell, 1992:20). A rigorous approach to the development of process theory is reflected in Chapter Seven and, of course, in the concluding chapter. An example of how themes and meanings were developed is presented in Table 3:

Table 3: The development of themes and categories (an example)

Category Name	Rule of Inclusion (verbal and non verbal behaviours)	Relationships and Patterns
Learning Triggers (provisional coding category)	***Painful beginnings (e.g. poverty and being orphaned)*** I came from a very poor family…All my sisters and my elder brothers didn't manage to study because of the financial conditions. All of them did Std.4. After that they were forced to work for a farmer (white man)…I am the first child from this family to get a matric certificate... As a learner, I had experienced that life was not simple because there were times when I never had a book for writing and I was beaten irrespective of the reasons I had of not having a book…I remember that I had to go to school bare-footed during cold winter days, sometimes I had to go without food… During those tough years pressure was put on me by teachers who used to 'sjambok' (sic) us and t-squared us. I failed to understand why teachers were not in a position to figure out what a number of families had financial problems. I remember one day I did not have a storybook and I was beaten as if I had committed a crime that can never be forgiven.	***Socio-economic conditions*** Most of the teachers, particularly in the previously disadvantaged communities come from humble beginnings Teachers may be slow learners partly because they take longer in coming out of their painful pasts and take time for their wounds to heal. Before they can even think of the learners, learning is about themselves and about improving their own lives, what they want to prove. At a time of massive change, people worry about themselves. They also focus on expanding their future rather than the organizations. They even plan to leave the profession (e.g. Principal in School A and the curriculum director in School B)

There were two levels of analysis in the study. The first level was a description of what was going on in the two schools, taking into consideration what individuals, teams, and groups brought to their schools. This was revealed by their actions and by what they said, as well as what was in formal documentation. The first level of analysis also described the leadership role. The second level focused on what participants contributed to their schools to be seen as learning organizations. In the second level of analysis, there was attempt to compare existing learning practices with the complexities, ambiguities and contradictions of organizational learning literature when applied in schools. Analysis at that level also involved

examining the possible effects if leadership did not intervene and play a role that had to develop an awareness of the complexities.

Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness, the study followed strategies that were to help minimize researcher bias:

- *Triangulation of methods:* In this study I used a triangulation of approaches as it is regarded as the most useful for gaining a full and accurate picture (Richardson, 1991).
- *Verbatim accounts:* The study, as reflected in the analysis chapters used a lot of direct quotations from the transcribed data. This transcribed data was helpful in illustrating the informants' views without neglecting the questions the study was trying to address.
- R*ecorded data:* In all the interviews, a tape recorder was used. In some interviews like the principals' interviews and the students' focus groups interviews, an audio visual camera was also used.
- C*ommon language:* All interviews were conducted in English, the language familiar to both the participants and the researcher. All participants were fluent in English but they were made aware that they could use their home languages.

Limitations of the study

Like all case studies, and qualitative research generally, this study is limited in the extent to which its findings can be generalized (Bassey, 1999; Buskens, 2002). Because the sample is small and is drawn from two schools, a detailed study of each school that helps in building a case study base is developed. The ideas that will be generated might illuminate realities of other situations and settings to further promote school learning and effective leadership that will sustain 'good' schools. The data base is small and also restricting. As a researcher, I would have liked to see this research used as a framework for knowledge construction about how schools learn, and have this research used to transform schools. However,

the discussion in the reflective chapter, Chapter Eight, helps to show how our own research practices may help other researchers examine their research practices.

As I have already mentioned, during staff development, I had planned to be a non-participant observer. According to Bless and Achola (1988), the idea of a non-participant observer is based on the assumption that 'the observer merely registers facts without interaction with the observed' (p. 86). This proved to be difficult in School A during the strategic meeting or workshop as participants were not focused on issues they were discussing during the meeting. No one was clearly chairing the meeting to ensure there was order, and the issues discussed were not being concluded. I found myself asking them questions to make sure I understood what they were discussing. On the one hand, my subjective stance came to the fore. On the other hand, the observation itself, especially because I was using a video camera, introduced its own biases by the very fact that the observed were aware that they were being observed (Bless and Achola, 1988). Similarly, Cohen and Manion (1994) argue that the observation approach is impressionistic, idiosyncratic and not representative. This raises the problem of generalizability. It is for such reasons that the study uses a variety of approaches. While I adopted the narrative as an appropriate research tool, its limitations cannot be ignored. Participants' narratives were dominated by their feelings and I could rely on their selection of those past experiences. They could choose to block painful experiences from recall.

The selection of the two schools in such different contexts also has a limitation in terms of generalizability. However, the study aims not so much to achieve generalizable conclusions but to provide what Bassey (1999) calls a "fuzzy generalization":

> A fuzzy generalization carries an element of uncertainty. It reports that something has happened in one place and that it may happen elsewhere. There is a possibility but no surety. There is an invitation to 'try it and see if it happens for you' (p.52).

A deeper analysis of the limitations is presented in detail in the reflective chapter, Chapter Eight.

Ethical considerations

Part of the rationale for this study was to improve the existing practice in managing learning organizations by focusing on particular contexts and the meaning for participants in these contexts. In order to achieve this goal, the information gathered had to be of high quality. To ensure this, it was crucial for me to protect participants' anonymity. Maxwell (1996) suggests sorting out and assessing the different personal, practical and research purposes that one brings to the study. Maxwell further suggests asking oneself questions like: '*Could my research harm the students or teachers?'* (p. 134). In my research school leaders could also feel threatened by the results as participating schools were selected on the basis of excellence. To minimize this fear, especially to those in leadership positions, I assured every participant that no one other than specified study school education colleagues with whom I would discuss results and conclusions (and my thesis reader) would know the results of my research unless the participating schools gave me permission to do so.

When I entered the field, I knew the importance of protecting the rights of the participants. I also knew that throughout the research process, I had to respect their rights by ensuring that what they told me remained confidential. This is also reflected in the introductory remarks of the interviews I conducted. In every interview or any form of participation, I laid the ground rules in writing and verbally that whatever the participants told me was not going to be divulged. When I wrote them a letter asking them to be part of the study, I gave assurances of not divulging their names and their school. That letter also had my signature as a way of further reassuring them of confidentiality. I am glad I have kept that promise. Throughout the study I use pseudonyms for the school and research participants. Addressing such ethical issues enabled me to collect as much information as I could from the participants. Some started giving me more documents than I asked for or were significant for the research.

In-depth interviews were successful, especially because the participants had built trust between me and those interviews were used to check patterns of findings generated through particular forms of data collection.

Therefore, confidentiality of information was guaranteed in the process of conducting this research. Confidentiality of whatever information was gathered in the school was also assured, respecting the wishes of the individuals, groups, and schools that had agreed to offer information about themselves and their organizations. A tape recorder and an audio video camera were used in some cases and the use of these negotiated with the participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS (A)

School A context and learning practices

> *There have been efforts to change schools and the education system for years, and yet we still do not have the system we would like. In fact, although we may feel that we are being bombarded by external and internal demands which force change on schools, for many aspects of the system and in many establishments, there is a surprising degree of stability.*
>
> Cockett, 1998: 54

What is the nature of learning in schools as organizations and to what extent does the existing learning fit the learning organization model? The theoretical framework in Chapter Two provides a starting point in understanding how organizations are created, manifested, and sustained. The case studies of the two schools and their learning practices are developed in this chapter and the next. Each case study provides an account of the school context, organizational history and development, everyday practices, ways of coping with educational change, and lessons learnt or not learnt in the context of change. These accounts are intended to yield a understanding of how school practices contribute to or inhibit organizational learning, as well as the role of school leadership in supporting the culture of change.

Background to School A and its context

School A was established in Orange Farm in 1993, shortly after the establishment of the Orange Farm Squatter Camp. The school is co-educational and it runs from Grade 8 to 12. Most learners come from Orange Farm, Sebokeng, and other neighbouring townships. Orange Farm started as a poor community with inadequate infrastructure and most of the children were living in shacks. Most of them do not live with their parents who have to live elsewhere to make a living. Starvation is rife and learners have low nutrition levels. According to Arnott (1999), children in this school often collapse in class from hunger and the school management sometimes uses its own resources to alleviate the worst cases (p.59). Now and again, the principal is seen calling some of the learners to give

them food from his lunch. Through the mass media, School A has attracted educationists, policy makers and the general public throughout South Africa and beyond as a school that is always striving for excellence against all odds.

The school started in chaotic times as a result of the changes that were taking place in South Africa as a whole:

> *There was that call from COSAS saying every child should go back to school. So, Orange Farm found itself having too many learners. So two secondary were established instantly - ours and another one called Vulandlela. We catered, unfortunately, for Grade 9 to Grade 12 when Vulandlela took all the Grade 8s and part of Grade 9s.*
>
> (Interview, School A principal, 21 August, 2001)

An additional problem in the beginning was that many of the learners came with forged results or claimed to qualify for more senior classes than they were entitled to enter. The students were taking advantage of the chaotic times, as the principal described in relation to students' cheating when the school started:

> *Some of the students forged (results) because when we were admitting learners, there was no documentation. It was simply what the learners had written down on a piece of paper. If the learner says, "I'm in Grade 12...there was nothing to do because we could not prove.*
>
> (Interview, School A principal, 21 August 2001)

Most learners were past school-going age and they came from the Sebokeng area which was notorious for violence. As a result, they wanted to be in control of other learners coming from other townships. The critical problems they faced when the school started were seen to be related to the fact that Nelson Mandela, who subsequently became South Africa's president, was released from prison:

> *Everything was chaotic considering the fact that there was that Mandela spirit. We had learners from Sebokeng who were travelling by train without any payment because of the chaos and we also had learners from Soweto travelling for free to school. So it was a matter*

of two bulls meeting in one place which was the school. The most important thing was that they did not come to school to learn, but they came to promote their culture of where they come from, and that's something we had to fight...At one stage, I closed down the school. I said, if anyone wants to come to school, they must come with their parents on a Sunday and failing which they shall withdraw themselves and those willing to come with parents, did so. In a way I was testing the support of the parents and I'm happy they supported me. We stopped that hooliganism from that day.

(Interview, School A principal, 21 August 2001)

As is evident in the principal's remarks towards the end of this quotation, parents were supportive in making them behave like school children.

The school followed a 'platoon' system whereby classes could not be started in mornings because the school depended on buildings of a neighbouring primary school. Classes used to start from 12 noon and ended at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. School A started with three staff members: the principal, the deputy principal and one female teacher. Here is how the principal described the school's situation prior to finding accommodation on a platoon basis:

The significant event for me was we used to assemble near a big rock. There were no formal classes and then we were told that the only place available was at Driefontein, the stable of horses. So we were transporting our learners using Putco buses but we went there for only one week. I realized that the place was not conducive to learning. The place was meant for horses, not human beings in terms of ventilation and sanitation. There was only one tap belonging to a landlord and he was angry, he locked the gates...so I decided to withdraw my learners and I looked for accommodation from the two schools.

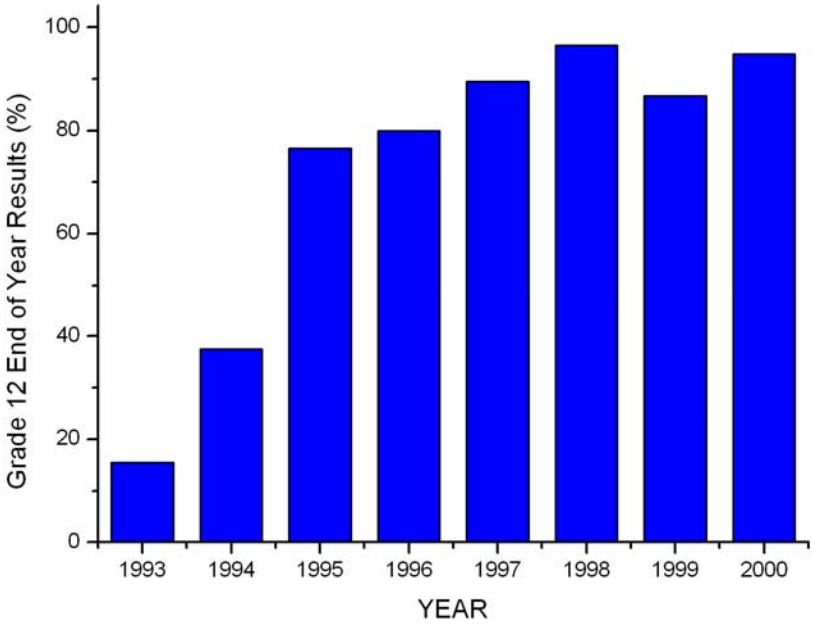
(Interview, School A principal, 21 August 2001)

The problems of ‘platooning’ were accompanied by a lack of other resources such as textbooks:

> *We went the whole year without textbooks and furniture and the only textbook we had was in November. Learners would come with paint tins (as chairs) because if they brought along chairs, they would be stolen. And they used to write on their thighs and was a good experience. We registered 210 Grade 12s and I’m glad to say that 15.5% of that number passed. But having said that, it was the best percentage in the district because our contenders got 9%... two exemptions came from there - and from the very same school that did not have furniture.*
>
> (Interview, School A principal, 21 August 2001)

True to its name, which means ‘build education’, School A has risen from ashes to stardom despite its being under-resourced like most other schools in the squatter camps and townships. As Figure 3 shows, there has been a dramatic increase in the Grade 12 pass rates, from an appalling 15.5 % in 1993; 37.5% in 1994; 76.6% in 1995; 80% in 1996; 89.5% in 1997; 96.5% in 1998; 86.7% in 1999; and 94.8% in 2000. Based on the high percentages pass rate, the school has enjoyed the publicity of having one of the best set of matriculation results in the Gauteng Province.

Table 4: Grade 12 performance between 1993 and 2000 – School A



After the dramatic increases over the first few years, results have fluctuated between 86% and 96%. The principal believes that the slight decrease in 1999 results from the introduction of Mathematics as a compulsory subject for all learners in School A. In 1996, members of the school had agreed that some subjects like Biblical Studies were getting learners nowhere after finishing school. According to the principal, the introduction of Mathematics as a compulsory subject was part of increasing opportunities for students as they prepared them for higher education. After a consultation with parents, in 1999 the school introduced what they called MST (Mathematics, Science and Technology) as compulsory subjects. However, due to lack of expertise in Technology, only Mathematics and Science were made compulsory for all learners in the school. This innovation is part of the reason why the results dropped in 1999 but the principal insists that it is the quality of the results that counts:

> *By 1999, we dropped to 86% basically because of Maths...The results went down a bit basically but it was a good achievement as it was a good Mathematical percentage considering the quality of improvement. Learners at first think that Maths is a difficult and*

boring subject basically because of what we say to them and also the parents who have experienced Maths contributed. But when they realized they (learners) have no place to hide and some of the motivations with regard to Maths, telling them that it's like any subject...But since last year, our results have improved generally in terms of quality.

(Interview, School A principal, 21 August 2001)

School leadership and the school culture

This section describes the culture of a school striving to create a positive and constructive learning environment. The primary voices about the school culture are those of the learners. According to them, the school principal sets the tone for the school. He is not just a principal dominated by administrative work. Learners' views, in particular, point to leadership that is attempting to transform the culture of a school, with the support of staff and parents. From the school principal's perspective, he is an instructional leader who takes his role seriously in making sure that learning takes places and the school achieves the results and goals set at the beginning of each year.

The learners see the principal as someone with a clear vision of where the school is going. His vision is to see all the learners doing well in the Grade 12 examinations irrespective of the poverty they are surrounded with in the community, and this vision is supported staff. During the focus group interview, one learner said:

He always tries to give us a boost for our academic excellence, telling us about his own life and how he has dealt with his problems…He always gives us practical examples of how to deal with problems.

(Focus Group Interview, School A,
18 August 2001)

When asked about his direct involvement in teaching and learning, the same learner quickly said:

> *He always sacrifices a lot and has determination. He always does his best for the school and for himself.*
>
> (Focus Group Interview, School A,
> 18 August 2001)

Everyone in the school seems to share the principal's vision. Teachers share the same goals of seeing the learners' performance continuously improve every year and they are involved in the planning of how the goals can be lived. One learner wrote in his essay:

> *What I like about all these teachers is that they are committed to educating the learners…they plan their work and work their plan, by making sure that they finish the syllabus earlier in order for us to have enough time for revising.*
>
> (Grade 12 Learner, School A, 2001)

The *mission* (as a document) reflects high ambitions as it states that the school is to meet basic educational needs of individual learners by providing lifelong education through helping and guiding them to establish and enhance their careers to their fullest potential. The intention is to provide excellence and quality education while striving to be the pace-setters in all educational disciplines. In the mission statement it is also stated,

> We will strive to be highly regarded leaders in the educational field in Southern Africa/Province/region/District.
>
> (Mission Statement Document, School A)

Developing and promoting learners' capabilities is fundamental to the culture of the school. This is achieved through the teachers who seem to be generally committed to the mission and vision of the school. The successful Grade 12 results are rooted in the school's most basic value which has become the school *motto*: *"First Things First".* Some of the many ways in which this is reflected is the number of hours the learners are at school. The school now runs from 7h00 to

16h30. Although most learners live far from the school and have to walk long distances to and from the school, they seem to have no problem with the long hours. When asked about their source of motivation, one of the learners had this to say:

> *Well, the prominent (sic) one (main source of motivation) is by looking at your current situation, like if you come from a poor background, you have to motivate yourself towards self-betterment.*
>
> (Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A, 18 August 2001)

Apart from the principal, who was the main source of motivation to the learners, all five staff participants also used their backgrounds of having succeeded against all odds to motivate the learners. This was revealed when they were asked in a follow-up interview questionnaire whether their past experiences somehow affected the way they related to other people within their schools:

> *If one of my learners tells me that he/she has a problem at home, I understand quickly because I come from there.*
>
> (Mosh, teacher, School A, October 2002).

> *Yes, it taught me to respect everybody irrespective of age.*
>
> (Muntu, teacher, School A, October 2002)

> *The love and aspiration I had for kids still exists today. The expectation of enabling them to make their dreams come true is fulfilling*
>
> (Sam, teacher, School A, 2001).

> *I take my situation and help them to deal with the difficulties they encounter.*
>
> (Mosh, teacher, School A, October 2002).

As many learners come from homes without electricity, most of them use candles for studying and, in some cases, have problems in doing any studying at home

because of limited resources. In some cases, the parents cannot even buy candles. In response to these problems, the school introduced compulsory study in the afternoons, where learners are assisted with their homework. Grade 12s are also expected to attend Saturday classes to ensure that the syllabus is completed in time and there is enough time for revision. Although the success of the school is attributed to the idea of "First Things First", some learners feel that it has denied them opportunities to be involved in extra mural activities. Most of their time is utilized in informal learning activities, according to one learner.

The principal promotes adherence to school norms and values by encouraging conformity to school rules and constantly reminding learners about their purpose in being at a school with a reputation for doing well. Conformity to school rules he has termed "Sunday Behaviour", a term he often reminds them when he punishes them. Roaming around when it is time for classes is just one example of unacceptable behaviour. For the principal, good behaviour is its own reward. The learners have a great respect for him as a role model and so are generally co-operative in exhibiting Sunday behaviour. However, good behaviour seems to depend on his presence. One learner commented:

> *When he is not inside the school premises, you see students running around but when the principal is inside the school yard, there are no students around. They are all in their classes working hard.*
>
> (Learners' Focus Group Interviews,
> School A, 18 August 2001)

When asked to elaborate on what he had just said, he continued:

> *It's very funny how the whole school is hanging around one person but that's the reality of it that when he's not around, there is disorder but when he's around, there is order.*
>
> (Learners' Focus Group Interviews,
> School A, 18 August 2001)

One of the characteristics of the school culture is *communication characterized by openness.* Although the study could not establish the extent to which this is a genuine openness, it was clear that the principal encourages openness and plays a pivotal role in making sure that different voices (both staff and students) are heard and in detecting when there is a 'noise'. The principal often asks his staff and his students to express their views in writing. They are given a choice of either remaining anonymous or being known so that their suggestions or queries are addressed individually or in groups.

The principal is very open to the learners. He motivates learners especially, during assemblies by reminding them where he comes from as a person and where they come from as learners with regard to their poor family backgrounds. Most of the learners attribute their success to their good Grade 12 results and their support from the principal. When asked about what they like about their principal most, one of them said:

> *He always tells us stories in assembly about where he has been and the problems he's had and how he has had to deal with them. He always tries to give us the boost for our academic excellence, telling us about his own life and how he dealt with them (problems). That's one special thing about him. He always tries to give us practical examples of how to deal with problems.*
>
> (Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A, 18 August, 2001)

Another learner gave a similar response in praise of the principal:

> *My principal, for example, I once had reading problems and I approached him and told him how I needed his help...He told me that even if how bad things went, there are always two sides of the story, meaning if you face the bad facts of life that you have to make a choice and a make a good choice.*

(Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A,
18 August, 2001)

Learners also see the principal as making sacrifices for them. He drives for more than 30 kilometres to the school in the evenings to check on the Night Study Group. He has to drive back to his home in the middle of the night after being satisfied that the group is fine. He is the first to come early to the school and starts lessons for the completing classes. This he started as a way of punishing the learners who were misbehaving, yet they were matriculants or in the last grade. He decided the punishment would be to start at 7 o'clock in the morning instead of the normal starting time. When the punishment was over, the learners had started to like it and asked him to continue with the early classes. As some learners live far from the school, it means waking up as early as 5 o'clock in the morning. Other teachers also got interested and starting at 7 o'clock. Other teachers now follow the principal's example of giving early morning classes before assembly for Grade 12. The Grade 12s accept the practice of starting school earlier than the rest of the school because they have reaped the benefits of getting good results reflected in the public examinations. The Grade 11 and 12 students had to be regulated so that all the teachers could have a fair chance to advance their syllabi. Apart from being an early bird as seen by his learners, one of them added,

> *He does not hide facts of life when it comes to teaching. He always sacrifices a lot and has determination. He always does his best for the school and for himself.*
>
> (Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A,
> 18 August 2001)

One of the school's *triumphs* is enrolling learners from previous Model C schools. The principal and the deputy made it a point that their own children attended School A so that others could gain confidence about the quality of teaching and learning at the school. The principal justifies bringing his first-born son to the school by saying:

> *I allowed him to come to the school just to show people that I am not experimenting with their children...and our deputy principal also brought his child from an ex-Model C school. Ever since we have been having a lot of them (from Model C schools) where the numbers are dwindling.*
>
> (Interview, School A principal, 21 August 2001)

When most learners are flocking to the ex-Model C schools, School A is getting many of them to their school despite the poor conditions of a school in a squatter camp.

The number of learners who qualify to go to tertiary education is often used as a measure of school successes. Most of the Grade 12s do so and are encouraged to come back to the school to motivate the other learners. According to the principal, this is a strategy of making other learners realize that 'there is nothing ordinary about ordinary people'.

He is also a principal who is compassionate, especially towards his learners. The learners appreciate the support he provides. During the lunch hour he is often seen calling students whom he suspects as needy and giving them some of his food. Since there are many such learners, he says he does it in such a way that other learners see it as a kind gesture at that particular moment, and not necessarily that he is targeting specific learners.

Learners also see the principal as approachable at any time they need him. There are learners who see their parents as their motivators but still see the principal as the main source of motivation. They feel that he is the more trustworthy in terms of being supportive, as some teachers are sometimes not so approachable and seem distant, making learners feel nervous of seeking help from them.

There are times when the principal feels he has to bend the rules. Whenever there is something that the staff members are unhappy with, he would say, "for the

sake of the learners". The principal is quite modest in the many things he says to the learners as a way of motivating them:

> *We say so many things when we motivate them that they do not have to compare themselves to other people. Any other person is unique. As a person, you look at your background first and say, "I am doing what is going to correspond with my background and please my parents or am I doing what is going to please my peers. At the end of the day is one slice of the bread".*
>
> (Interview, School A principal, 21 August 2001)

When asked about the extent to which the school has evolved, the principal says that that the school has not yet arrived (as a school) as he says:

> *We started manufacturing ourselves and we are still manufacturing ourselves. We started showing them our cleaning heels and now we have become pacesetters... We have something to boast about! We are the benchmark of the Gauteng Province and I also think we are the benchmark nationally.*
>
> (Interview, School A principal, 21 August 2001)

The principal, his staff, and one or two learners, often receive invitations to give presentations in seminars, workshops, or conferences. Other schools that have started excelling (including a neighbouring school) have adopted some of the principal's strategies. The Gauteng Department of Education encouraged poor performing schools in the Education Action Zone (EAZ) projects to adapt some of the School A practices to improve their schools. This is implemented through workshops and monitoring those schools to ensure there is improvement, especially in Grade 12.

Although the principal sees the Grade 12 results as something to boast about, he is also quite modest about what the school has achieved:

> *Our tradition does not allow us to praise ourselves. I will use the words of Bandura when he says; a person becomes what he is because of what people say about him. Personally, when I look*

outside the streets and see our ex-learners who are employed, being 'somebodies' that gives me great satisfaction.

(Interview, School A principal, 21 August 2001)

In keeping with the South African Schools Act (1996), parents have a say in the daily running of the school as they form a majority in the School Governing Body (SGB). They are involved, for example, in issues relating to finance and encourage all parents to pay school fees. They also encourage fellow parents to be involved in matters relating to their children, like discipline and those negative forces, at school and at home, that might affect the learners in their expected performance. Parents support school's strict approach to discipline. According to the principal, the parents expect good results and they attribute those results to school disciplinary practices. On these grounds, parents support corporal punishment as do the learners. This, of course, contravenes the South African Schools Act of 1996 which abolished corporal punishment.

Maximization and recognition of learner achievement

As part of maintaining a sense of direction in the achievement of results, the school first sets achievement targets for itself at the beginning of the year, including a targeted percentage of pass rates in the final Grade 12 examinations. As mentioned earlier, some of the techniques include the long hours learners spend at school to make up for possible disturbances when they want to study at home. The principal and his staff identify learners who are performing poorly and they are then encouraged to improve through continuous assessment of their performance. The afternoon classes and weekends are used to meet the learners' learning needs.

There are other sacrifices that school members make, like coming to teach on Saturdays and starting school for the Grade 12 learners as early as 7 o'clock in the morning. The principal believes that discipline, hard work, and proper study methods and motivation are the 'pupils' greatest weapons' and can help learners to succeed against all odds. For example, teachers have to ensure that they

complete the syllabus on time for revision. Learners are expected to form study groups under the watchful eyes of the principal as well as the teachers. The common strategy is called the SQ and 3 Rs:

> *Our method is called SQ and 3 Rs - survey, question, reading, reciting and revision. This encourages learners to form a group because you can only recite to a group.*
>
> (Interview, School A principal, 21 August 2001)

As part of ensuring that the learners' voices are acknowledged, School A has a learners' representative council (LRC), which is also a requirement by the South African Schools' Act (1996). The Learners' Representative Council (LRC) consists of representatives from all classes throughout the school. In 2001, 14 learners were elected onto the LRC and some of the portfolios they handle include cultural affairs, catering, staff support, fund-raising and cleanliness:

> *We have two committee members who are in charge of sport and a condolence committee that assists learners who may suffer family tragedies during the year.*
>
> (Interview, President of the LRC, School A, 2001)

At the beginning of the year, the LRC sets objectives for all the learners and below are some of the objectives:

- *We want to achieve a 100% pass rate among the Grade 12s. We have to set up a system of groups of six learners who study together and help each other with the work.*
- *We want to motivate all the seniors at the school to set an example to the Grade 8s and other juniors so that we can instil a culture of learners at…(School A)*
- *We want to create a spirit of cooperation between the learners and the staff so that the school becomes a happy place to be at and so that we continue to achieve*

(President of the LRC, School A, 2001)

The LRC President feels that they have been successful in dealing with the learners as he continues:

> *So far we have had the cooperation of almost all the learners and the staff at the school. There is a small group who are rebellious but we have been able to deal with them with the help of the principal and teachers, and the school governing body when necessary. I believe that we are the best school in Orange Farm and the LRC will be going all out to improve even further and ensure that we remain number one.*
>
> (President of the LRC, School A, 2001)

Learners are encouraged to compete for good results. Every after an examination, there is a recognition of top achievers. Learners at School A are not only encouraged to compete among themselves but also with other neighbouring schools. The principal has made them aware that they are not different from other children despite their poor backgrounds. One of the sayings of the learners, which they learnt from the principal, is that 'there is nothing ordinary about ordinary people'. This means that in whatever they do, they must be confident about success and not look at themselves as failures simply because they are poor. It is only when he talks to them about life's lessons that they should not forget where they come from and should work hard to please their parents.

Apart from some companies that provide the school with stationery as a way of improving results, the Grade 12s who perform exceptionally well get bursaries to go to tertiary institutions. The Life Orientation Department plays a major role in inspiring the learners to enjoy these benefits. This helps in solving one of the learners' biggest challenges of securing money or sponsorship after completing school. While the students are generally doing well, they often do not know where the money will come from when they finish school because of their awareness that their parents cannot afford the high fees they are expected to pay for tertiary education, as most of their parents are unemployed. Even those parents that are working get meagre salaries. As a result, learners rely mainly on companies that are prepared to sponsor them at tertiary institutions. This is a motivation on its

own because the selection is based on merit. These bursaries have become a source of motivation for learners to work hard and to gain recognition even outside the school. One of the Grade 9 learners proudly said:

> *Speaking of companies, now I have a chance of being someone in life for the future because the company is preparing us for the future by giving us compositions to write. And I happen to be one of the students who excelled in the assignments so they said if one does well stands a chance of getting employment somewhere (sic).*
>
> (Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A, 18 August 2001)

This is because in the South African system, the government provides cheap education at school and at tertiary level students have to secure their own sponsorship. For most parents, tertiary education is expensive and oftentimes their children get stranded or get bank loans, which they have to pay after completing their tertiary education. Their own teachers experienced the same problems, as is reflected in the biographical sketches the teachers gave as they described where they come from and where they are going. Such experiences make learners even more determined to get out of the cycle of poverty.

The learners are also nervous of competition from the neighbouring schools. This is because their school is known as the best in the area and now they are receiving threats from one neighbouring school has a chance of becoming the best in the area,

> *There's this other school called Leshata High, people outside were talking about how Leshata is better than our school so that was our source of inspiring the Grade 12s.*
>
> (Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A, 18 August, 2001)

The principal encourages learners and teachers to speak their minds. Because he feels that people may be afraid to speak their minds verbally, he has introduced a suggestion box where learners are expected to speak their minds about anything

concerning the school and even the things they are unhappy about. He then acts on the basis of what they say and if it concerns the teachers, he approaches them and sometimes lets teachers read what the learners say about their school. Most of the suggestions are based on how the results can be improved and what they feel teachers should do. Other concerns are about the negative aspects of what they do not approve of in the school, be it about the principal or the teachers.

Another strategy for speaking their minds is through debating as one of the students wrote to *School Matters Magazine*:

> *Debating and popular speaking are very popular activities at Aha-Thuto and the debating society has enjoyed a lot of success in competitions against schools in the area. I believe that these are valuable activities for students. They give you confidence and show you that you can speak to strangers with confidence. That will be valuable when you go out to work one day because you will be able to speak confidently to clients. You also learn from the experience of preparing debates, reading up, and doing research*
>
> *(Grade 12 learner, School A, 2001).*

Learner support

The night-study-group

Owing to the problems learners face at home, the school allows them to use some classrooms to study and sleep over at night. This becomes convenient because the school has electricity unlike many of their homes. It is also convenient for those who live far away as they end up staying at the school. According to the principal, the idea of sleeping at school started in 1996 under 'bizarre circumstances'. A certain learner was staying approximately 30 kilometres away from the school. Because of poverty-stricken circumstances, he used to come early by the first train to Vereeniging as there would still be no ticket examiners on duty at that time and he could travel free of charge. But going back home in the afternoon meant walking the whole distance and he would reach home towards midnight every school day. After the principal heard the plight of the student, he

offered him a classroom to stay until the following Friday. He says he was unaware that most learners were experiencing a variety of problems and the learner's problem was one of many. When he approached the learners, he learnt some of problems that made studying almost impossible in small overcrowded shacks. Eventually, ten other boys joined that student and they called themselves the night-study-group. They became useful to the school in the sense that they kept guard over of the school and vandalism was tremendously reduced.

Following the establishment of the night-study group, most of these boys obtained exemptions in the matriculation examinations. The principal made regular rounds in the night to monitor the boys in the process and to ensure they behave well, as well as to ensure their safety. The other teachers also gave the night-study-group full support. One student, interviewed by *Drum* magazine, said that some teachers gave them a pot, kettle and a stove. Parents received letters informing them about every learner who was part of the group. In turn, parents supported their children by providing blankets.

Girls are not allowed to be part of the night-study-group. They feel they are also denied the opportunity of being part of the group since they are also facing similar problems in their homes. The boys feel that it is unsafe for the girls and another reason being that not being with girls is a way of avoiding misbehaviour. One of the boys firmly said:

> *We are trying to avoid the misbehaviors (sic). We are still young...There can be babies produced from this brother and sister mentality.*
>
> (Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A, 18 August, 2001)

Vocational guidance

The school uses the Life Orientation department to expose learners to a range of experiences. Almost every month, run a series of career days is run. Different institutions and different people from private companies are invited to the school

to help expose the learners to wide choices of careers. The career guidance department head claims that the idea of having guests from the private sector is for them to provide basic educational needs. This is in accordance with the new curriculum, according to which learners are provided with life skills as a vehicle for lifelong education. According to the staff and the learners, a key aspect of this vocational guidance and assistance is to help learners decide on their careers, and educational assistance in applying for bursaries.

The Life Orientation department markets the school to interested partners in the business world by inviting them specifically to visit the learners in the last grade. The head of Life Orientation often invites motivational speakers who make learners in the last grade realize that their socio-economic backgrounds should not hold them back. Those learners that excel in some subjects, particularly Science and Mathematics, sometimes get sponsorship from such companies. This opens up opportunities for them even when they complete higher education as they are expected to work for the companies that sponsored them. Learners are motivated to excel as the selection process takes into consideration how much a student can excel compared to others. Speakers come from such organizations as the "I Can" Foundation, Saachi and Saachi Advertising Agency and NISAA. Learners who do well in the outside world are asked to come to the school to motivate other learners. Some of the former students have become motivational speakers and focus on motivating young people in schools.

External partnerships

The Life Orientation Department is one department in the school that ensures that most learners get to tertiary institutions after completing Grade 12. This was what the HoD of Life Orientation proudly said about himself:

> *The fact that most of the matriculants are absorbed for tertiary is because of his (meaning his own) dedication.*
>
> (Muntu. Teacher, School A, 2001)

Like all schools in South Africa, Grade 12 learners have a farewell function at the end of the year, called the Matric Dance. One of the challenges is that the dance is expensive for parents as learners have to look their best on that special day. Schools also need to support the function by providing money for food and to make sure the day is a day to remember for all the Grade 12s. As the day approaches, there are often tensions between the administration, the teachers and the learners because the learners make very high demands of how the day should be. When the research was conducted in 2001, there was a looming strike as the learners were dissatisfied with the Matric Dance preparations. In the same year, the Life Orientation Head of Department secured sponsorship for the dance with Price Water House Coopers.

Strategic planning

Regular meetings are held by the whole school and by departments. One of the strategic planning meetings by the Science, Mathematics and Technology department was captured in the study. There were discussions about how the department was to approach the problems they were facing as a result of the introduction of outcomes-based education (OBE) to secondary schools. It was clear from the discussion that the members felt there was inadequate support from the National and Provincial Departments of Education as they believed that the district training facilitators had limited knowledge of the new curriculum.

An example of curriculum planning is extracted from a meeting that was held by the Science, Mathematics, and Technology Department on 4 September, 2001. Outcomes-based education (OBE) had currently been introduced in Grade 8. The meeting was to jointly reflect on the challenges they face with the introduction OBE and Curriculum 2005.

The following recommendations were made by the teachers involved:

- form partnerships with primary school teachers as they have more expertise in teaching OBE;
- start training Grade 9 teachers since OBE would be introduced in Grade 9 the following year, 2002;
- learn from learners because they have vast knowledge on OBE as they have done it from primary school;
- hold meet regularly to share ideas, problems and insights;
- regular meetings of people in the same learning area in the department;
- investigate more about the schools involved in the Quality Learning Project; (QLP);
- enrol with institutions that are offering courses on OBE;
- invite facilitators from the Department of Education or from some other organzations with expert knowledge on OBE;
- watch "Educator Express" a television programme on SABC 3 on Saturdays;
- specialize in one grade until one has mastered the skills; and
- consider admission issues and have manageable classes.

The meeting was captured on video cassette to enable me to examine how the *'wheel of learning'* is turned for individuals, groups, and the school as a whole. My assumption was that the participants' underlying *values and beliefs* might be reflected in the decisions taken in the meeting which, in turn, would influence the way the decisions taken would be implemented.

Staff members often hold staff meetings in the mornings depending on whether there is an issue to be discussed. The principal asks teachers and learners to respond in writing to some specific issues. The extent to which those opinions or suggestions are taken into consideration by the principal is not clear. When asked why he preferred this approach, the principal responded by saying that he always thought the learners would be afraid to speak their minds so writing to him would be easier as they would feel free to say anything.

During official school closing at the end of the school year, School A teachers, with some HoD, and the principal, remain on duty until the Grade 12 results are released. In any case, since the school has a history of producing good results, staff often celebrate the release of results with a small party. This is not a rule enforced on all teachers but most teachers are used to staying at school after official closure. Teachers seem to like the idea because they feel it helps them to plan for the following year.

School realities through the learners' 'eyes'

As stated in Chapter One, one of the primary objectives of the study was to record learners' perspectives on their schools for the development of a thorough understanding of their learning experiences. The aim of the chapter was to establish a biography of the school, using the learners as the main data sources. Each had to write a story about their school, including what they liked and what they did not like about their school. Getting to understand their learning experiences would be useful in determining the extent to which their schools were in the process of changing in view of the changes taking place in education and in establishing a perspective on their journey towards success as schools. Following the above objective would be the other objective of determining how social class sustains patterns of advantage or disadvantage in the way schools learn collectively and change as organizations to maintain their stability while responding to outside forces, and the extent to which their environments are suitable or unsuitable for making their schools learning organizations.

There was also an interest in learners' experiences of the day-to-day activities. In this study, the stories were not treated like artefacts. Drawing from the lessons from Lance and Boje (1998), the stories were used as constitutive of organizational realities. Lance and Boje argue that in this approach, the stories are not indicators but are the organization. I begin with learners' experiences in their schools and the way they have constructed their school's identities. Here the concern is mainly with the learners' sense of what their schools provide to make

them what they are. Their attitudes and expectations are critical in the way schools continue to adapt to the changes in education.

The conclusion drawn in this section is that of the strong relationship between learners' families (social backgrounds) and the extent to which schools as organizations learn. Where leadership is viewed as one person at the top, there will be limited learning. What came out strongly from both interviews and the essays they wrote was their admiration for the principal as their hero and as a single person at the top of a hierarchy. Because the learning in the school is not aligned to the learning expected in learning organizations, the learners' stories have sad endings.

During the focus group interview, learners were asked about what they like about their school and this is how some responded:

> *Mostly is the performance and results achieved by our learners also there is good discipline amongst our learners and staff.*
>
> (Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A, 18 August, 2001)

> *What's also appreciable is the fact that the kids around here understand that they are from poor background so they put extra performance when they get to school. Most kids around here have a zest for educational success so basically that's what inspires them.*
>
> (Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A, 18 August, 2001)

> *He always tries to give us the boost for our academic excellence, telling us about his own life and how he dealt with his problems so that's one special thing about him, he always tries to give us practical examples of how to deal with problems.*
>
> (Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A, 18 August, 2001)

Other students commented:

The principal sacrifices for the school, wanting the school to have good results and to see the school doing well.

(Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A, 18 August, 2001)

Another thing he doesn't spare the rope, he beats.

(Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A, 18 August, 2001)

The issue of corporal punishment was interesting. I asked if when they said he does not spare the rope meant he still used corporal punishment and they unanimously agreed. Since I could not read from their faces whether they liked or disliked the practice, I asked whether they liked it, and I got the following comments:

In a way we do; in a way we don't.

(Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A, 18 August, 2001)

We don't like it but it seems as if it's necessary.

(Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A, 18 August, 2001)

The learners also see corporal punishment effective when the principal is around the school because he is able to keep order. When he is not there, they have an opportunity to roam around the school instead of being in their respective classes. No matter how much the principal is known for using corporal punishment, he has earned respect from the learners for providing them with the necessary support. August, 2001)

Students were asked to say more about the support that they were receiving from the principal and this is how they responded,

Like for instance, he's approachable. He said we can approach him at any time of the day if we had some problems.

(Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A, 18 August, 2001)

Talking about the principal, he is one of the pedagogic teachers I've known.

(Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A, 18 August, 2001)

When the learner was asked to elaborate based on what he meant by 'pedagogic', he said,

He tells us facts on life (sic). When coming to teaching he always sacrifices a lot and has determination. He always does the best for the school and for himself.

(Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A, 18 August, 2001)

I then asked the students what their source of motivation is:

Well, the prominent one by looking at your current situation like if you come from a poor background you have to motivate yourself towards self betterment.

(Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A, 18 August, 2001)

I would say my parents, they give me so much support and pushing me, telling me to work hard and also the teachers too but some are bad.

(Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A, 18 August, 2001)

Well for me personally my parents the do provide me with motivation, and also my principal too.

(Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A, 18 August, 2001)

Also what motivates the students is the expectation from the community.

(Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A, 18 August, 2001)

I would also say for me an inspiration comes from the fact that after every term examinations top achievers like to top ten get rewarded so it motivates students to get top standards. Also I've learned that in life things don't wait for you.

(Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A, 18 August, 2001)

School achievements as perceived by the learners

During the focus group interviews and essay writing, learners were asked about what they considered as the highest achievements of the school. This is what they said:

The most conspicuous would be that of our potential and it's fundamental for a school to be recognised and the opportunities provided by our school are good ones.

(Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A, 18 August, 2001)

It's all basically based on school's performance like the past matric pass rate. The school is associated with big companies which provide stationery which inspires good performance.

(Learners' Focus Group Interviews, 18 August, 2001)

Speaking of companies, now I have a chance of being someone in life for the future because the company is preparing us for the future by giving us compositions to write. And I happen to be one of the students who excelled in the assignments so they said if one does well stand a good chance of getting employment somewhere in Vanderbijl so there's a chance of coming to the school.

(Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A, 18 August, 2001)

Learners in School A maintain that they are the best and there is also a perception that they are 'in everybody's lips' because of their Grade 12 results. They think that their results are the best in the whole of the Gauteng Province. This is also because the learners' performance at Grade 12 has attracted the media. It is also interesting in the learners' responses is their generalizations using "everybody", for example. One of the learners did not think they were only known locally:

We are the best (school) in Southern Africa...Since…(School A) was established in 1993, it was the best of the best. Even now it is the best and will remain the best.

(Grade 12 learner, School A, 2001)

Students are also living in fear that the neighbouring school will overtake them in terms of their popularity. The following is a poem taken from one of the Grade 11 learners in 2001 when the neighbouring school, Leshata Secondary School got better results in Grade 12 than School A. She was urging the Grade 12s to work harder as she said:

We are in everybody's lips. Everybody is wondering how …(School A's) results are going to be, whether good or bad. If they are bad, we will be on the headlines. Sooner than expected, the word will be, "(A) school of excellence falls apart"...We are the best and Leshata learnt from the best.

(Grade 12 learner – School A, 2001)

Behind the good results that the school has been obtaining in the last five years, the learners see the principal as their hero. His belief is that every child has the potential to master any subject no matter the conditions under which that child is studying. He sees education as paramount to whatever learners do. This follows the school's motto of *"First Things First".* The students attribute most of their success to the motto, which their principal often reminds them of whenever they deviate from the school's norms. One learner boasted about their success,

> *We always know what we want and it is what we get. Success and 'First things First' is the motto of the school*
>
> (Grade 9 learner, School A, 2001.

One of the principal's contributions is leading by example. The learners see him as their main source of motivation. As one of the learners was quoted earlier on in the chapter, the principal uses storytelling as a tool for surfacing the learners' assumptions in general and the things that they take for granted.

The story of learning: a sad ending

The evidence revealed in this section came from the focus group interviews and the essays students were asked to write about their school. The emphasis was the real depiction of what their school is like based on the following guidelines: What I like about my school; what I dislike; what I like and dislike about my teacher; school successes and failures. Most of what they said they liked about the school has already been discussed above. This includes the fact that the school was doing well with its Grade 12 results and that the school was known all over the country for its good results. Learners also like the way they are disciplined in order to achieve the school goals. Although they admitted that the principal is very strict, they still feel he is doing it for their own good.

Although students had so many positive things to say about their school, they still had those things that they would still want to see changed. The following are their responses:

Sometimes we tend to compare Model C Schools with Township Schools. One advantage about the Model C School is that for the teachers, it's an obligation for them to not bring their family problems to school, whereas in our township schools, we have more of that where teachers bring their baggage to the school, which somehow destroys teacher learner relationship.

(Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A, 18 August 2001)

I think there should be lots of respect between teachers and students and you sometimes find some, mostly male teachers, not respecting students to an extent of proposing to students, we do have a lot of that in our school. Basically I think teachers should acknowledge students as their children other than as boyfriends and girlfriends.

(Learners' Focus Group Interviews, School A, 18 August 2001)

Some learners feel very lonely in their learning. Learners expect teachers to give them equal treatment whether they are slow learners or not. It is part of being professional for teachers to treat learners equally. According to the slow learners, teachers tend to focus more on the ones that do well and they feel neglected or ignored. This is felt strongly because the school has attracted even outsiders and the tendency is to focus on the ones that are prepared 'to shine to the outside world':

I do not like a teacher who set up a bad example to the youth and the children he is teaching and a teacher who discriminates, also a teacher who run away from his problems and take out his frustration towards the children.

(Grade 10 learner, School A, 2001)

The school often has many visitors since it has attracted researchers, the media people and sometimes companies who are interested in sponsoring those

students who are promising to do well. The students do not know the criteria used to have some learners called to meet the visitors. As a result, some are not impressed as one of them said that most learners are not invited when there are visitors at school.

Although some learners feel that corporal punishment is good for them there are those who are not in favour of it. The school continues to use corporal punishment from, the principal down to the teachers. Concerning corporal punishment from the principal and the deputy, one of them said,

> *My dislikes about the principal and his deputy is that they are still using corporal punishment when you are late on your early morning study, even if you are late for five minutes. That way they are using the old way of teaching that if you are a teacher, you have to teach with a stick in your hand.*
>
> (Grade 10 Learner, School A, 2001).

The above statement shows a deep sense of disapproval in the way the principal and his deputy punish learners. Another student described the extent to which the principal uses corporal punishment:

> *He (the principal) beats the hell with his stick and that is painful.*
>
> (Grade 11 Learner, School A, 2001)

Similarly, another one said,

> *He likes to punish us too much and makes us thank him for punishing us, saying he is 'panel-beating' us.*
>
> (Grade 10 Learner, School A, 2001)

The introduction of the South African Schools Act (1996) meant teachers had to stop punishing learners by using corporal punishment. This was a challenge on the part of schools because they had to find a substitute punishment. They lacked the skills of using other forms of punishment and for them corporal punishment was effective and fast to administer. One learner said:

Corporal punishment is legally banned but we are still corporally punished.

(Grade 11 Learner, School A, 2001)

Corporal punishment is seen by some learners as one of the solutions to maintaining or improving the results. This contradicts their criticism of the way teachers discipline them.

It is also interesting to note that learners want the school to continue punishing them using corporal punishment even when they know it is illegal for teachers to punish students using corporal punishment. For them it is better to suffer for a little while and succeed in the end. One of the documents collected was a collection of the notes that learners wrote to the principal at the beginning of 2001 on "Ways to Improve the Matric Results". Most of the learners felt that the best way to do so was to continue the way followed with the previous Matriculants. Unfortunately, the letters to the principal did not specify who the learners were, as they were expected to remain anonymous. The selected letters read thus,

Dear Sir
… (School A) is one of the best school in Orange Farm. And this school which most people regard as the light to achieve good results for them.

From the above, Dear Sir
… (School A) is one of the best school in Orange Farm. And this school which most people regard as the light to achieve good results for them. what I'm trying to say is that the way you use your medicine. It must stay like that, because if you do not use your shambok no one will take thinks seriously even our grade 8 will take advantage that you are no longer the principal of…[School A].
You are the head of this HOUSE.

(Grade 10 Learner, School A, 2000)

The above recommendation is one among many from students who feel that their school is on track in the way the learners are disciplined. Many learners who feel nothing should be changed in the school:

> *Dear Sir*
> *I think you should forget about SRC (Students Representatives Council) and class reps. if you find noise in the class just punish us as you used to. And in that way things will be better than last year.*

Other learners feel strongly that part of improving the results is if teachers stop having affairs with learners. Here are two similar letters to the principal,

> *Dear Mr…*
> *To obtain more percentage than the previous year is that teachers who are involved with learners should stop that. We need some advices of life to stop being in love and study hard because education first.*
>
> (Learner unnamed, School A, 2001)

Students battle between their expectations of their teachers not using corporal punishment and what they see as the way to go if learners are to succeed in maintaining record standards in their Matric results. The blame for a decrease in the pass rate is attributed to teachers or the principal not being as tough with them as he was before. In a way, the principal and the school team resort to corporal punishment because the learners are also comfortable with it and they do not foresee any danger in doing so because even the parents support the idea of their children being beaten. Dimmock (1996) maintains that the ability of school leaders to transform dilemmas into resolvable courses of action depends on the ability to analyze the dilemma by it in terms of normative, institutional and resource elements, and differential rates of change within and between these elements, is a "*sinequa non*". In his discussion of leadership dilemmas, Dimmock (1996) further argues that it also depends on the ability to view a complex problem through an expanded range of frames or 'lenses. These frames provide school leaders with a wide range of options with which to address to address those dilemmas. For

example, the principal, teachers and most of the learners are aware that corporal punishment is no longer legal but they still fell it is the way to go if the learners are to be helped to succeed.

As mentioned earlier on, learners are the best participants as they form the basis of what schools stand for. At the heart of the school's activities in this case study is the principal as a driver. The data for this section is based on the learners' responses from the focus group interviews as well as from the students' essays. After all the praise about their school, there are elements of their school that learners do not like. There are negative aspects of the school that are worth noting. This is the section that casts doubt on the way schools are progressing as learning organizations. This section is significant as it focuses on the inhibiting factors that make it difficult to see schools as learning organization. When the principal is not there, the learners are not in their respective classrooms.

Teachers (especially the deputy principal) use abusive language. There is a lot that learners learn from their teachers and leadership staff. One of the things that the learners find intolerable is the abusive or vulgar language that some teachers use. Different learners, who did not want to be named, alluded to the fact that some teachers, especially the ones that are senior, often used vulgar language:

- *He* [my deputy] *uses vulgar words and does not realize that they are harmful (Grade 10d, female learner)*
- *He* [my deputy] *is rough and uses vulgar language when he is mad (Grade 10d, female learner)*
- *The thing is he* [my deputy] *likes spanking, yelling and using unsuitable words to students*
- *He* [the deputy] *is always shouting at learners. He like embarrassing learners on parade.*

From the above quotations, it is clear that it is mainly one person (and one with a very senior position) that uses vulgar language. The deputy principal is expected to work closely with the principal but seems to have different values from those of the principal. Since School A is a secondary school, the learners are mostly

teenagers and do not like being embarrassed in from of other learners by their teachers.

> *There are some teachers who embarrass children in front of other learners.*
>
> (Grade 9 learner, School A, 2000)

Learners have expectations of their teachers in terms of their professionalism and appeared very disappointed by their teachers who have affairs with some of the girls because they are supposed to be role models. They said in many voices:

> *Our male teachers do not respect us as their children...They go to the kids and tell them how much they love them and convince them about buying them food for lunch after they are going to sleep with them...We take that as child abuse or rape and at the end the girls end up fighting for the educators which is taking the school name down to the drain*
>
> (Grade 11, female student)

> *Coming to the failure of the school, the school has failed to stop relationships between teachers and students.*
>
> (Learner unnamed, School A, 2001)

> *Love affairs between teachers and learners are one of the bad things.*
>
> (Learner, unnamed, School A, 2001)

The case study represents a school that is rooted in an organizational learning premise where role players strive for continuous improvement irrespective of the difficult circumstances presented by the school context. Although current management theories condemn leadership attached to an individual, the role played by the principal is remarkable in committing school members to school goals, especially the learners. The statements by some learners about their

school, particularly about the behaviour of some of their teachers reveal how unprofessional some teachers can sometimes be but the school continues to be judged by its good results.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS (B)

School B context and learning practices

> *Of course, in a sense "organizations" do not learn, the people in them do, and individual learning may go on all the time. What is different about a learning organization is that it promotes a culture of learning, a community of learners, and it ensures that individual learning enriches and enhances the organization as a whole.*
>
> Kerka, 1995: 1

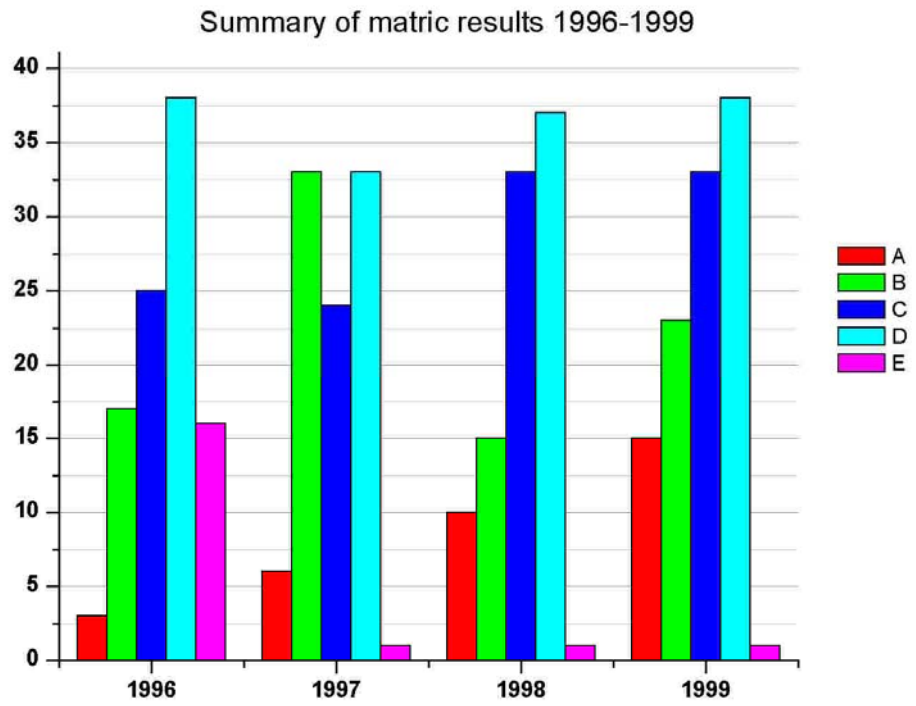
Background to School B and its context

The school is one of a world-wide organization of Marist Colleges founded by a young French priest, Marcellin Champagnat. Marcellin established schools in early 19th Century France. It is a boys' school in Gauteng and has been in existence since 1941. The school's strength and history affords every child the opportunity to achieve his full potential and to find both roots and wings (Jubilee Year Magazine: 2001).

Unlike the public schools in South Africa, the College sits the Independent Examination Board (IEB) Examinations. In 2001 it continued to maintain a University Exemption rate of over 85%. A number of individual candidates continue to excel with distinctions that are rated highly countrywide. The academic programme in the school does not aim only at teaching the syllabus.

Table 4 illustrates the progress in the Grade 12 examinations between 1996 and 1999. A, B, C, D and E represent symbols learners during the final examinations in Grade 12. For example, the table shows that there are fewer learners who get As and Bs which are distinctions. Instead a majority of them between 1996 and 1999 were getting lower symbols (Cs and Ds).

Table 4: Grade 12 performance between 1996 and 1999 – School B



School B is a boys' school where each boy is encouraged to develop his own special talents, be they academic, sporting or cultural so that he can face the challenges of the future with confidence. The high school works very closely with the Preparatory School and,

> *In addition, the High School benefits from the admission of boys from other primary schools into Grade 8. These boys enrich the school by bringing in different ideas, experiences and ways of looking at things. The High School has expanded rapidly in recent years, with enrolment of 470 in 2000.*
>
> (Jubilee Magazine – School B, 2001)

The school boasts of "The Marist Family" ethos as characterized by a caring and supportive environment. According to the School Climate Survey (CIE, 2000) there is a sense of identity as a Marist school and pride in the school, whose family atmosphere as mentioned by many of the learners is characterized by a

friendly atmosphere. In the Survey, a 'vast majority of learners' reported that they were happy at the school and a feeling of a sense of 'camaraderie'. Being in such a school entails far more than reaching one's potential academically: '…guided by the educational mission and moral teaching of the Catholic Church, we strive to create a community of care and concern, by befriending and showing confidence in our boys while maintaining high expectations of their behaviour and conduct (Jubilee Year Magazine, 2001)

In Grades 6 and 7 all boys take part in the Pupil Development Programme. This is a carefully structured programme that seeks to lead the boys towards being confident, self-sufficient and caring members of society, and to engender in them a sense of goal-setting and self-motivation. The school has a chapel and a resident Chaplain for counselling and advising learners, parents and teachers. The emphasis is still in fostering the family spirit and family masses are held at regular intervals during the year. Religious education is not only for academic purposes but also for the preparation for first Holy Communion in Grade 3 and Confirmation in Grade 11. The religious ethos is also built on annual retreats, regular times of confession, assemblies, and honouring the seasons of the church. Although a majority of the students at School B are catholic, children of other denominations and religions are also welcomed.

All members of the school community – parents, pupils and staff members are considered part of the Marist Family. School B also uses the *house system* of pastoral care, and small classes. This system enables the pupils and teachers 'to build harmonious relationships based on mutual trust and respect' ("Jubilee Year" 1941 – 2001). One of the key elements is the development of pupils' leadership where High School Boys are expected to be mentors for the junior pupils. Boys are often involved in outings, excursions, and leadership camps. These are designed to extend the learners both in and out of the classroom but also to reinforce the key values of a boy in the school: *humility, modesty,* and *simplicity*. This is in line with the school's mission statement,

> The school is dedicated to:
>
> Providing a well-balanced education in a Christian environment

> Recognizing and developing the unique potential of each individual
> Ensuring the process is guided by well qualified and highly motivated teachers
> Equipping pupils with self-esteem and the moral and intellectual qualities to succeed and be happy in an ever-changing world
> In order to achieve this, the school will:
> Provide small classes (maximum of 25 pupils per class)
> Encourage religious tolerance and multiculturalism
> Emphasise quality Maths and Science education,
> Entrepreneurial and communication skills, information
> Technology, sport and extra-mural skills.
>
> (The Headmaster's Report, School B, 13 November 1999: 5)

As stated in the School Climate Survey (CIE, 2000), 'learners appreciate the family atmosphere at the school and regard the overall discipline; holistic education; and cultural activities/fun days as positive aspects' (p.5). The family atmosphere felt by most learners at the school is captured in three head prefects' addresses during the High School Prize giving days in 1999, 2000 and 2001 as they were reflecting on what had made their days special while being students in the school:

> This, my thirteenth and final year at [School B] is one that I will cherish for the rest of my life. My only regret is that it has passed so quickly….When I started to prepare this address, I sat for a while and asked myself the question – "What is it about [the school] that is so special, why do I love this school so much? Is it the extraordinary fields and now enviable facilities? Is it the teachers, or perhaps my fellow pupils?" And then it dawned on me – It is all these things and yet none of these things. The answer is simple – the Marist ethos. The school is blessed by an intangible, omnipresent brotherhood – The Marist Brotherhood.
>
> (Head Prefect, School B, 1999)

> Considering the significance of today's function to us, the Matrics, I reflected on my days at …(the school), ten incredible years, and on what has made them special. I realized that my most cherished memories are not of the successes, or trophies or blazers, but rather of the times I have spent with my Marist brothers. We shared each other's joys and heartbreaks, triumphs and fears, successes and failures. Together we have given a glimpse of what we can be.
>
> (Head Prefect, School B, 2000)

> As I sat down to write this speech, I asked myself one simple question, what does it mean to be a …boy? …After considering all the aspects of my time at …(the school), I came to the conclusion that for me to be a …boy you must have pride in yourself and pride in your school. I believe strongly in school spirit and pride…As I was writing this speech the … (school) motto of "Take courage and be a man", entered my head. This has been a motto by which I lived by for the past five years. For me this motto has meant that whatever challenge life throws at you, you should try to face it like a man and overcome it.
>
> (Head Prefect, School B, 2001)

School culture and leadership in the school

The school has decision-making structures that include the school governors, principal, heads of departments, staff, and support staff. What is unique about this school is that it has an executive principal who was interviewed in this study because he had just been promoted to the position. In 2002, the principal was promoted to the position of executive principal. His deputy then became the principal. Another distinguishing feature of school is its distributed perspective, in terms of which educators, including heads of departments, are encouraged to take leadership roles in areas where they feel competent. For example, in 2002, the Head of the English Department was promoted to Curriculum Director. This was after the realization that he was way ahead of the others in terms of his

understanding of outcomes-based education (OBE) which was newly introduced in the South African schools. Before the Head of the English Department was promoted as Director of Curriculum, he took formal courses about OBE at the University of South Africa (UNISA). In the same year, 2002, he was promoted; he graduated with his Masters in Education. Another teacher in the same department has been involved in mentoring other teachers as a result of the mentoring skills she acquired at the University of the Witwatersrand, School of Education.

The principal is supportive of professional learning. He demonstrates a great understanding of how the educational trends are moving. He is very articulate in the way he communicates his acknowledgement and appreciation of excellence be it in the classroom or in extra-curricular activities. In his speeches he touches on the individual achievements, team achievements, and/or school achievements as a whole. One of the events where the principal takes his time in doing this is during one of the most celebrated cultural events, the Annual High School Prizegiving Day. It is one of those occasions where the school celebrates the achievements of those who have excelled in the classroom, in sports and in the different cultural activities. As stated in the principal's speech during the 1999 prizegiving,

> It is a chance for the Headmaster to trumpet the achievements of the students and staff and really to convince you that the financial sacrifices which you make to send your son here are well worth it – indeed that you are getting excellent value for your money.
>
> (The Headmaster's Report, School B, 1999)

The principal has also played a significant role in instilling the Marist values among teachers especially in reminding teachers about the challenges that lie ahead as the school grows in size while ensuring that individual learners get the necessary attention they deserve. For example, during the principal's address at the Annual High School Prize giving, he urged the teachers to keep in mind their responsibilities in a school with such values,

> Part of being a Marist teacher is a genuine concern and love of one's pupils. "To love them all and to love them equally." As we get larger there is a real danger that more and more boys will simply become part of the roll call, faceless individuals who make no contribution in the classroom or extramurally. The challenge for our teachers is to make every child feel "special" – noticed and cared for.
>
> (The Headmaster's Report, School B, 1999)

Another of the principal's (now the executive director) concerns was seeing teachers being lifelong learners,

> It is critical that teachers set the example in terms of being lifelong learners. Each teacher should ask himself or herself "what have you learnt this year" and teachers must engage in their learning of significant things. I am pleased to report that several staff have furthered their studies this year. Studies range from Mr…, the Deputy Headmaster, doing his M.Ed. through Wits with other staff upgrading their qualifications. Mrs…did the Mentor Course through the University of the Witwatersrand Education Department. This will enable …(name of school) to play a significant role in the development and training of teachers, not only for the school but also for the country as a whole.
>
> (Headmaster's Report, School B, 1999)

The principal is sharply aware of the changing context within which schools are operating:

> Running a school is certainly no longer an easy business, not only in South Africa, but also worldwide. Schools are confronted by changes in society, by changes in values and norms, by legislation on more than one front. In South Africa, we are confronted by legislation which concerns education, we are confronted by legislation such as employment equity and Skills Development Act which concerns labour, and we are also confronted now by taxation

> legislation with four changes for tax which are going to have an impact on schools. It is fashionable at the moment to be pessimistic, it is fashionable to moan and really I think it is critical at this time in South Africa's history to become more optimistic and that schools become centres of hope.
>
> (Headmaster's Report, School B, 1999)

Managing innovations for learner achievements

School achievements range from academic achievements often reflected in the students' involvement in competitions organized externally, sports, and other extra-mural activities, some of which have been discussed above. Innovations in the school come in different forms. The ones the study focuses on are those that are aimed at improving the learner achievement and the culture of teaching and learning.

Students are exposed to the outside world and are made aware of the significance of learning multiple skills. A good example of the development of such awareness is captured in the speech by Father Smangaliso Mkhatshwa, MP and Deputy Minister of Education, in the 2000 Yearbook,

> One of the critical fields awaiting many of you is the world of work…This is an area evolving so rapidly that people can no longer count on one set of job skills to carry them through their working lives…Hard work is no longer enough. Smart work has become a critical requirement. Innovation is the defining element of the world of work. Companies today require people to redesign their own jobs, work in teams, and do a whole lot of things beyond simple skills. Workers need to communicate better.
>
> (Deputy Minister of Education's
> Address, School B, 18 November 2000).

Participation in the Olympiads

There is a high level of participation in the Olympiads. These include the Old Mutual Maths (Mathematics) Olympiad and the Computer Science Olympiad. In 1998 and 1999, the High School won the SASOL Mini-Maths Olympiad. Some of the Olympiads result in the winning students going overseas. In the Old Mutual Maths Olympiad, 15 senior and junior pupils qualified for the Second Round by achieving at least 50% of the First Round. These first two rounds consist of multiple choice questions some of which are very tricky. According to one Mathematics teacher who coordinated the participation of the students in the Mathematics Olympiad in 2000, of the 27 pupils who participated in the Second Round, 10 finished in the 20% of all participants nationwide. Students' participation in the Olympiad depends on the support and encouragement from their teachers.

According to the former principal who then became an Executive Director in 2002, this type of competition attracts more than 30, 000 entrants. One of their students who was the star of the show and whom the former principal congratulated represented South Africa in the Pan African Maths Olympiad where he finished fourth overall and was awarded a Silver Medal. The same student represented South Africa in the International Maths Olympiad held in Korea and he finished just one point short of the cut-off for a Bronze Medal. Since the boys' success was a collaboration of all, the former principal said during the address at The Annual High School Prize-giving in 18 November 2000,

> One must congratulate the boys, Miss…and the Maths Department who really have kept the reputation of Maths at … (the school) extremely high. Well done to you all! The school has also participated in the Mintek Science Quiz, Young Historians Speaking Competition, various Olympiads and I congratulate the staff and the boys for their efforts.
>
> (Principal's Address, Annual High School Prize-giving, School B, 2000)

The school keeps a track-record of students who continue to excel at tertiary level. For example, in 1999, one student received a Dean's Scholarship to Stanford University; the top Engineering Student at the University of Cape Town was from School B; so, too, was the top Building Science student at Wits University in that year; while another featured on a Dean's Merit List at the Rand Afrikaans University.

Cultural activities

Learners are to choose from activities like chess, writing club, memory skills, mindbenders, bridge, scrabble, debating, Afrikaans debate, canoeing, band practice, and fly-tying. Learners have to participate in different activities each school term. Cultural participation at the school is seen as an integral part of educating a child holistically. School B students are encouraged and supported to explore a range of their talents and to foster and develop new skills. The school's cultural calendar includes: The High School Public Speaking festival, the English Olympiad, the Just-a-Minute competition, senior and junior house play festival, a school dramatic production, an annual variety concert, a best speakers' evening, the senior and junior book quiz, and the Young Historians debate.

All learners are offered an hour-long compulsory cultural activity programme which has been time-tabled into the school day. Such programmes are meant to allow the learners to enrich and extend themselves in an array of pursuits. A statement in the Jubilee-Year Magazine from the arts teacher is,

> There are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give to our children. One is roots; the other, wings
>
> (Jubilee Magazine, School B, 2001:2).

Public speaking

Learners take an active part in public speaking. Apart from the usual debates, there is a school's Parliament, the 'Young Historians Conference, and the English and Afrikaans Olympiads. The Parliament is a pupil body that is unique at school B. Parliament is a pupil body that is unique to the school. According to the teacher who is called the Speaker, this forum's responsibility or function is 'to make

constructive suggestions to the Headmaster and staff in relation to matters affecting the running of the school and matters relating to the service that the school might render to society at large'. Parliament as a body does not have legislative powers.

There are two houses of parliament and each house supplies two representatives per standard or grade but other learners are free to attend as observers. The Head Prefect plays the role of Prime Minister and has a responsibility to appoint other prefects in the role of Cabinet Ministers. Parliament tries to meet every two weeks at second break (lunch) on a Thursday. In 1999, the most debated issue raised during the year was the prices and menu at the tuck shop. The teacher in charge of ensuring the smooth running of parliament activities said about the tuck shop issue that despite the pupils being quite vocal on the topic, no one was prepared to take on the responsibility of preparing a proposal to the lady in charge of the tuck shop. Other topics debated in the same year included the need for more cultural activities such as a cycling club, the comment reports and the compulsory attendance at rugby fixtures. The teacher in charge expressed her enjoyment of being the Speaker in that year. Her concern was ensuring that more of the debates be translated into action as the Curriculum Director was to take over as Speaker the following year.

The Media Centre

In the recent years, the library now popularly known as the media centre, has become one of the most popular venues for students. Apart from the loaning of books, the students enjoy using the computer facilities. There are other additional facilities in the audiovisual room and classroom. As part of enhancing teaching and learning in the library, there is now an overhead projector, a television set, and a hi-fi system. The library and the available resources enable learners to come in the afternoons to come for revision through the help of videos and cassette recordings. According to the college librarian, the school has also held Independent Examination Board, Adlib meetings and the annual Book Quiz in the media centre. The College Librarian also helps the school in some fund-raising activities for the disadvantaged,

> *In the second term (2001)…, the College Librarian, managed to bring Clem Sunter to the school. He gave a dynamic and enjoyable presentation on the "Hedgehogs and Foxes" and the Aids issue. As a result of his generosity we managed to raise over R4 000 for the Baragwanath Paediatric Oncology Unit and Alexandra Old Age home.*
>
> (College Librarian, School B, 2001)

According to the college librarian, who is often called the media officer, there was 'big move' to the new Resource Centre in December 1999. The centre consists of the library with a study section, a lounge area and a computer work station. In 2000, there were about 8 computers with internet facilities and 14 computers in total.

The college librarian has valuable experience in working in a corporate environment both in South Africa and abroad. As part of her innovativeness and risk-taking, she convinced school leadership to purchase software in 2001. According to the executive principal, they took the risk and bought the software. The college librarian has become an agent for the schools interested in the software. For each contract signed with the school to use the software, the money comes back to School B to recover the costs as the school spent R36 000 for the software.

According to the executive principal, they took the risk and bought the software and they had promised them that the school would be a trendsetter in the software and the college librarian would recover the huge amount by sharing the expertise with the use of the software.

Learners are excited by the media centre as it does not only benefit them with the knowledge from books. This is how the college librarian explained how learners were utilizing the resources in the centre:

> *They borrow books, they do research…but with the computers, they also get on to the web mail, they search the internet, they come and*

type all work in Microsoft Word, they use Excel, Power Point and they also do searching in the internet.

(College Librarian, School B, 2001)

Teachers also make use of the media centre more effectively with the help of the college librarian. She mainly assists as a researcher, especially when teachers and their learners are involved with specific project. When asked how teachers make use of the centre, she responded,

They utilize it for reading purposes, they ask me to look for material for the classroom, I purchase books for them…We often discuss ideas, especially when we are doing a project. They ask me, "What do you think we can do?" What resources have you got?" and they'll come and tell me what they are planning to do and will look for resources… I want to press more and more emphasis on CD-ROM, videos…

(College Librarian, School B, 2001)

The college librarian gets support from selected learners called media assistants. She is also a multi-skilled person who is an artist as well. During Arts Exhibition, she is often asked to be one of the critics.

Community service

School B learners are encouraged not only to focus on academic and sporting activities. They are also involved in community service. Since they live in the most urbanized area of South Africa, they are expected to engage in some volunteer work in the neighbouring townships such as Alexandra and Tembisa. In this section, I discuss some of the programmes designed for learners to understand the importance of being involved in improving other learners' lives, particularly learners that are disadvantaged. Community service takes place through a range of outreach programmes, each of which are described below.

The co-workers raise funds for the needy but, more importantly, they interact directly with those they are helping, visiting various homes in Alexandra, a

township in the north of Johannesburg, and shelters like Nazareth House. During the Speech and Prize-Giving Day in 2000, the principal congratulated the co-workers saying,

> Co-workers under the leadership of … and ... (leading students) have done sterling work throughout the year…They have consistently worked to address the needs of the poor and the needy. (Thank you letters were received from the Paedistric Oncology Department at Baragwanath Hospital and the Blessed Joseph Gerard Old Age Home in Alexandra acknowledging the efforts played by this small group of boys). We look forward to welcoming 50 senior citizens from Alexandra to a Christmas Party on December 1 hosted by the co-workers. Co-workers are to be congratulated on the way in which they reach out to those less advantaged in the true spirit of Marcellin Champagnat.
>
> (Principal's Address, Annual High School Prize-giving, School B, 18 November, 2001)

The St. Mary's Interactive Learning Experience (SMILE) is designed to instil in the boys a broader social responsibility. For example, Grade 10 and 11 students are involved in a one of the main outreach programmes in the school called the St. Mary's Interactive Learning Experience (SMILE). The two grades present an English Oral Skills programme to disadvantaged primary school children on a weekly basis. They target Grade 6 learners at a township in the East Rand called Thembisa. In the year 2000, the principal commended the SMILE Guides as they had sacrificed their extra-murals on Wednesdays throughout the year to take part in the programme.

There is also the English Conversation Skills Programme. The programme is run by SMILE students in Grade 10 and 11 to ninety six (96) Grade learners in schools in the neighbouring township. The aim of the programme is to guide the primary school learners through different activities and is aimed at improving the disadvantaged learners' English conversation skills. In 2000, it was decided that

the programme should run for about 24 Wednesday afternoons per year. According to the SMILE facilitator,

> This interaction with the children from Tembisa, has created a greater awareness and better understanding of the difficulties that second language speakers encounter among the ---(schools') learners. They tackled this task with commitment and enthusiasm.
>
> (College Magazine, School B, 2000).

As part of a new initiative, in the same year, the students donated money in order to provide lunches for the Thembisa learners on their arrival during their visit to the school. The SMILE facilitator included in her report some comments from The SMILE Guides (SGs) in their reports about their experiences and gains in the programmes:

> I have learnt that the most loving and caring children are the most poor. They are the sweetest, most appreciative kids. I love them with all my heart and I would do anything for them. I have decided on the career I will follow thanks to these children. Thanks for this wonderful gift.
>
> (Grade 10 Learner, School B, 2001)

> S.M.I.L.E really boosted my self-confidence and taught me how to react around people. I think I have become self-assured. I also thought it was a time of learning from my 6 children and I really enjoyed it.
>
> (Grade 10 Learner, School B, 2001)

> It has taught me about the great privileges I have and that I should be very thankful, because right down to the very basic material things, I am in a very fortunate position. It has taught me that the least I could do is to share some of the privileges I have.
>
> (Grade 10 Learner, School B, 2001)

> I've got a second chance to be a child again, meet new friends. I got to do things I wished when I was a kid. They are quick learners, but also family and I would like to thank S.M.I.L.E. for the opportunity they gave me.
>
> (Grade 10 Learner, School B, 2001)

> A great feeling of satisfaction knowing I have done something good for the under-privileged of our country.
>
> (Grade 11 Learner, School B, 2001)

When asked if the programme has helped them understand the underprivileged a little better, some of the comments were,

> A lot better. I understand that they need exactly what we need.
>
> (Grade 11 Learner, School B, 2001)

> It has opened my eyes wider to know how we should continue these programmes to get everyone more or less on the same level.
>
> (Grade 10 Learner, School B, 2001).

As part of encouraging others to get involved in the S.M.I.L.E., the students involved in the programme were quoted by the facilitator as saying,

> Go and do something worthwhile and satisfactory for your country.
>
> (Grade 10 Learner, School B, 2001)

> That it (the programme) will do something, not only for the kids, but also for their hearts.
>
> (Grade 10 Learner, School B, 2001)

> To join so that they get a true idea of the society surrounding them and to make a effort to better it.
>
> (Grade 10 Learner, School B, 2001).

Teachers from the nearby township accompany their learners to School B for further learning support from their peers. They are very appreciative of the programme and find it an enriching experience for their learners. According to the reports in 2000, one of the teachers from one of the township primary schools observed that the learners were beginning to express themselves with confidence. Similarly, a teacher from another school in the township the programme had taught their pupils how to use the second language confidently and was hoping the programme would continue in 2001. Teachers from such disadvantaged schools saw the programme as ideal because it did not pile them with papers but did 'the concrete thing i.e. how to use the materials you are given'. The programme is seen by the facilitator as a dynamic, worthwhile, and mutually beneficial to all. Its success is dependent also from the sponsors from the First National Bank.

Having said so much about how he has contributed to the school, I asked the executive principal about what he thinks he has that some do not have, he said,

> *I probably don't have a great deal that others don't have but what I do have people say we need the right people to be in the management and they say that we have the passion. I think I get on well with the pupils but I think I have a particular talent in getting along with the boys, teaching the boys about leading the school. I miss that contact now at my new position because even if the contact is stressful it's engagement, when you're engaged with pupils it makes you feel that you're doing something worthwhile.*
>
> (Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

The executive principal insists that he has a good relationship with the boys,

> *Yes I teach them quite a lot but I don't intend to do ceremonial occasions which are important for the school, things like the assemblies those are important occasions of the school, the way things are done around here, the prize giving, the benediction*

services, those are occasions that are important to the traditions of the school.

(Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

One of the challenges the executive principal he feels he needs to overcome is that of encouraging the teachers to be more professional in their teaching job,

I think we've got to go back to the sense of teaching in education, teaching is a modern job, people mustn't teach if they think their work begins from 7:30 in the morning till 2 o'clock, teaching is a hugely demanding but wonderfully satisfying profession , it really is. Those pupils that you touch, those pupils that you give back, some years later they come back and say how much difference you've made in their lives and there's nothing satisfying more than that. It's a noble profession and we need to see that more, teachers need to see that more, we need to see that more profession to the public. The status of teachers is too low in this country, teachers need to be celebrated, they do a great job under difficult circumstances. The same job there's tension where they're bringing in changes I don't know how to get around it because I think that there's a perception amongst the teaching call that all this decisions about class management and curriculum development are being taken often who absolutely don't know nothing about classroom at all and we might be looking at world class practice and trends that have been tried elsewhere, I think there are some of the things that have been demanded too quickly from staff and I think it's having a devastating impact on staff. I've met teachers, particularly from the state's schools. They've just had enough and they are bewildered by what's going on and they've been demanded to do what it took other countries years to do.

(Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

Asked to reflect on the things that he would like to improve in his personal or professional life, the executive principal humbly said,

> *I would like to read more, certainly things like 'Independent Education' which is an quarterly magazine and occasionally I get that Quarterly Review from Wits, that's part of our educational policy and I try really to read about education, I buy books.*
>
> (Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

Because of the leadership challenges the executive principal faces in the schools he expressed his regrets that school life takes more of his time with his family even though he did not express regret for having such a high profiled position,

> *Sometimes I don't go home, the last two weeks has been like knocking off late at night, that's definitely had an impact on my personal life…Short of resigning, going back to become a teacher or a deputy is a nice post in any school, you get to teach, you're part of management position and you've got responsibility but the buck does not stop there but a deputy is a nice position… I think I need to develop my spirituality a bit. I'd like to spend more time reflecting and praying perhaps become more and more involved in church. I think that creating space in my day about 15 to 20 minutes just thinking, reading, reflecting, praying looking for inspiration. I went to a workshop at this conference, we had a list of various spiritual books, the books were handed out. Books that reflect on spirituality, I've been looking at some of those.*
>
> (Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

School Development and Strategic Planning

During the time of his principalship, the executive principal focused on improving the image of the school. In April 1999, the first phase of the Development was the completion of the Champagnant Hall. The school roll increased from 229 in 1994

to 452 at the start of 1999. By the year 2000, the learner numbers had doubled at the High School for the previous five years. This was achieved partly by the improvement in the image of the school. The developments included the physical development which included re-landscaping of the quadrangle and the toilets. The school managed to improve infrastructure through a R13 million development programme. When I asked the former principal about the innovative activities he had been involved in the past seven years of being a principal he said,

> *What we've been involved and spent most of the time in the past seven years is improving the infrastructure of the school. We've embarked on an ambitious development plan. It's called Development Plan 2000. We started that in 1996 and that was to transform the infrastructure of the school which was lagging behind.*
>
> (Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

In 2000, when the present executive principal was still a principal, he attributed most of the success to their development planning to the chairman of the Board. As he put it,

> He has a wonderful eye for detail, he is remorseless in his commitment and I don't think we will ever be able to fully appreciate his sacrifice and the efforts that he has made and I would like to thank him for his foresight and perseverance.
>
> (Headmaster's Annual Report, School B, 18 November 2000)

He also thanked the parents for their support saying,

> Your generosity and willingness to support the vision and development is going to bear dividends for many generations to come…
>
> (Headmaster's Annual Report, School B, 18 November 2000)

Apart from the parent body as a whole, the Parents' Teachers Association (PTA), was also appreciated for raising R460, 000. During August holidays in 2000 a group of staff from both the Prep and the High School went away for a planning weekend. According to the executive principal, the purpose was to develop a strategic plan to take them forward over the next five years. It was also envisaged that the Planning Weekend was to help them have a clearer idea of who they are and develop a common vision with an action plan to carry School B forward. The key questions during the planning were: Why the school should continue to exist; if they are simply a more expensive clone of the school down the road; and what values they had that needed to be translated into behaviours. During that weekend, they went through a SWOT analysis and from that, they developed four key strategic areas upon which to focus. It was then that they agreed that they needed the services of an outsider. The following is how the principal summarized the CIE (2000) report:

> The key strengths were the grounds and the buildings, the extra-mural programme and the ethos and pride and also the strong sense of care which is given to learners by the staff. There is a high sense of family atmosphere which prevails at the school and the vast majority of pupils reported that they are very happy at the school.
>
> On the negative side, in both schools there was a feeling that bullying was a major issue, vandalism was another and theft amongst learners needs to be addressed. Parents were concerned about the high staff turnover and there was a perception that there was no staff appraisal system or staff development policy. This perception is incorrect. In both schools there was a feeling that communication with the parents should be improved.
>
> (Headmaster's Annual Report – School B,
> 18 November 2000)

At the time the principal delivered the speech, the report was being typed and he promised that the full report from the CIE would be available to parents, staff and

pupils. A date was still going to be decided for a report-back to the key stakeholders in the school.

School climate survey

As briefly mentioned in the earlier chapters, the Catholic Institute of Education assisted to investigate three questions for School B: Where are we now? Where do we want to be? What obstacles do we need to overcome? A selected sample of 217 parents, 20 teachers and 336 learners were involved in the study and different instruments were administered. The participants represented all the role players in the school.

The purpose of the survey was for the school to measure itself against its mission.

> The Marist School, as envisaged by St. Marcellin Champagnat, offers families an approach to education which draws faith, culture and life into harmony.
>
> …(name of school) is a school in which all members of the school family recognize the special Catholic character of the school and join in upholding the Christian values of the Gospel within a Catholic Marist tradition.
>
> The school provides a challenging learning environment which enables pupils to realize the potential and develop their talents. Thus prepared, pupils can take their place in society as enquiring, well balanced individuals aware of their social responsibilities to the wider community and ready to respond with compassion and justice to the realities of that society.
>
> (Mission Statement – School B, 1999)

The executive principal who was the principal at the time the report was released feels that the report is not a proper reflection of the school. His views are shared by the researchers from the Catholic Institute of Education (CIE) as it is stated in the report,

> It is important to note that the findings are based on questionnaires and focus group interviews which indicate *opinions*. These opinions may not be necessarily true. For example, the report makes very little reference to the rich cultural life of the school, precisely because these views were not expressed at the time. The researchers have attempted to verify some of these opinions, but some of these opinions require an inspection of teacher preparation files, learner work and extensive classroom observation.
>
> (Catholic Institute of Education, 2001:4).

Contradictory evidence is reflected in the school achievements at the time the survey was conducted and the following achievements were highlighted in the report:

- The learner numbers had doubled in the past five years in the High School.
- The School had successfully embarked on a R13 million development programme to transform the 'aging' infrastructure of the school.
- The school had started writing the Independent Examination Board examination which (the exams) is highly respected and proved to be improving.
- Unlike in its recent past, the school was highly involved in a variety of sports activities such as Hockey, Swimming, Athletics, and Tennis.

(Catholic Institute of Education, 2001: 4).

According to the Climate Survey (2001), what ranked high in the parents' responses about what they liked about the school were things like, the 'Marist ethos, spirit and tradition; family environment; teacher care; facilities; and academic standard' (p.6) as positive aspects of the school. The middle ranking responses included aspects like teachers; holistic education; sport; and small classes. Among the things they said they did not like about the school were things like communication and organization, questionable teacher ability, staff turnover and 'favouritism'. Other issues that came from a minority of parents include 'poor

discipline; theft; the car park; the emphasis on sport; and no extra lessons for learners' (Catholic Institute of Education, 2001: 6).

Learner support and guidance: Head prefects' views

Head prefects are given the opportunity to address members of the school during the annual prize giving day. The 1999 head prefect started by appreciating the experience gained as a head in his last year saying it was his greatest and regretted it had come to an end so quickly. He said he was also grateful for the support he received as an individual in the past 13 years,

> Over the last thirteen years, I have had the privilege of watching …(school name) grow from a small intimate school, to the formidable establishment it is today, …I feel I owe much of my growth as a person and a leader to having to interact and deal with this broad spectrum of individuals.
>
> (Head Prefect Address, School B Magazine, 1999)

According to the prefect, other members of the student representative council provided unwavering support. He also appreciated the role played by the principal and his deputy as he said, "We have a highly professional and extremely committed leadership and I thank both of you for your support and guidance" (School Magazine: 1999: 9). Apart from thanking staff and singling some of the teachers for outstanding support, the year 2000 Head Prefect said something similar about support from top leadership for, "unfailing support and belief in the matric group" (School Magazine, 2000: 11). Another similar comment came from the 2001 Head Prefect who saw his principal and his deputy as supportive as he said, "I really enjoyed working with both …(principal) and …(the deputy principal) as they always supported any decision I made regarding the school and this gave me the confidence to face any situation in my position…" (School Magazine, 2001: 6). Staff support featured in all the Head Prefects' speeches and now and again each mentioned specific names of staff members who gave them special support and guidance.

Something very interesting came out of the speeches from the 1999 head prefect and the one for 2000. They singled out a particular Mr. C who was such a disciplinarian and very strict. As they were leaving the school system, they felt he had contributed more to their lives. This is how they reflected on their young years with Mr.C.

> I remember my first day. For some strange reason, the picture that comes to mind is one of Mr. C. [in full] around, bellowing and barking in a tone that belies his small frame and giving a whole new perspective of the word, “pampoen” (sic). I recall asking my mom, when she fetched me that day, if Mr. C. was the owner of the school. Until that day I have never received an answer to that question. I think that speaks volumes for his presence and of the positive influence he has had on all our lives.
>
> (Head Prefect Address, School B Magazine, 1999: 9)

Similarly, the 2000 head prefect said of Mr. C starting from his being known for using the ‘small C’ (probably a cane),

> I promised myself that, unlike Head Prefects before me, I would not mention one particular teacher of … (school name)…I have not forgotten the sensation of his cane, burning my tender flesh. Nevertheless, this year has radically changed my perception of the “small C”. It is only when one is in a position of leadership that one begins to comprehend how much he is a part of this school, and how much this school is a part of his life…it may be annoying to have his booming voice echo from the quadrangle through your classroom. That voice, however, has helped to make this school the amazing institution that it is. So Mr. C…, for the time, effort and commitment you untiringly give to the school. For your ever present faith of the abilities of …(school), and more importantly, for your everlasting love for the school, I thank you and salute you.
>
> (Head Prefect Address, School B Magazine, 2000: 10)

School learning experiences and lasting memories

Schools are supposed to be places where children enjoy themselves to the fullest. This depends on the extent to which they get support from their teachers, school leaders, parents, and even their peers. One of the striking features of the Head Prefects' speeches at the annual prize-giving is a deep reflection of what it means to be a boy in School B. Each student admitted having thoroughly enjoyed his years at the school. The following are drawn from the different Head Prefects:

> This is my thirteenth and final year at …, is one that I will cherish for the rest of my life. My only regret is that it has passed so quickly.
>
> (Head Prefect Address, School B Magazine, 1999: 9)

Although the path hasn't always been smooth…Yet in the end, I believe, we put our differences aside, bridged the gaps, supported each other, and stood united.

> (Head Prefect Address, School B Magazine, 1999: 9)

I would like to say that I have thoroughly enjoyed each and every minute of this year and have grown as a person. I have understood the meaning of friendship and have learned the valuable lesson that respect is earned not just given.

> (Head Prefect Address, School B Magazine, 1999: 9)

Typically the head prefects' addresses reflect a strong attachment to a caring school whose ethic of care is manifested in the actions not only of the executive principal but in those of all the other members of staff, including the support staff.

Leadership among learners also means offering advice to those remaining behind. Like the principal's habit, the learners also do it in a creative manner like reading students a poem:

> Seize the moment and make the most of your school career. Above all believe in yourselves. I would like to end by leaving you with the words of this poem by Larry Chengges:
> Believe in yourself – In the power you have
> To control your life, day by day
>
> Believe in the strength
> That you have deep inside
> And your faith will help show the way
>
> Believe in tomorrow
> And what it will bring –
> Let a hopeful heart carry you through…
>
> For things will work out
> if you trust and believe.
> There is no limit
> to what you can do!
>
> (Head Prefect Address, School B Magazine, 1999: 9)

Again, in 2000, the prefect gave his final message to his peers about what he felt holds value for all of them. He reminded them that true worth can only come from within each individual. He enriched his speech in the form of a poem by Robert Frost. It was a poem reflecting on what is left behind with its central focus on what lies ahead. The poem was titled “The Road Not Taken” (Head Prefect Address, School Magazine, 2000: 11). The following year, 2001, the prefect did not include a poem in his speech but reminded the boys of the school motto of “Take courage and be a man”. Reflecting on his experiences, he said the motto helped in overcoming the challenge of ‘walking into a situation in which you have no idea of what to expect …’ (p.6).

School challenges

Like School A, School B faces a number of challenges. In this section, I focus only on four that I consider crucial and they are linked to teaching and learning; communication; teacher turnover and data management. The executive principal believes that the quality of teaching and learning can improve through the quality of conversation as a starting point,

> *That I think is very important, we're trying to get our staff to talk to the teaching stuff, not talk about rugby, weather, they must be ready to talk teaching to discuss as part of the professional development to have this course on teaching and part of that.*
>
> (Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

There is still reluctance among staff to have people observe another's class and yet the executive principal thinks that is the way to go. The executive principal says he has already started watching each other teach and the executive principal thought that the practice might encourage others to follow their example. All that was left for them then was to report back to the staff about what they had already started. The executive principal prefers a more developmental approach than an evaluation of a lesson which teachers experienced in the past from outside authorities,

> *I've talked to the staff the privilege of observation by getting into each others classrooms as peers not as management coming in. I try and remove that top down where you're observed but to come in and talk teaching and watching people teach. You learn so much as an observer and the person being observed, also you sit and write an observation which is really deconstruction of what happened that lesson. You write down what you see but you don't comment on it and you then go through the lesson of the teacher and saying this is what happened, this boy got up and left the classroom without permission and this is how you responded and this is how you felt and as to why the boy did this.*
>
> (Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

Because I was not clear about 'talking teaching, I asked him to explain what he meant,

> *I think that in effective schools teachers discuss teaching, they discuss innovation, they invite their colleagues to come and observe their lessons of which they think might be a special different way to innovate and try to get staff to talk about teaching which is very important.*
>
> (Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

Such sentiments are already receiving support from the teacher in charge of the mentoring programme in the school. According to the executive principal, the mentor does what they see as an extension of what she does with the students who are recruited in the programme but still based at a university. She does what the executive principal calls, a 'deconstruction' of each lesson. He says they are putting money aside for the mentoring programme to succeed because they have a shortage of teachers. Asked how successful that was, the executive principal said,

> *You've got to earn high level of trust and I think that with people it all goes down to that they are very busy. You hear the staff saying that they haven't been to another's lesson because we never get the time but I think people should create time.*
>
> (Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

The school does not have policies supporting mentoring in the school but does have guidelines for a learnership scheme where 'apprentice' (student) teachers are partnered with experienced teacher-mentors, concurrently with registration in a university teacher education programme. Experienced teachers who wish to serve as mentors are encouraged to participate in mentoring workshops run at the university. Asked whether all staff were aware of the learnerships and associated mentorship programme, the executive principal said that staff needed a much

greater awareness of the programme and its rationale as this would help them understand, for example, why a teacher is in charge of mentoring has a lighter teaching load.

Communication among staff in the school is not very effective, as the principal is well aware,

> *I think that we'll probably get nailed about our communication. We have regular staff meetings every Monday, those are not discussion meetings, those are administrative meetings where they talk about particular students discussing what's going to be done in the forthcoming week, that's on a Monday. We have a meeting in the staff room in the morning, five minutes in the most with both primary and high school and we say this is what's happening today, we've got a visitor just so to let everyone know what's going on. I think we can improve in communication, we can use other modes of communication more effectively, I think we can use sport more effectively but I also think there's also some laziness, lots of calendar we've got are termly calendars where you've got everything there, the times, the venues etc. A little booklet that goes to every parent and student in the school and often the students they don't take the booklet on time to read what's going on which makes us move to electronics news letter so parents want to receive news by e-mail and we do so. I think we're trying but I think everybody can all improve on that level.*
>
> (Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

According to the executive principal, staff members get on quite well together. The sharing of one staff room improves the collegial spirit; they socialize on occasion at the end of term break, or during the term they go out to lunch. However, another member of staff observes:

> *There are cliques…the Afrikaans department in every staff room where teachers who haven't taught Afrikaans sit together, the men*

seem to sit together, the smokers sit together but in our staff room there aren't chairs some staff rooms you find that you sit on the same chair for 35 days, we don't have that the parking place is always there.

(Interview, Curriculum Director, School B, 30 November 2002)

Staff turnover

As stated in the Climate Survey Report of 2001, p.7, the issue of staff turnover was a real concern as it appeared on what parents felt needed to be changed,

> A high percentage of parents are concerned about the increasing staff turnover at the school and would like to see the school management developing creative financial incentives to ensure that staff remain at the school. Other improvements that parents would like to see are improved communication between the home and the school; less favouritism showed by teachers particularly in the area of sports.
>
> (School B Climate Survey, 2001: 7)

This observation of staff turnover and the lack of written policies is also captured in the curriculum director's remarks,

> The biggest problem when we don't have policies written is the institutional memory problems. When a key person leaves, no one quite remembers exactly the way we do things because it isn't in writing. We know that's a problem. Anyway, we've had this situation probably for 4 or 5 years at St David's – stability in terms of leadership. People in the same slots for a substantial amount of time. As a result, we kind of naturally developed a way of doing things. In a way, those are the weaknesses where problems with organizational memory come to the fore.
>
> (Interview, Curriculum Director, School B, 30 November 2002)

The demands by some parents on the issue of sports seem to be contradictory as, on one hand, they want the school to make less emphasis on sports and focus more on the academic activities and, on the other hand, they are concerned about the lack of commitment in sports and even consider the school to hire professional sports.

Support staff

According to the principal, support is provided for the support staff in their life long learning which is commendable because it is part of what is expected by the Department of labour. This is well captured in one of the interviews:

> *We spend a lot of money in training, not just at the top level. Our support staff are all doing an Adult Basic Education Training course at various levels we try to equip them as well and it's part of developing their skills. We submit a work skills plan and we pay our revenue to go into developed schools. One percent of our annual budget salary goes to revenue. And we have an organisation of about fifty employees who have to submit their development skills plan and an update from the SETA. Its part of the nation building to develop skills and it's amazing in schools like ours how the services are doing it right.*
>
> (Interview, Executive Principal, 15 October 2002)

On the contrary, in the School Climate survey report, it was revealed that the support staff 'felt that their contribution to the school was not always recognized, they were often ignored and not introduced to a new staff at the school. They made several suggestions which included the following,

- All ground staff should be supplied with a standard uniform;
- regular meetings should be held once a month with management to discuss relevant issues;
- the relationship with the Estate Manager needs to improved; and
- working conditions need to be revisited.

(Catholic Institute of Education, 2001: 7)

Data Management

Talking about the Climate Survey conducted in 2001 by the Catholic Institute of Education, the executive principal expressed his reservations,

> *We wanted to know how well we were doing but I don't think we managed the process very well, we didn't prepare the staff, the parents and the boys sufficiently on what we were doing and why we were doing it and what we are trying to archive. The CIE came and ask the staff, the parents and the pupils and they asked them three questions, what are the three best things that go on in your school, what are the three worst things that go on in the school and what would you change if you were the principal. And they came in and did this and it was during exams times in the high school, we didn't prepare our pupils sufficiently enough or our staff and that was a problem, we struggled to get the returns back from the staff, the parents and the pupils so it wasn't based on a very good sample, what happened then after collecting the data, the CIE just came in there and they ran focus groups with staff, parents and pupils, now they told me to choose parents that were saints and sinners. Some parents were dissatisfied and unhappy with the school and we knew that. It was at that point that I think we didn't manage that process because the people who were dissatisfied spoke out far more loudly than the people who were happy and they dominated those focus groups and the same thing happened with the staff and the pupils in the focus groups. I think it led to a very skewed perception and I was hurt by the results. You obviously go through something like that because you go and receive things that you don't enjoy and I didn't think the report was attended by staff but by very few parents. There were 36 parents that came for the report-back out of the 800 parent body and they challenged the whole methodology of thing - they challenged the statistical analysis and I'm sure that the CIE who are probably the best people to do this kind of issues, they've got quite a unit at the CIE that does school quality issues - and I'm*

sure that [the head] and his team have moved on a lot since then and I blame ourselves for not managing it all from right to the end.

(Interview, Executive Principal, 15 October 2002)

A deeper analysis of school B is found in Chapter Seven of the thesis. At a descriptive level, School B reflects a school that is engaged in organizational learning with an understanding of the changing times. This is drawn mainly from the executive principal's speeches, and innovative practices in learners' engagement in cultural and community activities. Both School A and School B have the learners' interests at heart, especially in helping them achieve good results at the end of their school lives. What is also similar in the two schools is the strong leadership by individuals and unlike in School A where learners feel that some of their teachers are unprofessional in many respects, School B learners have great respect for their teachers as they receive adequate support from them. On the contrary, School B has a strong Marist ethos that is also reflected in developing the learners not only academically but in a holistic manner. This is reflected in the learners' involvement in community service which also helps the learners understand the plight of those learners in disadvantaged communities.

CHAPTER SIX

STORIES OF LEARNING AND UNLEARNING

Life histories and the development of learning in schools as organizations

> *"Stories are capsules of unreleased learning…Stories are alchemy. They are medicine, healing, mystery, paradox, power, and many other things, allowing us to feel, taste, touch, see the stories around us…They are the container, the elements, the process, and the trigger of transformation."*
>
> Cory and Underwood, 1995: 129

What do different individuals bring in to their organizations that contribute to or inhibit the process of organizational learning? Through selections from participants' life histories, this chapter attempts to capture important elements of the complex nature of learning in schools as organizations linked to the participants' backgrounds and social orientations. Teachers' experiences in relation to the broader socio-cultural structures in the schools as organizations are highlighted. The chapter offers a critical appraisal of selected experiences of both schools, but with a wider range of supporting materials from School A. The two individual cases I take from School B are both examples of what I consider cutting-edge learning.

Stories and their place in learning organizations

Organizations are microcosms of a larger society (Kofman and Senge, 1995). Since organizations are made of individuals, stories are pertinent to an understanding of learning in organizations. Since the study is an embedded case study design which links personal trajectories and institutional processes of accumulated learning, the chapter builds on such arguments for a better understanding of the debates surrounding schools as learning organizations. The premise here is that individual stories and organizational learning is embedded to social, economic, and cultural context and may affect organizational learning positively or negatively. Linked to this premise is the assumption that in order for an individual to learn and perform effectively, he or she must be treated as a whole person. Treating an individual as a whole person means understanding the person's views of the world as well as an acknowledgement that an individual can

make meaningful contribution to the organization. By including such narratives, people may begin to have a deeper understanding of how their life histories are influenced by their economic conditions, cultures, and even their races and gender orientations. The idea of learning organization is linked to personal growth where people are assisted in their search for what is meaningful in their personal and work lives (Rolls, 1995)

As a starting point to understanding what individuals bring or fail to bring into schools as learning organizations, I felt it was critical to understand how the individual teachers construct the knowledge of "self" or even "other". Such an understanding is critical in understanding the process of learning or unlearning in schools as organizations. As stated in Chapter One, I started with the first assumption that schools as social units can learn through their members. That kind of understanding would, in turn, help in revealing how the organizational learning processes are affected via the individual. The members can learn individually or collectively. Although most of the learning may not be highly conscious, individuals can inquire on behalf of the system and the system can learn when its members are prepared to change their mental models and sometimes, their agreed practices. In essence, it is not organizations that learn but individuals, who learn (unlearn) on behalf of the system as they bring in what they have learnt (or failed to learn) to the organization (Marsik, et al., 2000). The information gathered was to understand the participant's ability to learn something new and included stories of learning to change and adapt to new situations, stories of healing and stories of overcoming.

In this chapter, I present 'cases' of individual participants who have survived against all odds and who have managed to use their difficult circumstances to transform themselves. In selecting these examples, I was guided by the choices they made about their learning to learn as a way – perhaps the only way – to control their destinies despite the circumstances. The *first* section of the chapter provides a broad understanding of where most teachers in former disadvantaged communities come from which I call 'humble beginnings'. The section explores the basic assumption that stories can be used for organizational learning and that

others may learn from them. The *second* section is a presentation of individual stories, how individuals have survived against all odds, and how they used their circumstances to transform themselves and the kind of transformation that has shaped the learning in the organizations they are in. The *third* section is a development of 'cases' of individuals in School B who represent the cutting edge of learning organizations from a normative perspective. Although implicit, the data presented in this chapter reflects the complexity of learning in schools which are also complex as organizations. Section *four* is a further discussion of the stories where I examine the stories focusing on how life experiences may alter individual orientation to organizational learning processes and how school leaders acknowledge, or fail to acknowledge, what individuals may enrich the learning of others.

School A participants: humble beginnings

In analyzing the data, one of the discoveries I found illuminating was that most teachers, particularly in previously disadvantaged communities come from humble beginnings and have experienced different forms of poverty. Those experiences could either promote the process of organizational learning or inhibit it. Most South Africans living in black communities have experienced different forms of poverty. Poverty experienced in black communities can be traced from the previous era of apartheid where black people were segregated from the white communities leaving them poor with very little resources for survival. Others, as the stories show, lived in white farms where they were not expected to go far with their education. These stories help in revealing the dysfunctional learning experiences in schools as learning organizations.

The narratives that individuals were expected to write about themselves were to illustrate incidents that trigger learning to change and which may be of relevance to learning in schools as organizations. These were narratives of connectivity and overcoming what they perceived as crises. For example, each individual had to explain an incident in which he or she ignored the growing signals of trouble until an overwhelming crisis occurred to make him or her take the bold action. These

were also incidents that they considered to have almost compromised their personal and/or professional lives.

The stories appear as they were written by the participants, so as to preserve their voices and guard against marginalising their data or missing out important elements of their stories. The stories provided important clues of the effectiveness of their strategies to learning as individuals which could be made useful for schools as learning organizations or inhibit the learning. I assume that the narratives would also reveal the participants' values, their sensitive spots, and what would provoke their learning and innovation or block it. Part of the story-telling was also to examine the participants' reflective abilities by asking them to tell stories of exceptional service, individual successes, their favourite experiences or stories of circumstances that prevented them from experiencing those highlights. In terms of organizational learning, I hoped the stories would help in revealing individual preferences and personal reactions to learning. These hopes and assumptions were inspired by Kofman and Senge (1995):

> We are startled to discover that at the core of the person, at the centre of selfhood there is …nothing, pure energy. When we reach into three most fundamental of our being, we find a pregnant void, a web of relationships. When somebody asks us to talk about ourselves, we talk about our family, work, academic background, sports affiliation etc. In all this talk, where is our "self"? ...The answer is nowhere, because the self is not a thing, but as Jerome Bruner said, it is 'a point of view that justifies the flow of experience into a coherent narrative - a narrative striving to connect with other narratives (p. 29).

While names I have given to participants are not their real names, they are not too far from their real names. Since the participants were asked to write the stories in their own spare time, exact dates of writing are not indicated for the stories except that they completed, at my request, within the month of August 2001. The following year in October 2002, I conducted follow-up interviews to fill some of the gaps in the biographical details and to ensure that the narratives were as relevant to the study as possible.

School A: learning for survival

Mosh's story

This story is about a teacher who was born on a farm, as were many poor South Africans who spent most of their lives as farm labourers. Mosh is known for his dedication to his work as a teacher. He is admired by school leaders, parents, his colleagues and best friends in the school, particularly learners. He is the first teacher in the school to learn computers and has started introducing computer lessons to the higher grades (Grade 10 and 11). Grade 12s are not involved because they are often too busy preparing for their final examinations. Because of his outstanding results in Mathematics in 2001, an Ikateleng Project, run by the Potchestroom University, appointed him to teach Mathematics (Higher Grade) to learners in different schools. When this story was told in 2001, the teacher had been nominated the Best Teacher of the Year in Mathematics and Science in his district. He is likely to be leaving the school in the next two years or so to be a co-ordinator of the project where he hopes to get more incentives through promotion and a salary increase.

Coming from a poor family and having grown up in a farm, this teacher was clear that he had to free himself from the poverty that his whole family had suffered. Mosh begins his story by describing the family he comes from and the conditions in his family. In South Africa, people living in farms are often regarded as very poor and the poverty does not easily leave them because the farmers they often work for do not allow them to go much further with schooling:

> *I was born on the 03 May 1970, Jagerustrust, a farm near Petrus Steyn (Small town). This farm is 35 km away from Petrus Steyn. My parents have 12 children. From this 12, I'm the seventh child and there is only 3 boys from that 12. I came from a very poor family.*
>
> (Mosh, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

Despite the problems they faced in their home and the fact that they were living under a white farmer who did not want them to go far with schooling, Mosh has made his family happy:

All my sisters and my elder brothers didn't manage to study because of the financial problems. All of them did Std 4. After Std 4, they were forced to work for a farmer (white man). This farmer was complaining, saying my father has too many children, so they must help him to work. But the reason behind this statement is that the farmers around that area they did not want a black child to be educated or to study further after Std 4. All the farm schools in that area started from Std 1 – Std 4. After Std 4 you were supposed to go to a township nearby to continue with your schooling.

(Mosh, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

Mosh's stubbornness about the things he believed in was reflected at a very early age. To defy the orders of a farmer where your parents have been servants for all their lives was unthinkable. However, with support from his mother, Mosh decided to defy the farmer who, for years, has always expected the black people staying in his farm to spend the rest of their lives working for him after having obtained very little education. The sufferings he endured afterwards did not matter to Mosh at all.

I did Std 1- Std 4. After Std 4, I refused to work for that farmer, I told my parents that I want to study further. My mother supported me. My friends tried to change my mind, showing me how much monies do they earned every months. But they failed to change my mind. The following year I went to a township nearby, Mamafubedu, where I had to make a major adjustment from a farm life to a township life. I was just staying in a shack of only one room. That room I used it as my kitchen, sleeping room, bathroom, and study room, almost everything. I was using paraffin stove to cook and candles to study.

(Mosh, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

His determination is demonstrated from the time he was young and he already had a vision for what he wanted to be. He attributed his love for teaching to his role model, his Mathematics teacher which is the subject he now teaches:

Every Fridays and Saturdays I was walking 20km to the bus stop. On my way home when I was walking this distance, I was telling

myself that I want to be a teacher, even if the wind could come from all directions, I will be a teacher one day. When I was just saying, I used to act like one of my Mathematics teacher. This was my dream.

(Mosh, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

Like most young people as they grow up, this teacher was not spared from the temptations of youth. Although he was not one of the lucky ones to be warned of the consequences, Mosh was lucky to have his strong conscience and his mother to help him think seriously about making his ways straight so that he does not lose sight of his dream:

As you know that people do change, when I was doing Std 8, 1989, I started to change. It was the year I started to smoke cigarettes, dagga and drinking liquor, because of friends. My school performance dropped, I passed Std 8 and Std 9 by chance. In 1991, I failed Std 10. When the results were published in 1992, I tried to find my name in the news paper, but I didn't find it. It was heart breaking, because it was for the first time in my schooling to fail. Just because my mother was aware that I have changed, she encouraged me to repeat the Std 10 and started to be focused. She helped me to register for supplementary and full-time. That year 1992, I stopped all the wrong things I was doing because of friends, I started to work very hard, and I managed to pass my supplementary, that same year 1992.

(Mosh, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

Although Mosh had difficulties at tertiary level, he managed to continue living above his problems. His dream which he was so determined to fulfil made him look for small jobs to make ends meet:

I'm the first child from this family to get matric certificate. My parents, sisters and my brothers were so happy. My elder brother, who was staying in Evaton, registered me at Lekoa Technical College, for Electrical Trade Theory, I did N1- N3. After N3 I experienced so many problems, I was forced to seek job, because my brother said he shall not be in position to help me with my fees again. I spent two

years working part-time jobs. When I was struggling like this, I reminded myself about my dream, I wanted to be a teacher. End of my 2nd year of unemployment, my cousin helped me with money to register at Sebokeng College of Education.

(Mosh, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

Triggers for (isolated) learning

Hardships are what seem to have triggered a new kind of learning which can also be interpreted as individualistic. As a result of the poor quality of life experienced by the participants in this study, they are mostly engaged in isolated learning. Poverty has a way of making children lose their self-esteem (Gardner, 1991 in Fullan, 1994). That loss of self-esteem is reflected in the way Mosh decided to make a deliberate effort to start learning habits that were relevant to the times:

In 1995 I did my 1st year. When I received bursary, I paid back my cousin's money, and I started smoking cigarettes and drinking liquor again, but I managed to stop before the end of my 3rd year. When I was doing 3rd year at college, every day during break I was not eating, I was spending my time with my Physical Science lecture. He was helping me with computer basics, because the college were not offering computer classes.

(Mosh, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

Shattered dreams

As is the case with many teachers, completing tertiary education did not mean that Mosh would automatically get a job. His dreams were almost shattered by the difficulties of finding a post:

After receiving our 3rd year results, I sent my application to different schools. When I was doing this job, I went to one of the school called Leshata Secondary School. I will never forget what happened that day…I found him [the principal] *outside the staff-room. I gave him my application, he checked it and he said "Are you a teacher?" I*

> *said "Yes, Sir". He continued "Is this your results?" I said "Yes, Sir". He continued again "Is this not your brother's results?" then I said to him "It is my results, but as you can see that there is no Diploma inside, we are having diploma day on the 1st of December. He said "I don't believe that a man like you is a teacher." He took my application, then I left. After all this I went to …*[School A]*with a broken heart. Principal of this school took my application without any questions.*
>
> (Mosh, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

Mosh's dream was realized when he got a permanent job at the school where he is now. His employment came at a time when he was getting desperate:

> *In 1998, January, when the school reopened I got part-time job at Lekoa Technical College, February, the same year, I received a phone call from* [School A], *I went there without any waste of time. This was a time at which my dream came true. I started to teach Grade 11, the same year. It was a challenge to me to teach the Grade 11. I worked very hard, since from that year, 1998. I worked on Saturdays and during the holidays, and I also attended the morning classes and afternoon classes. The very same year our school received computers from Standard Bank as donations.*
>
> (Mosh, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

His desire for self-development is reflected in the way Mosh was determined to learn how to use computers. He is now proud that he did not wait for anyone to teach him but he did it himself. His determination was also inspired by his own experience of the difficulties in getting a permanent teaching post. Learning how to use computers was a way of being multi-skilled which he considered an advantage in a changing world. Here Mosh differed from others at the school who felt that learning computer skills was a waste of time. Refusing to be discouraged, Mosh persevered on his own, without waiting for other to help him or join him. Others did not recognise the power of this technology. Today, Mosh is the only

teacher in the school who is teaching computers. At the time he shared his story with me, Mosh was doing an Honours degree with the Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) in Mathematics and Technology:

> *When I was doing my 3rd year I was so interested to know about computers. So after receiving these computers I wanted to get a teacher who could help me with computers, unfortunately, no one was interested to help me. Every day during break and afternoon, I was teaching myself computer. I was spending three to four hours every day teaching myself a computer.*
>
> *One of my colleague said to me "Mr *********, these computers will make you mad, and I think even at night you do dream about computers". These kinds of words never discouraged me to continue with my dream of knowing a computer, instead, motivate me a lot. I was working very hard to know computer, without study materials. I was just getting information from the computer and from other people who know computer when I met them.*
>
> *Every Saturdays and Holidays after teaching my classes, I spent most of my time teaching myself a computer. Today people don't believe when I tell them that I taught myself a computer, really it's amazing, you can't believe it. The year 2000, I started computer classes at our school.*
>
> (Mosh, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

Mosh's individual learning is also reflected in his professional contributions to the school. He always sets targets for the Grade 12 results. From the time he started teaching the Grade 12, his ambition has been to achieve hundred percent pass rate. His confidence in teaching has been boosted by the results that keep going up. He does not just want students to pass Mathematics but to get more distinctions:

In 1999, I started teaching Grade 12, and I managed to produce 64% pass rate and one distinction. The following year, 2001, I managed to produce 84% pass rate with five distinctions.

(Mosh, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

On Saturdays, Mosh is not only furthering his studies but is also involved in serving the community. Grade 12 learners from a range of schools often attend summer and winter schools to prepare for the final examinations. Mosh is also involved in teaching Mathematics to learners from different schools:

The year 2000, I did HED (Higher Education Diploma) with Sebokeng College in association with Potchefstroom University. While I was a student, I was appointed by Sebokeng College to help them with computer classes. I was teaching the other student the same subject I registered for. Because of producing the outstanding results, the year 2001, Keeling Project, run by Potchefsroom University, appointed me to teach Mathematics (HG), teaching learners from different schools. Teaching learners from different schools some teachers said is difficult, but I find it not difficult but challenging, you must know your work, that's all. During the holidays and Saturdays I used to teach learners from different, so that's why I have found it as something which is challenging.

(Mosh, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

Mosh's hard work has not gone unrecognised by the people even outside his school. He is currently having awards which are incentives on their own:

In 2001, I have been nominated as Mathematics and Science Teacher of the year. What I have experienced is that if you stay focused, you will achieve what you want. In most cases friends are the ones which influence somebody to change, especially if your friends don't have dreams for the future. Whatever you want to achieve is possible if you work very hard. Now I'm staying with my parents, my wife and my two sons.

(Mosh, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

Schooling and dysfunctional learning experiences

Rabs's story

This story is the story of a female teacher who also came from a poor background. The worst suffering is in her life history is the way the teachers treated her at school where she was often punished for the books she could not afford to buy – an experience that has taught her to treat learners differently basing it on her own experience. She is well liked by her colleagues who describe her as collegial and cooperative, and always willing to engage in tasks where others are less willing. Although learners describe her as a 'a bit on the quiet side', many of them confide in her. Two of the learners mentioned that they like her because unlike some teachers, she is trustworthy. She is a hard worker and tries to instil the values of hard work in her learners. Although it is not her formal task, she spends some of her time helping learners in their career choices and considers herself their mentor. Her personal needs as well as those of her family are her priority because she says she does not want her family to suffer like her.

The extent of Rabs's poverty is reflected in her not even having a place she could call home in her early years. Her family relied on their extended family for shelter. Like many black adults at that time, her mother was a domestic worker unable to provide even basic needs:

> *I was born in Boipatong, near Vanderbijlpark on the 21 of October 1972. I am the fifth born child of Mr. and Mrs Rabs. I am also their second daughter. I am the second daughter. Her grand-parents brought up my mom because her parents got sick after their wedding and her mom was taken back to Hebron where she grew up after the death of my grandfather. His father's niece brought up my father after his mom's death. He was brought up in Bophelong until he was nine years old. From there his brothers took him and when he was old enough he started working at ISCO Industry near Vanderbijpark in 1960 when he settled with my mom at Boipatong.*

On their arrival at Boipatong, they never had a place to stay nor their own house so they had to lodge at Mr. Ramonokopi's place until they had their own home in 1962. During that year, my mom worked as a domestic worker and she had to take me as well as my late brother to work. She took us along until we were at the age of being admitted to Grade 1, the former sub-standard A.

(Rabs, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

The salaries black parents received then were very small and could hardly satisfy the needs of their children both at home or at school. Many learners suffered at the hands of their teachers who made unreasonable demands to the learners whose parents were unable to provide proper uniforms or books. Although she talks about wonderful years as well, Rabs's story is dominated by bitterness, bitterness over the teachers who made her suffer for the sins of her poor parents. Although she remembers her days of walking bare-footed to school, she recalls these days without any resentment for having parents who were poor and the following excerpt gives a flavour of her childhood struggles at school:

As a learner, I had experienced wonderful and tough years. There was an instance during my school years that I experienced as being tough because of monetary problems in my family. One day I had to go bare-footed to school during cold winter days, sometimes I had to go without food however I managed to survive through odd life. All this happened when I was in sub-B i.e.grade 2 & 3 but after that things started to change.

During those tough years, pressure was put on me by teachers who used to beat us and T-squared us. Sometimes I felt like I could run away, but I couldn't as I failed to understand why teachers were not in a position to figure out that I really had problems. I remember one day, I did not have an exercise book and I was beaten as if I had committed a crime that can never be forgiven. I could not understand why because I informed my parents that I do not have

an exercise book, they could not afford it but at the end of the day, I was one to be blamed.

(Rabs, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

Rabs's story shows how insensitive teachers and schools can perpetuate alienation. She remembered a time when she almost left school in despair. Such experiences can be considered as one of the forces that shaped her life as a learner and, later, as a teacher.

Dysfunctional learning experiences and happy endings

Despite some bitter experiences, Rabs recalls many of the good times of her schooling. Her brother, who was working then, made life a lot easier for her as he started providing for her financial needs. What is striking is the way she links her change in life with what her brother could provide to save her from the wrath of her uncompromising teachers. As she continued with school, particularly in Standard 6, she began to see the benefits of working hard, such as the money she received as an incentive:

However, there were some instances where I enjoyed schooling. My life-style changed and I was no longer the teacher's victim for not having books that they wanted us to buy. I felt that a school is a place to be. This was more boosted when I was in Standard 6, which is now known as grade 8 when we were given R50-00 amounts to encourage us to work hard in our school work especially in Mathematics.

(Rabs, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

When Rabs looks back, there are lessons she says she has learnt from her own history. Hardships in her family have left her with good lessons, for example, lessons of working hard which is still what dominates her life even now. Suffering with her family has also made her value family even more:

The lessons I learned from my family is that hard work pays in that for one to be successful, one had to go through hardships. I learned that one has to be committed in whatever he/she does. I also learnt

that a family is very important because the standard of life that we used to live changed a bit when my brother started working. I think the type of lifestyle that I was brought up with made me to be a responsible person and that I should develop/try to help my younger sister and brother to pave their own lives.

(Rabs, Teacher, School A, October 2002)

Living in harmony was one of the things that her mother instilled in Rabs when she was still very young. A sense of community was also developed at home where her mother taught her that her neighbours are like family. A sense of community is crucial to building collaborative practices in schools – a matter I discuss in detail in Chapter 8.

Rabs also talks about how she lost some of her friends due to some gaps in the way they began to view the world. This was as a result of petty jealousies and differences in the extent to which each was educated:

Furthermore, the lesson that I learnt from school is that hard work pays. If you work hard, dedicate your self in what you are doing, you will be able to achieve long desired dreams. I also learnt that even if circumstances are not good for one, we can still succeed as other wealthy people do. Moreover, even though money is the determining factor one can still survive. In addition, the environment I grew up in played an important role in my life. As a young child I grew up knowing that my friend is my sister because whenever we had a fight my mom would take me to my friend's place and urge us to forgive each other. And if we were reluctant, we would be beaten up shaking hands we would be friends again. This in a way promoted a degree of tolerance and I knew that whoever I played with was my sister even though we came from different families.

However, as time went by, things changed completely to an extent that each one of us had to take their own way. This is in itself developed a sense of hatred and induced distance among best friends. I automatically turned into an introvert wherein I felt shame

and never wanted anyone to have access into my personal life. I realized that I was an introvert when I was at an interview at Potchestroom University where interviewees were given psychological assessment in terms of personalities and abilities etc.

(Rabs, Teacher, School A, October 2002)

This is what she has to say about her professional preparation. Again, hard work comes as a dominant feature in her, she says

I trained as a teacher at Vista University, Sebokeng Campus and obtained Bachelor of Education degree in 1988. I have taught for 2 years and my experience as a teacher is that hard work pays with the end results of the learners especially Grade 12 learners.

(Rabs, Teacher, School A, August, 2001)

Like the time he was a child and still experiencing hardships, this is what she says about the lessons she has learnt as a professional:

I also learned that as a teacher I am a learners' brain groomer and my readiness determines the learners' future. This is because what they learnt they will be able to decide on the field of study that they would wish to follow. The lessons that I have learnt as a professional now is that I should be able to accommodate change especially in terms of the new South African Schools Act. I also learnt to accommodate the issue of OBE, even though in some way it seems to be a monster.

(Rabs, Teacher, School A, October 2002)

Reflecting on her skills, knowledge and attitudes, she feels comfortable with what she has come through and what she has achieved. She feels she is an autonomous leader in her own right. She also has made a contribution in making:

I think I am a self-manager in the part of job I am doing. I am able to do things in my own without being pushed without anyone reminding me of my responsibilities. Other people think that I am a hard worker

in terms of the changes that are evident in my work and I also believe that I have leadership qualities.

(Rabs, Teacher, School A, October 2002)

Still not forgetting where she comes from with her family, Rabs feels she has made a great contribution to the younger siblings:

The impact that I have made in my family is that I am a role-model of my younger sister and brother. They regard me as their shoulder to cry on, they believe in me because I am able to raise the standard of the family.

(Rabs, Teacher, School A, October 2002)

Challenging times

Mdav's story

Mdav has also been through a lot of struggles considering his family background. His story depicts a life of someone who has been through a lot of hard times but he took those struggles as challenges and would not give up on the things that have always mattered to him. In his early years, his adventurous spirit got him into trouble but nothing could make him feel he is worth being laughed at even by his peers. Mdav is so articulate and he tells his own story with vivid detail:

I…, the first of my parents 11 children, in the close-knit village of Tshififi, located five km north of Sibasa, in the Northern Province. Signs of being adventurous and inquisitive were my true hallmarks from my early childhood. I was barely six months old, and learning to crawl, when I put my right hand in the smouldering embers. The results were horrific; my hand got badly burnt and constantly became crippled. This deformity laid foundation for indomitable resistance, and zeal to prove myself as a strong person.

Besides all the incessant abuse other children hurled at me because of the uniqueness of my hand, I had never allowed myself to recoil myself into a cocoon of self-blame and self denial. I learnt to be

independent and assertive from my early childhood. As a youth I was exposed to both formal and informal education. That I was born into a family of staunch Christians deprived me of some major cultural knowledge and practices. These three aspects have played a crucial role in shaping and structuring of my character. From Christianity I learnt about humility, compassion and love for other human beings. Formal education made me imbibe the western culture. The result was that I became an object of psycho-existential crisis from early years. Not enough chance had been allowed for enough cultural diffusion to take place. In the process I was deprived of enculturation in my formative years.

(Mdav, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

Mdav recalls all the 'dramas' that occurred to him when he started schooling and his resistance from being stopped in the things he valued most:

I started my primary education in 1977. My first day at school was preceded by some drama. For the time in my life I was rebellious and unstoppable. When my parents declined to register me that year because I was not yet ripe for starting formal education, I burst into tears and stubbornly tailed my friends, when I got school I met the same resistance from my teachers. But I resisted and persisted until they succumbed to my desire. It was a fear of loneliness and not an insatiable desire learn which made me start school early than I was supposed to.

(Mdav, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

Mdav's valuing of his cultural tradition is reflected in the recalling the time he went to the initiation school and what the significance of what this culture means to him:

In 1985 I was taken to initiatiation school, for preparation and graduation into manhood. This informal type of education provided me with knowledge of my culture. Simultaneously, it equipped me with temerity and indefatigable fortitude which should be characteristic of any fully grown and mentally matured man.

(Mdav, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

His career was shaped by his success in school. His love for books developed made him become interested in politics and now he is dong a course in Publishing with the University of South Africa (UNISA):

> *1985 had been very important, because for the first time I saw a remarkable improvement in my school performance. Before that I had been very inactive learner who was always at the tail ends of events. This matric rise in my performance had been ignited suddenly found passion for reading and acquisition of knowledge. In 1990 I passed my matric.*
>
> *From 1991- 1993, the period I spent at Venda College of Education, I had always at the top of the list of best achievers. At the same time I immersed myself into reading political and motivational books. I was recruited into politics by my fellow students who were politically minded. I joined politics because I wanted to stop what I saw as undemocratic and dictatorial tendencies the college management was so steeped in.*
>
> (Mdav, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

Determination and 'bleak futures'

Mdav's success at school could not spare him from the problems of his roots as a poor boy from Venda, in the Northern Province. He saw his chances of making it in teaching dwindling and decided to immerse himself in community activities and temporary teaching posts. Although he was starting to lose hope, his determination to be a teacher was strong and that determination made him to take a giant step by leaving his safe and familiar environment in his province and to come to the Gauteng Province in search of permanent employment. This is where he finally got a job in the present school:

> *After graduation I found myself faced with a bleak future and prospects of securing a post were very slim. But instead of wallowing in self pity, I decided to pour myself into village politics. I made this decision not to attain some political gains, but to be some*

service to my local villagers. In 1994 was elected chairperson of Tshififi development forum. All along I never wanted my mind to decompose because of inactivity as result of job scarcity. Then I read veraciously and involved youths and self improvement projects. I wrote a number of plays. This galvanized me into forming a drama group called Tshififi drama group. I used my spare time profitably by assisting the then grade 12 students. I was ready to teach them without expecting any financial gains, but to help light the candle of hope in my village.

On 11 August 1994, just as I was starting to lose hope, I got a temporary teaching post at William Themeri Secondary School. I worked very hard and exalted the school from a very low position to a greater height. I obtained status as a teacher of excellence. In 1994 I obtained 96,4% pass in grade 12 English. Then that achievement had been very monumental in my life and unprecedented in the history of the school.

The following year was bleak and barren year in as far as securing a post was concerned. I was nominated to represent my village in the greater Thohoyandou TLC where I served as head of education faculty. In 1996, I got another temporary post at Thusalushaka Secondary School. I was employed to teach English and Geography. I left an indelible mark. I so deeply impressed the school that they all wanted me to become permanently employed. I still feel indebted to the principal of the afore-mentioned for providing me with an opportunity to prove myself. I feel I will remain in the red their confidence and trust in me has been quite helpful.

In 1997, due to such longevity of unemployment, and the ever-dwindling prospect of securing a post in the Northern Provinces, I decided to move to leave my nest and move to Johannesburg where I got a teaching post at [School A]*. They employed me teach*

Afrikaans, but a year later was assigned to teach my major subjects Geography and English.

(Mdav, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

Mdav feels he has made huge contributions to the school community as a whole:

In 1998, was served in the school governing body, which gave me an invaluable experience and insight into understanding the functioning of the school. From 1998 I decided to move away from the periphery and get into the centre of activity. I had to juggle with plenty of responsibilities. I had an unyielding desire to help in the furtherance of the school's aims. I am a pioneer in the establishment of the school library, guidance department, Creative Writers' Association; I also helped in building bridges between the school and the outside community. I also madly wanted to make a mirror to reflect the school achievement. This desire made me put building blocks of establishing news letter in place. This involves empowering students through assigning them with some task which contributes to the publication. Unfortunately this remains a dream because of lack of funds.

(Mdav, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

He is also studying to further his career with an intention of leaving teaching. The feeling of leaving teaching has grown stronger now that he is about to complete the course and he is already getting job offers. When asked recently about why he wants to leave teaching, he says the environment is confining and he feels he is not growing professionally:

In 1999 and 2000 I was tasked to teach grade 12 English. Not only I achieved a 100% pass, but there had been an impressive improvement in the quality of the symbols .In year 200I, I enrolled with UNISA for BA (Communication Science) I intend to leave teaching and become a communication practitioner one day. This will not be an abandonment of teaching but climbing on to the higher platform to serve my nation with greater responsibility assigned to

my occupation. Currently I am still studying for my degree and I hope to finish next year.

(Mdav, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

'Unfortunate' circumstances

Muntu's story

Muntu is the HoD in Life Orientation. He was nominated as Best Teacher of the Year at College Campus where he participated in the College's teacher development programmes. He is the principal's right hand man. Before the former principal left, he wrote him a testimonial recommending him for any post where his services would be needed. He described him as a real asset to the school. He saw him as hardworking, diligent, and cooperative and a person who always looks for opportunities to lend a hand as part of his calling. The former principal also regarded him as an open-minded, honest and trustworthy person. He is now a newly appointed deputy principal but there have been delays in his official appointment.

Muntu prefers to write his story in the third person,

> [Muntu] *was born in Evaton, a township near Vereeniging, on 27 July 1960. He is the third child of his parents, and their second son. Both* [Muntu's] *parents were born in Frankfort. They came to the Vaal Triangle in search of work started his educational journey at Magasela Lower Primary, moved to Ntsele Higher Primary then to Esokwani and completed his matric at Residensia State School.*
>
> (Muntu, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

Like most of the participants in the study, he experienced financial difficulties which delayed his tertiary education. It is interesting to note that he sees going back to school as journey:

> *Unfortunately for* [Muntu], *he had to spend a year at Irvin and Chapman raising money for his tertiary education. In 1982 he went back to continue his educational journey, he then took a Secondary*

Teachers Diploma which he completed in 1984 [Muntu] *started teaching in 1985 and in 1986 was promoted to serve as H.O.D (Social Science). This happened after an inspection. Few days after the inspection,* [Muntu] *was called to the principal's office and was given the good news.*

(Muntu, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

Muntu's frequent use of "unfortunately…" as a way of introducing his paragraphs seems to suggest that he sees many of the things that have happened to him as unfortunate. Even the highlights in his life seem to be short-lived. He could not stand some of the changes taking place in the school where he was because he felt a lot was going wrong and there were no opportunities for growth:

Unfortunately for [Muntu] *he had to act at least for three years to acquire the necessary experience* [Muntu] *made a huge contribution to the success of the school. In 1996,* [Muntu] *once more went back to proceed his educational route, he took a B.A. Degree which he completed in 1998. Realizing that he wasn't developing, dedicated educators were redeployed and wrong people were given senior posts he left the school he loved to and start all over again as a post level 1 educator.*

(Muntu, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

The conditions under which he worked in the next school made him realize how much he loved his teaching job despite what he says that his experience in that school based on the way he was received was unwelcoming. He was not well-received because the school where he came from was considered a school with an unhealthy climate and he was seen as a possible bad influence.

Then he [Muntu] went to Khutlo Tharo where the love of teaching was revived. He was fortunate to be given a teaching post at this school despite objections by some members of the staff. They argued that he cannot be a good educator as he came from a school with an unhealthy climate. At this school [Muntu] *tasked to transform Grade11E which was the most troublesome class at that time. He taught Geography Grade 10- 12 and IsiZulu Grade 8*

> *and 9. When he was the chairperson of COLTS (sic), he was requested to help the SMT with time table; LSM and ran the internal examination.*
>
> (Muntu, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

Muntu thrived and worked hard to prove his worth and to gain trust of people who at first were not happy to work with him. When an opportunity opened for him to teach at the school where he is now, he could not resist the opportunity. On reflection, the principal of the previous school lamented as he felt the school was losing a valuable person. At Sakhimfundo, the principal saw in Muntu a man who deserved to be a deputy or a principal:

> [Muntu] *coped very well with all tasks assigned to him. He conquered the hearts of his colleagues. He made his presence felt. Unfortunately* [School A] *came with an offer* [Muntu] *could not refuse. On the 10 April 2000, he joined* [School A]*. On the day he left Khutlo Tharo the principal cried because he did not want to part with this valuable educator. After a long discussion he finally accepted released* [Muntu]. *He (the principal) told* [Muntu] *if things don't go as expected, he must feel free to come back. He told* [Muntu] *that he deserves to be a deputy principal or principal. After those words* [Muntu] *was released with the principal's blessings.*
>
> (Muntu, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

When he was employed at School A, a school he considered was prestigious made him determined to make sure that he made an impact on the people in the school for further recognition. As the Head of Life Orientation, he has contributed in helping the learners get bursaries for tertiary education and has made networks with the relevant sponsors for promising learners even before they get absorbed into tertiary education.

> *At* [School A], [Muntu], *has settled well and made to be felt by everybody. The fact that most of the matriculants are absorbed by tertiary institution is because of his dedication. He has turned the guidance department to be the engine as well as the marketing tool for the school. He has transformed individual learners as well as*

> *classes to be competitive. He has motivated learners to take their studies very serious.* [Muntu] *has also inspired educators and help established partnerships with tertiary institutions, companies and NGO's.*
>
> (Muntu, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

His determination to be a principal has never faltered. He took the words of the previous principal seriously and worked towards proving himself to be a deputy principal:

> [Muntu] *is now setting his eyes on a more challenging role as a deputy principal. On this level he will be able to concentrate on uplifting educators, running the school and taking the school to a higher level.*
>
> (Muntu, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

Part of how he sees himself as having achieved in life is having a family, being able to attend to his spiritual side, and his ability of planning ahead.

> [Muntu] *is married and has two daughters. In his spare time he plans ahead, look at the means of improving his work, search for opportunities for the school, watch soccer and go to church on Sundays. He lives in Debonair Park.*
>
> (Muntu, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

Analysis of the stories' content

How do these stories address the story-tellers' own learning in organizations? The stories told did not just focus on the content. The examination of the stories focused the kinds of stories told about participants' learning for themselves and others and how those experiences manifest themselves in what and how individuals contribute to organizational learning processes. In order to elicit more information to implicitly or explicitly develop those links, participants were given their stories to read and reflect on them and to bring those experiences closer to the every-day experiences at school. A Phase Two Questionnaire was developed with the following sections: Your Unfinished Story; Your Learning in the School as

an Organization: A Personal Dimension; Strategies to Enhance Learning in Schools as Organizations; and Leadership in Enhancing or Inhibiting Change Organizational Learning Processes.

Lessons learnt from experiences

Survival against all odds

Based on their unfinished stories, the first phase two questions asked participants to reflect on what they may have learnt. They responded as follows:

> *If you want something in life, you will get it, even if you experience some difficulties.*
>
> (Mosh, Teacher, School A, October 2002)

> *I have learned that life is what you make it. One has to go through hardships to accomplish the best as it is even known that easy come easy go and I also learned that perseverance is the mother of success.*
>
> (Rabs, Teacher, School A, October 2002)

> *I have learnt the virtue of patience and willingness work hard and make my life better. Through setting myself goals and persistently working towards their attainment I was able to overcome.*
>
> (Mdav, Teacher, School A, October 2002)

It is interesting to note that out of the four stories presented above, three gave almost similar responses except for the last one whose biographical details are mainly based on how he has worked hard to be where he is mainly in relation to his 'power struggle'. Hardships/difficulties are seen as norms and what everyone has to go through in order to achieve something. Their experiences based on their responses demonstrate an understanding of how unexpected or unanticipated problems can bring chaos to one's life and the need to act or 'respond accordingly' despite the problems.

The following question was to elicit information on what they considered to be the root causes of their experiences. Mosh saw the problem as lying with his parents:

> *It is because my parents were not educated.*
>
> (Mosh – School A, October 2002)

The first response comes from the teacher whose mother supported him to run away from the farmer who did not want him to go further with his education.

Rabs, whose mother was a domestic worker blames it those who had the cultural advantage at the time and feels they were taking advantage of their parents. Although her mother gave her moral support, she feels that was not enough as her problems were mainly financial ones. What she considers as unfair is,

> *Unfair labour practices as my parents earned little money to maintain the family as they earned little money that could only be able to pay rent and buy little food.*
>
> (Rabs, Teacher, School A, October 2002)

Even as an adult, Rabs is still bitter with the teachers who used to beat her as a child because he did not have, for example, an exercise book. She resents the teachers for their lack of understanding that the problem was not hers but was deep rooted in the political climate of the time.

The third one similarly gave the following response about the root cause of his problems,

> *They could be apportioned to lack of insight into the trends that harbinger the change in political climate. This made me to remain on the margins as the rationalization processes start to occur.*
>
> (Mdav, Teacher, School A, October 2002)

All of these responses reflect the political nature of schools which impedes effective organizational learning. This raises questions about the extent to which

schools are responsible for continuous reproductive role of inequalities deep rooted in the society.

Muntu, who boasts of having worked hard feels the school authorities have been unfair not to have recognized the fact that he has served the school (School A) so diligently. He feels betrayed by those in power yet he has contributed to the school success particularly in the recognition of learners by the outside world through the award of the bursaries for higher education. One of the bitter lessons he says he has learnt while serving his school is that,

> *Don't allow anyone to delay your progress, don't love your workplace too much, don't rely/trust authorities for your progress, think about yourself first.*
>
> (Muntu, Teacher, School A, October 2002)

Muntu's statement is pregnant with meaning about the politics of schools and the struggle for individual achievement. He feels he has been treated unjustly as he has been dedicated to helping the school in achieving its goals. For example, when he submitted the questionnaire, he attached testimonials including those from the previous principal, which was part of ensuring I understood how he had been let down in the school, particularly in securing sponsorship for learners with most companies. When asked what the root causes of some of the problems experienced, this how he responded pointing to school leadership:

> *Incapacity, favouritism and jealousy.*
>
> (Muntu, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

The fact that Muntu made this comment after the principal had left is particularly telling. Clearly, he feels that school leaders do not have the capacity to lead and, as a result, they sometimes stand in the teachers' ways when their time for promotions comes. Muntu is the teacher who ha just been appointed deputy principal by the School Governing Body. Subsequent delays in the formal appointment led him to believe that someone in authority is not handling the matter fairly, either because they had someone in mind for the post or were

jealous of someone just plain jealous of someone who has worked closest with the previous principal.

Personal experiences and organizational learning

Since Mosh, Rabs, Mdav and Muntu are seen as achievers by their own colleagues, it then became necessary to look at what they appreciate about their experiences and whether those experiences help them cope in the changing educational environments. This question attempts to draw out individuals' tacit knowledge and how it is shaped as well as their role in assisting their organizations to evolve and adapt to new environments. Although tacit knowledge means knowing more than one can communicate, that personal knowledge the participants would bring from their stories could help to open up their understanding of how they assist in shaping their school environments in achieving school goals.

A further probing question asked participants how their experiences have helped them in shaping their personal and professional lives. All the stories were of people who have had difficulties in life in general and have experienced different problems as a result of their poor families. For example, during the time of the political transition in the early 1990s, getting a permanent job was a struggle for all the participants especially those teachers who joined the teaching profession at a time when teachers were facing redeployment and rightsizing. Not surprisingly then, responses to the probe revolved around teachers' experiences of hard times and how they became stronger through their experiences. For example, Muntu reflects:

> *It has taught me to be stronger and see problems as opportunities to grow.*
>
> (Muntu, Teacher, School A, October 2002)

From his experiences, he draws the following lesson for his professional life:

Always think and plan ahead. As a leader and manager, I have to be exemplary. I must avoid mistakes made by my predecessors on their juniors.

(Muntu, Teacher, School A, October 2002)

Rabs feels she has to secure her financial position so that her family needs not to suffer in the way she did as a child. Unlike her parents who did not have a choice as they were exploited by being paid meagre salaries, it is also interesting to note that her lessons have shifted from the people who caused them to suffer to ensuring that her family do not become victims of political and economic circumstances:

I have to save (money) as much as I can and plan ahead for my family because proper planning for my family because proper planning of the family is very important so that you don't let your children suffer.

(Rabs, Teacher, School A, October 2002)

Mosh, the 2001 Maths and Science Teacher of the Year, who once struggled and came out to be a good teacher who is admired by many in his schools says he appreciates his past and his reasons are as follows:

I feel equipped. Problems are there to be solved. You must challenge life. Don't wait for life to challenge you because it will be difficult.

(Mosh, Teacher, School A, October 2002)

Learners' gains from teachers' past experiences

In trying to link their professional lives with their personal lives and what they appreciate about their experiences, participants also reflected on how their personal experiences shape the ways they treat their learners:

I always listen to my learners' problems and I do advise them that they should deal with problems in such a way that those problems are not barriers to their success because I do tell them where I

come from and the difficult times that I have experienced and where I am now.

(Mosh, Teacher, School A, October 2002)

Mosh thinks that his past experiences have affected the way in which he relates to other people. On the issue of learners he further comments:

No, I take my situation and help them to deal with difficulties that they can encounter.

(Mosh, Teacher, School A, October 2002)

Furthermore, the problems Mosh has experienced throughout his schooling has made him better prepared to deal with learners as a professional,

I must not be short-tempered. I must try to solve all the problems I am experiencing without anger, because I know at the end I will be able to overcome all these difficulties.

(Mosh, Teacher, School A, October 2002)

Talking about teachers or the teacher-student relationships, Mosh feels teachers still have a lot to learn to change. He thinks they behave as people who are not professionals and unrefined,

We still have teachers who are supposed to be somewhere and not be teachers. When it's time to communicate with teachers and have a problem, they say things like "Work!", "Go home!"

(Mosh, Teacher, School A, October 2002)

Mosh says that such utterances by teachers imply to learners that they should stay a distance from their them which is what the present teachers used to experience from their own teachers some few decades ago. He feels strongly about what learners experience in the school as a result of lack of resources from home,

If one of my learners tells me that s/he has a problem at home, I understand very quickly because I come from there.

(Mosh, School A, October 2002)

Mosh quoted an incident of one boy who came to him saying that he is considering leaving school because of the financial problems. He said that he got the opportunity to tell him the story of his life and to make the boy realize that he can still succeed despite the problems he was facing and that leaving school was not the best option. One of the teachers mentioned love for children that has enabled him to make the children's dreams come true. Another teacher says that experience has taught him to respect everybody irrespective of age.

School, family and education

The teachers who have humble beginnings all say they have had close contact with the parents of their learners. Mosh, for example has learnt the value of liaising closely with parents so that the learners do not fall into the trap of leaving school before they have completed schooling. Whenever it is necessary, Mosh talks to parents and explains to them about what is expected of them as a way of supporting the learners to show parents the links between family and school for learners, and for the learners to achieve in life and to be free from their present circumstances.

As a result of their experiences, respect is one element which Mosh, Rabs, and Muntu consider as important in dealing with their colleagues. From their stories, one can assume that they have not always been treated with respect and in order to gain respect, they show respect for their colleagues. Mdav, who grew up in a village in the Northern Province, says respect is what he was taught at the village where everyone was supposed to be respected. Past experiences have also taught Mosh to avoid conflict with his colleagues. Muntu, who was about to become deputy at the time of this study, said his experience has made him better and stronger. He uses his experience to motivate his colleagues and, "and warn them if there is a need". In the data, there are no examples of why and how he warns his colleagues and his capacity in the school structures.

Persistent problems

Just because their professional dreams have been fulfilled does not mean that school teachers are without problems. One of the questions asked required the respondents to say whether they had anything that has happened recently (especially relation to their professional lives) that makes them feel like the past is affecting their professional lives negatively.

Mosh, described by many in his school as the most diligent teacher, has had a severe family problem which he was very reluctant to disclose during the follow-up interview. This reluctance could also be attributed to his introverted nature. I sensed this when I browsed through their responses when collecting them. One of the questions asked them to explain if there were still some elements of the effects of their past experiences and if their school leaders are supportive of some of the problems they were going through. I insisted I wanted to continue the conversation based on his responses about his past experiences and what he was going through then. I wanted him to perhaps say something that illustrates how the school has been supportive of staff. He had hinted financial problems as one of his persistent problems. I sensed a bit of resentment and asked him to give an example whereby he needed support of any kind in the school and if he got it. One of the clues in his responses was her determination to leave the school. The statement that follows shows that teachers, especially those from a poor background, are still battling to make ends meet:

> *If you are a father, a parent or a husband, there are so many challenges in life…So many things are happening that make me feel like I am still struggling like when I was young.*
>
> (Mosh, Teacher, School A, October 2002)

Although he was not explicit with the problem, it was a problem that needed financial support as well. Mosh says the acting principal was helpful because he knows him from when he was doing Standard 6 as a student in one of the acting principal's class. Because of his support, the School Governing Body (SGB) came to his rescue and he was able to get a loan from the school to attend to his family

problem. The school had set a precedent and other teachers also started borrowing money from the school. Unfortunately, there will not be such loans in the future because people don't want to pay back the money to the school. The district education office is also against the school giving out loans. Mosh comments:

> *It's funny because if you don't get support from the school, where can you get help? People working in companies get support from their companies. What about us. This is one of the things that make me want to leave teaching. Really, I want to go. If I finish this course I'm doing now, in 2 to 3 years.*
>
> (Mosh, Teacher, School A, august 2001)

Similarly, Muntu does not feel adequately supported in the school for the things he aspires for. Muntu was interviewed for the post in June 2002. According to his standards, the interview was successful. He filled in the forms and signed the acceptance letter. In a statement from the letter he wrote to the mega district, he says he then left the principal's office 'expecting [School A] and the District office to do the rest'. Although he is hoping to become deputy principal in the near future, there have been delays in the system and in the selection procedures and he seems to be losing his patience. This has created mistrust between him and the school authorities, as he puts it. When asked to relate an incident similar to his past experiences, he somehow blames the deputy principal:

> *After attending the interview for the deputy principal's post, the forms (with votes) were not sent to the district as expected. Then they were kept at the school and when they got there (at the district) they got lost.*
>
> (Muntu, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

Asked how he responded to the problem, he said:

> *Firstly, I relaxed expecting my seniors to deal with it. Realizing that much is not done I got involved by phoning the district and writing a letter of dissatisfaction.*
>
> (Muntu, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

Muntu was interviewed for the post in June 2002. He says the interview was successful. He filled the forms and signed the acceptance letter. In a statement from the letter he wrote to the mega district, he says he then left the principal's office 'expecting School A and the District to do the rest'. In a quote from his letter of complaint to a senior district official, expressed his disappointment:

> *The truth is, I am very disappointed with the way this matter has been handled. I have had confidence in our district. Unfortunately the treatment we (as educators) get from the district leave much to be desired. We become victims of errors made by certain individuals. Having said this, I know that there are officials who do their best to ensure that we enjoy being part of Mega District.*
>
> (Muntu, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

This teacher feels upset by a school that does not acknowledge the things he has contributed to the school. He has attached testimonials to me as a researcher to hear what the former principal had to say about him; the learners' extracts of what learners say in appreciation of what he has done for them; and testimonials from the organizations that have contributed to the school assisting promising learners at tertiary bursaries. He has make partnerships between the College and his school so that the promising learners are not left out with new technology. In praise the principal of College Campus: Computer Career College in Parktown, wrote, among other things that,

> *Nothing is ever too daunting a task for Mr. D… to tackle when it comes to motivating and encouraging his pupils…He frequently has ideas about motivating his pupils despite any disadvantages, to do their very best in all that they do…He is a dedicated teacher and a true professional, a man who puts the interests of the child always before anything else. He is a credit to our profession and a credit to his school…teachers like Mr. D… are a rare find in our education system today and everything possible should be done to retain his service to his community and to the South African education system.*
>
> (Muntu, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

The kind of respect that the teachers in School A demonstrate for those in authority reflects fear of victimization. The power relations that are in existence in the school are those that are 'silencing'. It would seem as if people have not forgotten how they got where they are and cannot afford to lose their jobs until they are ready to do so. As a result, individual goals are not necessarily school goals or shared goals.

Cutting edge individual learning

The executive principal: Mr. Peedy

The Executive principal, Mr. Peedy started schooling in primary schools around Johannesburg. He has fond memories of that school as he says it was 'very small but a happy school'. He then went to a boarding school in Grahamstown. Before doing his Bachelor of Arts (BA) at the University of the Witwatersrand, he joined the military service. His major subjects at the university were English and History. He says he did not get to teaching by mistake,

> *I always wanted to teach, it was quite clear where I was BA was headed. I followed that up with an HDE at the same university in 1979 and in 1980 I began my teaching career and I started at King Secondary School and I taught there for three and a half years. I then moved to St Johns College which was partly because of the History department [...] I loved my time there and in 1994 I was ultimately appointed deputy, the very junior deputy principal because the other three people are senior management team and between them there's more than 100 years of service for the school. So I was pretty much a baby. I did formal management training in the early 90's. I did a certificate course through Damelin on Educational Management and it was a first course of such that they offered.*
>
> (Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

At Damelin, Mr. Peedy gained management skills that involved the financial aspects of running a school, marketing, accounting, law and education which he says was an interesting course. He did not end there as he says,

> *I also did a Further Diploma for a year in computers and education because I had realised that was an aspect of my own management and for my own personal favour so I did the EVD and that was in 1993/4 and in 2000, I did a business course through the Gordon Institute of Business Science. It was a new school which had just opened down the road here in Illovo and that as very interesting and it was different from anything I've done before. It had no particular educational focus but it just opened up my mind and all sorts of things, we looked at strategic planning, marketing and human resources, [...] and that was really exciting.*
>
> (Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

As a researcher at Wits University, I would often see Mr. Peedy attending weekend courses in the Wits Centre for Professional Development in Education. I then asked him to tell me more about his involvement in his own recent professional development:

> *That was in 2000 I went to the Centre for Professional Development with (the present principal) courses which was run by (the Director of Heads, Teachers and Industry – HTI.). And there was the Centre for Education Leadership which was interesting and we looked at curriculum and management styles and leadership styles, interesting too.*
>
> (Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

Asked about some innovative activities he has been involved in the school, he said what has been their main focus is the improvement of the infrastructure in the school which they has occupied them for the past seven years:

We've embarked on an ambitious development plan, it's called Development Plan 2000, we started that in 1996 and that was to transform the infrastructure of the school as it was lagging behind. There was tremendous uncertainty mainly from the part of little income, mainly from white people about the future of state education so it was like boon time for independent schools, the numbers at [School B] were low and they began growing steadily and I decided we have to improve in the part of the school, so the past seven years have been a continuous process of development in building. So we built a separate graduation board. We built a high school pavilion with change rooms and we built a new school hall which became the centre of the school. We completely redeveloped that quadrangle. At one stage it was all bulldozed…and no tree was standing and that was 5/6 years ago and now you can see the quadrangle has been formalised into parts and a movie theatre. One of my colleagues once told me that I had built very early. Most heads start to build when they run out of educational ideas...We've redeveloped the entrance at the gate...

(Interview, Executive Principal,
School B, 15 October 2002)

Mr. Peedy served as a principal for seven years and on his eighth year (2002), he was promoted as an executive director. The role of being executive principal is not common among schools and, in a way, it is an innovative way of running a school. Mr. Peedy was asked to comment about his new role and he expressed his concern about not being clear about his new role:

Now it's becoming the end of my eighth year but my role had changed at the beginning of the year I was appointed executive principal and I still have to find out exactly what that means because I really had to write on my job description and I've also been teaching more than I thought as a head. I probably haven't yet devoted enough time to the strategic issues. So I've been here for seven years as a head and now executive principal which is another

innovation to try and change the structure and some of the boring issues.

(Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

Mr. Peedy has also been determined to improve the academic results in the school which he says were not good before he became the principal. The boys have also been encouraged to enter competitions like the Maths Olympiads. Most of what he has achieved is through the recognition of the boys as individuals and with individual talents:

I've tried quite hard because boys' schools have a poor record and I think that the nature of the school wasn't all that competitive, academically I've tried quite hard to make a far great emphasis on teaching and learning and the achievements perhaps we look at achievement and see that as a dirty word but perhaps that's achievement at all level, try to add value to those kids that are struggling, it's not just about the academic high fellows. There are boys who would win the Maths Olympiads, others are like really talented sportsman and you don't train them, you could sharpen them but those kids come once in twenty years if you're lucky. It's been remarkable, we've had two winners in the Maths Olympiads in the last five years and for two years we won the Sasol for best high school in mathematics but those are just our top kids. I've been saying we still got enormous amount of work to do to get learners to take responsibility for their own work but you'll find that very few take responsibility or desire to improve themselves for their own sake. We come from a system where discipline has been top down and where kids don't really take responsibility for their own work. When you walk out of the class you'll tell them to study on their own, there is very little they do to develop their own selves.

(Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

Apart from the Maths Olympiads, there are other students who participate in the English Olympiads and various other competitions. These include competition speeches and other cultural activities as well. Mr Preedy says that her school also works closely with a school in Alexandra township to help the Alexandra students in Mathematics, Science, and Biology. The students from Alexandra come to the school where Mr. Preedy is an executive principal. They attend workshops, are tutored by the teachers and by some of the pupils. These underprivileged students also get hands on experience in the laboratories which Mr. Preedy says is lacking in their schools.

The executive principal is clear about the changes that have taken place in the South African education system. Asked about one of his concerns, like the principal in School A, he pointed to corporal punishment and the recognition of human rights:

> *The evolution of corporal punishment from the boys' school was a massive issue because the boys' school used corporal punishment extensively and now suddenly you have to try and find ways to trying to discipline learners and some teachers never thought about their discipline in their classrooms...*
>
> (Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

Mr. Peedy says they stopped using corporal punishment a long time ago. He encouraged teachers to attend workshops at the Johannesburg College of Education. According to Mr. Peedy, the changing educational context also means learners want their rights recognized. In addition, the school has to bow to some parental pressures,

> *But there's also human rights culture out there which is very difficult to deal with, of which now children demand their rights and there's a parental pressure too, they are no longer partners in education. You'll think of a school like this where parents pay high fees, they no longer see themselves as partners but see themselves as consumers and they start demanding, they demand things and*

places a huge stress, it's a removal of responsibility from parents towards the school in terms of dealing with discipline, teaching them and the school comes under a lot of pressure.

(Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

The changes in the curriculum to outcomes-based education (OBE) are also a big concern for the executive principal. He understands the processes involved in teaching using the outcomes-based approach and the way it is demanding on the teachers. He is aware that there is no way to avoid OBE because it will be externally examined in the matriculation examinations:

But the curriculum like the introduction of OBE curriculum 2005 has placed a lot of demand from the staff to extra time. I think a lot of staff has tried to teach and develop students. It certainly wasn't an emphasis on things like role planning but an emphasis on trying to prepare children to be thinking flexible and well adjusted in the world of work place but we've preparing towards the exams and there's no getting away from that and with grade 11 and 12 it would be lunacy not to prepare your children for their matric exams because at the top end of the school the teaching is very much directed by the examination board…OBE requires enormous time, it requires reflection on your teachers practice, it requires a great deal of administrative time and I think staff are just overwhelmed by the enormity of it all.

(Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

The executive principal tries to relieve a bit of stress from the teachers by dealing with discipline issues in the school. He says although the students behave quite well, they are still trying to find suitable systems to implement as a way of disciplining the students. He says they spend a lot of time talking through issues, holding disciplinary hearings and holding talks Most of the time they do not achieve good results from the hearings.

Mr. Preedy believes that subject heads should take the initiative and develop themselves instead of waiting for formal school leadership to do so:

> *I think a lot of subject heads are not taking responsibility to develop their own skills. They are waiting to be developed from above and I think the staff must take responsibility for their own staff development. Obviously the school will support teachers in terms of resources and financially it puts them through various university courses.*
>
> (Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

The school supports learning at all levels,

> *We spend a lot of money in training, not just at the top level. Our support staff are all doing an Adult Basic Education Training course at various levels we try to equip them as well and it's part of developing their skills. We submit a work skills plan and we pay our revenue to go into developed schools. One percent of our annual budget salary goes to revenue. And we have an organisation of about fifty employees who have to submit their development skills plan and an update from the SETA. Its part of the nation building to develop skills and it's amazing in schools like ours how the services are doing it right.*
>
> Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

Asked about what is there in their school that is distinctive from other schools, he said:

> *I think what makes us different from other schools is the fact that we have a very strong religious background. We're a catholic boys' school starting with the Marists brothers and the founder of the Marists brothers. He was 100 years ahead of his time; he's just a wonderful man with great fundamental ideas on how to treat children*

and children of all abilities and backgrounds. The other thing that makes us different as a high school is the size of our school, size is important. It gives us that competitive edge. It's a double edge sword because we're small enough to be competitive but we're also small enough for each individual to be known by the whole staff, not too many boys don't fall on that crack. There are 480 boys in the high school and 600 with primary including grade 0 to grade 7.

(Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

In response to the challenges based on the educational changes schools are facing, the executive principal said:

I think teachers are tired, a lot of that has to do with our internal plan. I think we need to structure our year better. I think we need to have more staff involved in calendar and what we do, when. I think that has been some sort of top down process and that seems to happen at the same time and we're busy as a school …and things like academic deadlines and house plays, drama production and public speaking competitions, they all seem to be happening at the same time and staff are tired, staff are also tired of getting the administrative portfolio on matric, that's a huge amount of work and they're battling with it.

(Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

In the face of so many challenges and as part of acknowledging that the teachers are tired, the executive principal feels that joint-decision making is the way to go and he believes that there are several changes that can possibly be made to accommodate the changes especially at the administrative level:

I think we can [accommodate the changes]*…The academic, cultural and sports staff to sit together and plan the year together so that we look at things and how they impact on other things. It concerns me that other schools they're busy adding things on not taking anything*

away and that sorts of find that resource is time and people are more busy and I've included the kids here as well, the kids are entirely busy.

(Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

Mr. Preedy says one of his challenges is to find a balance between senior management, 'telling staff what the way forward is and involving staff in decision making'. He also believes that creating space for dialogue among staff is crucial:

I think somehow we need to create time for our staff to be able to air their opinions and views, get the management to talk about their grievances…I think schools perhaps are prepared to do business, schools are not business in one sense, they don't produce products. They are like family and in family you talk about things, you discuss things, you try and resolve issues. I think the role of a head is far more of a mayor than that of being of a CEO. I think a head's role should be compared to the one of a chief executive, his role should be that of a mayor trying to keep all sorts of parties happy. I think we can learn lessons from business in terms of management and leadership, some of those morals but I think what we must take in comparison between a school and a business too far.

(Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

Since School B is an independent school, it enjoys a lot of autonomy from the Gauteng Department of Education and very few changes are externally mandated:

We've been quite lucky in that. We're not at the mercy of the GDE, I think to a GDE school there're moments where GDE practising management by anguish, they go to ex model C schools because they're allowed to go to model C schools whereas SADTU tells them not to and inspectors in those schools also some schools in the townships. They go into schools that are affected and well running and causing trouble creating headaches for those administrators in

those schools. There really need to be a calling up of under performers. I think the minister of education is trying to focus in the under achieving schools. I think there's a lot of work that needs to be done in terms of cultural and teaching discipline.

(Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

The principal feels there are too many activities going on in the school:

I think we've got to look at everything that we offer. We need to offer a little bit less in some areas, have fewer sports fixtures, fewer Saturday events and create opportunities. We move towards two days before start of the term staff development so we have two days now to try and talk about things, step in order to try and talk about these issues, in order to develop staff.

(Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

The executive principal supports innovation in the school. One of them is an expensive software programme that the librarian insisted was a valuable resource for the school and would help in supporting teaching and learning,

She did the work on it, she looked at local library administration on software packages and she went out and found what she had believed was the best and that was from her own personal initiative… She got support, so we said we'll purchase the software so we put our neck out, we spent lots of money for that software but she in turn became an agent on that software and is now bringing in for each contract she signed with the school when getting that money back for the software that we bought. It was originally R36 000.

(Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

Staff members are also involved in courses that directly help in the development of the school,

> *One of the things that we've really tried very hard is that we appointed a teacher in charge of training. (She) did the mentoring course at Wits and we subsequently sent three teachers on that mentoring course and we've tried hard to do something about the teacher shortages so we've approached people who we think might be good teachers and we've tried to develop them as teachers and they've done the Wits school based HDE, so what that means is that they have a strong theoretical input from the university but they're based in our school.*
>
> (Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

The teacher that plays the role of mentor is now having an office of her own. The executive principal proudly says about her:

> *She has been put in charge of teacher training and we've lessened her time table, we've given her an office where she can conduct her interviews and play the role of mentor. On a spin over from that (she) has also run workshops on lesson deconstruction which is to try and get staff to reflect on their teaching practice. In my generation of teachers, we don't do psychology and I did a little bit of a degree in HDE but I never really thought why am I teaching, why am I going to teach. I just teach with enthusiasm and flair and the kids love it but I've never really thought why I am doing this.*
>
> (Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

Teachers are also encouraged to develop themselves academically,

> *Some people 've done their masters, some of the old buffalo bulls were energy consumers sitting there in the staff room and they don't innovate, they don't want to entertain new ideas. They've done courses over the years but it's part of now, it's part of developing*

praises at the end of the year as to what courses you've been involved in and what papers have you written, what workshops have you attended.

(Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

Asked how much of what the staff learns is brought back to the classroom, he responded:

I think it's brought back in the classroom but I don't think enough is brought back to the staffroom. I don't think people benefit enough from people who go on conferences and courses, there's never time and space built in a report back to staff what I learned.

(Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

The curriculum director, Stu

At the time of the interview in November 2002, Stu had been teaching for the past thirteen years. He was trained at the University of Cape Town and got a BA Honours in English and a Higher Diploma in Education. He taught for five years before he became a head of department (HoD) for English and he has been an HoD for eight years. In 2000, he became the curriculum director at School B. Stu has completed his Masters in Education (M Ed.) at the University of Witwatersrand (Wits). Apart from obtaining an M Ed at Wits, he has also done a certificate course in Outcomes- Based Education (OBE) through the University of South Africa (UNISA). When asked if he has done other courses, Stu explained:

I have done quite a lot of short courses, particularly educational management courses… and then, of course because I'm quite heavily involved in one of the teacher unions, I'm quite involved on Curriculum study panels. Not just unions, for example, just this last week-end I was part of the Independent Schools Panel providing information to the Minister on the new FET (Further Education and

Training) and Curriculum Statements. So, I have got quite a wide exposure to curriculum policy.

(Interview, Curriculum Director, School B, 30 November 2002)

Stu has a genuine interest in lifelong learning considering that there are a lot of educational policy changes in South Africa,

I love to learn! And I think I have a genuine interest in policy issues as well and also organizational development issues in South Africa. One of the things that concern me in South Africa is to get teachers to learn more effectively (he pauses) *which is why, of course, my M Ed dissertation was on that area…It was a case study on the potential of using internet- based learning to improve teacher development outcomes surrounding Curriculum 2005 and quite suggestive* […] *results in terms of getting learning communities going in schools and allowing virtual mentoring which alleviates a bit of costs in doing school-based development on the kind of scale we need in South Africa.*

(Interview, Curriculum Director, School B, 30 November 2002)

In trying to explain how beneficial the management and curriculum courses he has done, Stu says:

The management courses have been very helpful. Certainly, they got me to think in a more strategic way about how organizations should function. And I found most of the curriculum stuff not that helpful, in particular, the OBE course I did at UNISA. I thought was not hugely helpful at all. One of the problems with distance learning, of course, is how you get genuine outcomes-based interactions going and they didn't succeed in that. So it ended up being quite theoretical. At the end of the end of the day the assessment was all about memorization rather than demonstrating skills which was disappointing...

(Interview, Curriculum Director, School B, 30 November 2002)

One of the assumptions in organizational learning theory is that it should add value to organizational learning. Stu was asked if his own learning and self-development has made any significant contribution to the development of others in the school and he said,

> *As one of the Heads of Curriculum, one of my broad portfolio or part of my portfolio is to facilitate the instruction of the new curriculum and so I have been involved and obviously running workshops and also mentoring individual teachers and heads of subjects on how to implement OBE and […] I was just playing an advisory role and coordinating.*
>
> (Interview, Curriculum Director, School B, 30 November 2002)

In view of the many changes happening in schools, teachers may show less interest in learning from one another even though it is an expected norm,

> *People were initially reluctant. People were very afraid initially of change but I think there has been a big build-up on enthusiasm and buy-in over the last couple of years. I would say it's probably been a 3- year process getting to where we are now. But I think they still have reservations about implications for their practice. But they are quite enthusiastic about the concept and they try it out in their classrooms.*
>
> (Interview, Curriculum Director, School B, 30 November 2002)

Stu is responsible for helping others implement outcomes-based education (OBE) and Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS). He had to help teachers in his school to implement it. Attitudes differ in terms of how it was received, so too do OBE coping skills:

> *Most people think it's a good idea conceptually. There are lots of problems about teachers learning practically how to do it. But I think most of the problems are that a lot of teachers sit and wait to be*

developed rather than going out proactively and finding ways to come to grips with the issues, and obviously there is always a change of reserve elements in any school and then one battles through with them. But I think we have made success even with those.

(Interview, Curriculum Director, School B, November 2002)

As Stu is a key person in helping the school with staff development, I asked him about the role he played, for example, in the workshop on Stephen Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Successful People.* During that workshop, he started by telling them a story about the history of OBE tracing it from its political agenda and its significance for addressing equity issues in South Africa which I found interesting. I asked him to tell me more about how staff development programmes are organized. He says that as a school they took a policy decision some time ago that they have two staff development days at the beginning of every term. They have tried to interpret staff development in broad terms. This was reflected in the Covey workshop which Stu says was useful in developing people's personal impacts in their jobs. He agrees that not all the workshops are necessarily teaching oriented. This is why he began the Covey workshop with the story of OBE – to give them the content of the new curriculum, in an accessible and unthreatening way so as to help them understand their situation. Storytelling in organizational learning is a tool for encouraging dialogue. I asked Stu how the story of OBE was received and particularly because he was creative in the way:

In fact it was very well received. In fact, I have had quite a lot of people coming to me in the next few days after the course and said now for the first time they understand what is going on, and I think there's a big lesson there in terms of the assumptions made by policy makers about how much teachers really know the broad terrain in which they are working. And very often they know very little, even very competent well-trained, experienced, able teachers.

(Interview, Curriculum Director, School B, November 2002)

One of the questions in the research is about the way school leaders support learning in the school. Stu said:

> *School leadership is very enthusiastic about that development programmes and I think they see it as quite an important element of who we are as an organization. Yah, and there has been quite a lot of creative ideas as to what we should do on these training days. Like for example, the Covey course, we had various speakers over the last courses… Also, obviously because we are a Marist school, we are also involved in that network as well. So for example, the start of next term when all three Marist schools in Johannesburg are coming together at Sacred heart to do a workshop on the vision and the ethos of specifically of the Marist education and with the spiritual component as well.*
>
> (Interview, Curriculum Director, School B, November 2002)

Although the school does not have written policies, which Stu thinks is not a good idea, Stu feels the people who have played a significant role in the development programmes are the present principal and himself with the support frm he executive principal.

Apart from the M Ed Report, Stu wrote an examination equivalent essay reflecting on real issues about some of the challenges he has faced in his school when Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) was introduced at high school level in 2001. As a curriculum director, Stu faced the challenge of ensuring that Grade 8 assessment in Outcomes-based Education would need an assessment report with a different format. The report would have to follow a criterion referenced approach rather than a norm-referenced one. I had to include descriptive rather than summative accounts of pupils' learning. Previously, the school used assessment practiced associated with mark-based reports for Grade 8.The new format was different from what was previously used in the school. Stu used a process of consultation starting with the heads of departments. However, there was what he

calls ‘cosmetic’ changes when the teachers finally produced the assessment reports and only two of the departments changed their assessment practices.

Reflecting on some of the problems he experienced when working in the school, Stu maintains that the problems were based on the school culture. Stu’ assessment of culture include: a high level of autonomy; a fairly low support especially at middle level; a high sense of identity with the school culture and not individual departments or teams; weak performance rewards; low conflict tolerance; and a fear of taking risks in innovation. He agrees that he took the culture of the school practices for-granted as the problems were deep-seated than he had imagined. To show his understanding of the problems in the school he concludes,

> The challenge to educational managers, arguably, is to find ways to challenge and support teachers so that they can engage in such “double-loop learning”, a form of learning which potentially threatens their very sense of identity and understanding of their professional world. Important components of such educational leadership might be modelling the desired reflective practices, and paying careful attention to the values portrayed in the symbols and language which shape the culture of the school as a whole…[he quotes relevant authors] “one cannot set about trying to construct a better theory-in-use without also trying to construct the behavioural world that is conducive to the development of the theory-in-use.”
>
> (Extract from the Curriculum Director’s M Ed Examination equivalent essay, 13 July 2001)

As a result of such awareness, Stu felt there was a need for a detailed strategic plan for changing the school culture. That was beyond the scope of the paper. Stu left the school in 2002 and became a management consultant in an international management firm. During the interview which took place a month before he left, he was asked why he was leaving the school. He explained how he felt his efforts were not being recognized giving an example of a deputy principal post he had

applied for but could not get. Instead, the post was given to someone whom he felt was junior to him even in terms of experience.

Concluding remarks

The two case studies depict differences in socio-cultural contexts, which have powerful influences in the way individuals, teams, and organizations learn. The individuals who have suffered under the apartheid regime demonstrate some resilience and work towards breaking the cycle of poverty. The selected participants in School B represent individuals who have lived comfortably from childhood and seem to have followed as smooth path except with a few challenges. Their memories about schooling differ. Teachers from poor communities recall mostly painful memories than happy memories which are reflected in those in middle class schools. However, there are striking similarities in the two case studies. In both schools, participants all work hard to satisfy their needs and this is followed by also trying hard to satisfy the needs of their learners. The selected participants in both schools are into developing their qualifications and have done so to improve the quality of their lives.

CHAPTER SEVEN

AN INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS

School images and contradictions in the efficacy of the learning organization model

> *Organizational learning would appear to offer a way for a school to make sense of paradox, to ride the 'see saws' of change (Handy, 1994), and to establish and maintain a sense of connectedness, direction and continuity…Organizational learning offers the potential of stability for change, an opportunity for schools to move ahead without losing their roots.*
>
> Mulford, 1998: 639

The chapter is a deeper level of analysis of the two case studies, with particular attention to the nature of learning in schools, be it by individuals, departments, teams, or schools as organizations as these emerged in the data presented in Chapter Four, Five and Six. In the analysis, I have sought to identify and distil essential elements of school practices, learning cultures and other dimensions like school leadership that need attention if schools are to be seen as embarking on the journey of learning as organizations. I begin with an examination of competing elements of school practices, namely, the learning or unlearning of practices by individuals, groups or schools as a whole. The findings reveal some of the gaps in current thinking about schools as learning organizations if examined against existing learning practices. The second section addresses the leadership implications in each of the tensions that have emanated from the study.

Resilient frameworks in a changing environment: reflections on the case studies

The section focuses on school practices and cultures that show in-depth the resilience of the educational frameworks when schools are supposed to be transforming themselves in view of the changes. In this thesis, there are five resilient frameworks that seem to emerge in an educational change environment which seem to persist. Like Christie (2001), I am mindful of the complex debates on resilience in psychological literature. As stated in Chapter Three (in the 'sampling' section), one meaning of resilience is the ability to recover from, for example, illness, misfortune or change. In this thesis, I also use the term as

description and metaphor to explain what schools are going through while traveling the journey of learning organizations and interpreting their ever-changing environments. However, those elements highlighted as resilient frameworks in the study show how the schools confront challenging circumstances, welcome them and still persist in doing well for learners to succeed. Resilient frameworks in this study therefore refer to those striking features of schools that refuse to change as a result of the nature of how schools are, how they operate as opposed to other forms of learning organizations.

The six resilient frameworks are: the functioning of a school as a system an the maintenance of order in a context of disorder and chaos; the idea of a school as a community; the struggle for personal and professional recognition in "I" versus "we" contexts; innovation versus the quest for academic excellence; vulnerable teams in resilient hierarchies; and the leader-democracy paradox.

The schools' maintenance of order in a context of disorder or chaos

The difference in school cultures determines the kind of interactions between the schools and their communities. In School A, recognition of the community's existence does not mean that parents have a final say in the daily running of the school. For example, in the cases where the former principal in School A felt he was operating between order and disorder like in issues of discipline, he would consult parents on the decisions to be taken about their children in matters of discipline. Then order would be restored. In School B, parents play a critical role and they are heavily involved in matters concerning their children at school level. School B parents insist that they need to be contacted whenever there are changes in the daily routines, for example, when their children are going to be delayed at school.

In Chapter Two, I distinguish between *first* and *second-order learning*. First order learning is defined as the form of learning that occurs in stable conditions while the latter is useful in unstable environments. During the early years of School A, there was need for the former principal to maintain order and what he applied was

both first – and second order learning as he was trying to establish a stable environment in a turbulent context. The changes were incremental and interdependent. When the new curriculum was introduced, strategies like *survey, question, reading, reciting and revision* which the former principal in School A said they emphasized as a method for sustaining good results as seen by the public, worked for them even when such methods were no longer appropriate. Instead, second-order learning was necessary for the changing environment. Second-order learning would involve unlearning prior premises and developing new frames and interpretive schemes (April, et al., 2000). In view of the outcomes-based curriculum that was introduced, there was a need to align their teaching methods to the demands of the new curriculum.

The assumption that the concept of self-managing schools will improve the decision-making processes is still uncertain. The centralizing tendencies, habits that have been developed over time, histories and institutionalization make people to be first-order learners, which means that they are often not able to learn beyond their given frames. The South African education system allows for limited learning since schools focus on maintaining stability in order to perform better in the public examinations written yearly by the Grade 12 learners. First-order learning contributes positively to organization performance, especially when an environment is stable (April, et al., 2000). However, the school environment in South Africa (except for the public examinations) is also changing. When the teachers in School A, during the strategic meeting, for example, attempted to learn from the changing environments, their learning was limited in that they perceived the need for new understanding but did not take action. Part of the problem was that the people in leadership positions, like the principal and the deputy principal, were not involved in the strategic meeting and yet that would have been when implementing those suggestions made during the meeting. The former principal in School A left the school out of his own accord and his first-order learning was left undisturbed. From this, it can be assumed that he is still interpreting his present experiences with his existing competencies and understanding. People who are still trapped in the previous competencies have problems executing alternative actions.

Schools are about maintaining order. As a result, when there is a disturbance, there are often attempts to work towards obtaining order again. On the contrary, learning organizations operate between order and chaos (Handy, 1995; Marsik et.al, 2000; Hargreaves, 1998). This means that learning in such organizations is developed when order and chaos live together. In South Africa, the National Policy on Whole School Evaluation which is seen as a cornerstone of Quality Assurance and as part of the school improvement efforts, schools are asked to make deep changes to deep rooted practices. The former principal in School A believed that discipline, hard work, and proper study methods and motivation are what would make them to succeed against all odds. The teaching and learning method described by the principal does not seem to involve learners in an in-depth exploration of issues relevant to their subjects. Students are engaged in learning that requires concise responses that do not involved them intellectually, emotionally or even personally. Sharan, Schachar, and Levine (1999) advocate for a shift in school learning that helps students to 'pursue knowledge' by researching topics that helps them to gain broad perspectives. From the school history, it is clear that the principal in School A had a vision of *how* the school goals should be achieved. Everyone had to follow into his steps. The success of this conventional type of leadership has made the school well-known for having a good principal who was successfully managing his school to survive against all odds. A good example of how schools often find themselves trapped maintaining stability is when the principal in School A expressed his frustration about the introduction of outcomes-based education and Curriculum 2005 at secondary school level:

> *I must tell you, OBE (outcomes-based education) is still a problem to me and I wonder how I'm going to sustain it. Time will tell. I want to leave the school. I have done what was supposed to be done. I think I must be given a bigger kingdom where I must monitor where I will spread my gospel in a broader way…I've been to Cape Town doing motivational speeches but around our district, I've never been called to motivate but other districts, I have. That shows me that I can be in a position to infiltrate other schools. If I can be given*

another post basically, I would look at the curriculum of the schools and change it.

(Interview, School A Principal,
21 August 2001)

These comments might be interpreted as indicating that the principal is concerned more about where he is going than where he is now. The principal's mental models are not questioned in the way he views his ability to articulate what he thinks schools need and what schools really need. For that reason, when he is gone, the school is left in a bit of turmoil. This is captured when Muntu, one of the teachers who has been very close to the former principal, complains about the present leadership in the school. The principal's idea of a *bigger kingdom* that he now desires to rule demonstrates absolute power where the monarchy's decisions are not questioned.

In School B. there has been a transformation in the school structure. At the beginning of 2001, the former principal was promoted to being an Executive Principal. This is a common trend in organizations outside education where there are directors but there is still one who is considered an executive director. Such a change has not been significant in that the roles of an executive principal over a principal are not clearly defined. Although it is often considered a good thing to go up the hierarchy, the former principal now an executive principal is aware of the distinction.

I think the role of a head is far more like a mayor than being a CEO. I think a head should be compared to that of a chief executive. His role should be that of a mayor trying to keep all sorts of parties happy. I think we can learn lessons from business in terms of management and leadership. Some of those morals are reflected but I think what we must take into not take the comparison between a school and a business to far.

(Interview, Executive Principal, School B,
15 October 2002)

The comparison between schools and business suggests an amount of understanding of the changing nature of schooling and the principal cautions against taking the comparisons too far because of the kind of clients have. The quote also suggests the executive principal understands the complexities in the way schools should be run. In his analogy of the roles and responsibilities, there is an element of contradiction between the way he sees the role of a principal which he likens to the role of a position he is holding now and the role of the present principal. The notion of school as family depicts the persistence of dominant hierarchical structures.

The social systems in the two schools are different because of the difference in climate which, in turn, influences the schools' learning capacities. In School A, it is revealed that when the school was at its early stages and the learners were full of the 'Mandela spirit', as the principal puts it, the principal worked hard in trying to reprimand the students. This was around 1994 when the government of national unity took over the South African government. The school was closed for a while as an attempt to maintain order. Parents were invited to deliberate on the disciplinary measures already taken by the principal and those decisions were not challenged. Since that time, there have not been major disciplinary problems. That order which the school has worked so hard to maintain has been a double-edged sword. On one hand, it was useful for the school to maintain order which also resulted in positive outcomes like the success of the learners in their last Grade at school. This is the main method of assessing schools. On the other hand, successfully maintaining discipline did not expand the school's capacity to face the challenges of a changing environment. Another example is when the corporal punishment was abolished in schools. The school has continued with corporal punishment and both the learners and their parents in School A do not seem to have a problem with that.

In School B, when the executive principal is asked about the most important change, he also mentions the banning of corporal punishment which has left teachers with less effective disciplinary alternatives:

So many changes have happened. The most important one is when they banned the stick and this has left teachers with nothing to cling on in terms of disciplining learners in such a way that until now, I haven't found a way of disciplining learners if it's a major offence. I normally involve the parent and I realize that it works wonders…the other corrective measures which have been preached to me are not working. The one of manual work does not work.

(Interview, Executive Principal, School B, 15 October 2002)

Unlike in School A where the parents are flexible about corporal punishment, parents in School B would not accept corporal punishment as they are clear about the new policies. School A principal and his staff are also encouraged by the learners to use a stick as the school uses the previous learners' results to convince them that corporal punishment is rewarding:

In fact they asked me for it [corporal punishment] in Grade 12. We normally pose the question, "Here are the results of your predecessors. Now, how do you improve them or sustain them?", and they would come up with the stories. But now of late, they've been saying that, "How come you are treating us differently from our previous successors because you are no longer using a stick?"

(Interview, School A principal, 21 August 2001)

Since there is a strong belief in School A that to spare the rod would decrease learner performance, corporal punishment is a practice that is generally favoured by all members of the school. The findings revealed that School A's notion of survival against all odds also pushes learners to succeed even if it means using corporal punishment which has been abolished in all South African schools through the South African Schools Act of 1996.

School B has a different climate created not only by the social system but also by its dynamic complexity. The executive principal was concerned about discipline among learners:

> *On the disciplinary issue, I can say our pupils have been behaving quite well. But we have tried hard to wrestle trying to find suitable systems to implement which puts pupils to order and to punish them. We spend a lot of time talking through issues, a lot of time holding disciplinary hearing, talking and after without good results. So, the discipline, we are still wrestling with it.*
>
> (Interview, Executive Principal, School B,
> 15 October 2002)

The director of curriculum, Stu attributes the problem of lack of discipline not only to learners but also to parents who are sometimes too protective of their children. He moves on to attach some of the problems to leadership and management in the school:

> *You mean some major weaknesses? Yes, I think there are a number of them. I think that the school leadership and management structures are very inadequate in that there's an attempt to get too few people to do too much, as a result the quality of the work suffers. Hence, I'm talking about leadership groupthink. Certainly, leadership is often too much bound up in administrative routine issues and are not able to take a strategic view. That's a key problem. I think teacher workloads are too although we are moving to address that.*
>
> (Interview, Curriculum Director
> School B, 30 November, 2002).

Learning organizations are also about leading and embracing change. Despite attempts to improve structures, beliefs and values are still strong in a context where gender dynamics are highlighted as deficiencies that persist in present practices. Women teachers, who are still a majority, are marginalized when there are promotion posts. In both schools, women teachers are not in leadership positions. Even when there was a vacant position for a deputy principal post, none

of the female teachers applied. When I asked about this, the women teachers said that the system favours the male teachers and therefore it was even useless to try. Such practices continue to be the order of many schools despite the majority of teachers being female.

As mentioned elsewhere in the study, School B is a single sex school for boys. Gender is a fundamental aspect of the school culture where female teachers are a majority and most of their role is reflected in the classroom and in a few management positions but not in leadership positions.

> *The transformation of gender which really important is not really a priority in the organization. It's a very conservative organization in terms of that. It's the maintenance of the...values...for generations... but that is a positive selling point to the clients. One of the reasons why parents send their children to [name of school] is because [name of school] is a kind of organization and a school which they went to for generations ago. There's a particular culture which is conservative, religious based boys school. They play rugby. It's a rough-tough place where boys are made to be man. And in a sense it's completely inappropriate for the modern world. I've taught there for a very long time and I believe there are many valuable things but I don't believe it's transforming itself in the way it needs to transform itself. The culture and gender issues are part of that.*
>
> (Interview, Curriculum Director, School B, 30 November, 2002).

Learning organisations are about accepting and embracing change. Gender dynamics are highlighted as deficiencies that persist in present practices. Women teachers, who are still a majority in both schools, are marginalized when there are promotion posts. In both schools, women teachers were not in very senior positions. Even when there was a vacant position for a deputy principal post, none of the female teachers bothered to apply. When I asked about this, the women teachers said that the system favours the male teachers and therefore it was

useless to try. Such practices continue to be the order of many schools despite the majority of teachers being female.

As mentioned elsewhere in the study, School B is a single sex school for boys. The issue of gender is a fundamental aspect of the school culture where female teachers are a majority and most of their role is reflected in the classroom and in a few management positions but not in leadership positions:

> *The transformation of gender which really important is not really a priority in the organisation. It's a very conservative organisation in terms of that. It's the maintenance of the ...values ... for generations...but that is a positive selling point to the clients. One of the reasons why parents send their children to [...] is because [...] is a kind of organisation and a school which they went to for generations ago. There is a particular culture which is conservative, religious based boys' school. They play rugby. It's a rough-tough place where boys are made to be men. And in a sense, it's completely inappropriate for the modern world. I've taught there for a very long time and I believe there are many valuable things but don't believe it's transforming itself in a way it needs to transform itself. The culture and gender issues are part of that.*

To take the argument further, such dominant practices can be viewed as aspects of the implicit background rules and hegemonic culture mediated within the school context. Angus (1993) argues that such organizational cultures, although created within, reflect in part, structural features of society at large as 'Institutions are created within, and exist in relation with, that society' (p. 59). This implies, in regard to relationships between men and women and what is perceived to be their appropriate roles, that society, despite its diversity, is characterized by a 'gender order'. While avoiding a debate on the dialectical relationship between agency and structure, specific institutions like schools, as Angus (1993) argues, will also have their own gender order or 'gender code' (p.59). The democratic changes that have taken place in South Africa to address the issues of equity and redress have also shaken the old order even at school level where men still dominate senior

positions at the expense of the women who are a majority and have the qualifications and have been in the profession for years.

The idea of a 'school as community'

The notion of school as a community builds on the notion of commitment and connection to one another (Sharan et al., 1999). In both School A and B, the existence of community is demonstrated in many ways. Teachers support each other and are seen taking different leadership roles in supporting the learners as they are all members of the school community. The communitarian image of schools asserts that formal school leaders, teachers, and learners are the 'rightful citizens' of schools because they either work there or attend school there. The South African Schools Act of 1996 came with the devolution of power to schools. Schools would either be Section 20 or Section 21 schools. Section 20 schools are the public schools like School A. These schools rely heavily on the government for resources. Section 21 schools were as a result of South Africa's adoption of the idea of self-managing schools. Such schools are registered as companies and are given the freedom to develop themselves using resources at their disposal. School B is one such school and most of these schools have adopted corporate cultures especially in dealing with their clients.

Although the two schools are in different contexts, the study has shown that parents irrespective of the socioeconomic status are concerned about the welfare of their children's learning. Schools face the challenge of satisfying the different needs of the parents especially in the Section 21 schools where the demands are more visible. Most parents in such schools are upper middle class and have more access to information about issues of schooling, their rights as customers and their children's rights. This is especially a concern to teachers where there are middle class parents who, in turn, are more concerned about their children in a society where crime is on the increase.

The study shows that there are two conceptions of schools that are operating simultaneously: the community nature of schools and that of being market-driven.

The new school governance policy, as reflected in the South African Schools Act of 1996 requires parents to be highly involved in school matters thus broadening the school community base. This is what I call 'the communitarian nature of schools' in the study. There are variations in the levels of parental involvement and their visibility in the way parents, communities, and learners are viewed as clients and their rights to get the desired service are taken more seriously at school level. The variations are based on the parents' different perceptions of schools and the manner in which they are received at school by those who are there everyday. The findings from both schools reveal a tension in the way parents move in and out of the school system either as members of the school community or members who want to be treated as clients and demanding special service. Such changes have also come with parental choice of the type of school their children can attend. This is part of viewing parents as "consumers". Such systems of choice are explained in terms of marketing and competitive forces which runs counter to the schools as communities.

Despite parents now being regarded both as members of the school community and its customers, their demands to schools are becoming more difficult to satisfy as they seem to interfere with professional responsibilities and autonomy. Examples of the parents' demands are reflected in their responses during the School Climate Survey of year 2000. Parents were asked to complete the statement:

"[School B] would be a better school …"

> *if parents were consulted more with respect to what time pupils need to be fetched from events or functions. The long wait in the car park becomes annoying. Merit awards and sport colours should also be appointed more fairly. It appears that some deserving boys are overlooked, even if they've represented their area in a particular discipline.*
>
> (Grade 12 parent, School B)

> *If there were more Catholic teachers and if lunch could be provided before sport (a canteen) at approximately R5 per day, per pupil.*

(Grade 12 parent- School B)

If the pupils received more individual academic and emotional support. The teachers also need to interact more closely with the pupils and the parents. The tutor system is a good idea but it isn't working effectively. More practical and "hands-on" experience is required in certain subjects at school. More group work would be good especially in Science and Biology.

(Grade 12 parent- School B)

If teachers that didn't perform adequately were replaced and good teachers were kept at all costs. The sports teachers should stop refusing outside professional help, especially in the rugby teams. The boys can relate better to young coaches with hands on experience…

(Grade 11 parent- School B)

The statements by parents reflect parents who see themselves as clients who are clear about their needs which challenge schools' status quo. The study has not engaged in the extent to which these needs can be questioned as one may argue that some of the demands by parents are impossible. In schools, particularly in the South African context with diverse clients, there are still fewer schools with human as well as organizational capacity to cope with the self-management status where parents and learners are genuine partners. In schools, there are moral challenges that school leaders and their staff face since the dominant cultures in schools are for learners and parents to accept what the school provides as a given. In most cases especially in former marginalized communities, parents still remain reluctant in matters concerning the schools and the changes that are taking place. The problem may also lie in the limited understanding of the meanings attached to those changes in as far as governance matters are concerned. In School A, for example, parents and learners still have a limited voice. This can be traced from the dominant cultures of professionals as having expert knowledge which parents and learners can hardly question. In School B, parents have the cultural capital

and they demand a lot from the teachers. This is part of expressing their desired future about their children and also because they have to get their money's worth. The demands by parents combined with the many pressures for schools to change their practices as a result of the restructuring processes are some of the greatest challenges teachers face. Parents are becoming more protective of their children and this was captured during the interview with the curriculum director in School B. Having parents who try to be overly protective of their children has its downside. On the school front, it is not clear how parent's input is often solicited and the degree of their involvement desired in school communities to provide rich and varied learning experiences that would be useful to children's learnings for the rest of their lives. Sometimes parents see themselves as clients detached to schools as communities and sometimes they feel strongly about being part of the school community.

In some cases, whenever parents come to school, for example, they are seen not as necessarily belonging to the school but viewed as visitors. Even among themselves, they do not feel that sense of belonging. From time immemorial, schools have successfully created boundaries that are defined by who works there and who attends school there. As the boundaries loosen, the school inhabitants feel threatened and the parents push for more recognition as Fullan (1996) nicely puts it, 'The term, self-managing, however, is misleading because the other trends, paradoxically mean that with greater autonomy comes greater permeability of boundaries and more visible accountability and involvement with other constituencies' (p.702). This is especially true of School B where parents have the cultural capital. On one hand, the parents in School B have a lot they want to see changed in the school. On the other hand, the teachers as well as the school authorities see the parents as interfering too much.

In school A, parents are still generally hesitant to initiate contact with the school except on matters of discipline and students' performance. School B parents are highly involved in the welfare of their children and often make individual demands in terms of what Rolls (1995) refer to as the 'just-for-me' service. Such service and

attention is problematic in schools as it implies that learners are products and schools are factories that produce learners.

In Chapter Five where School B is discussed in detail, the findings revealed that learners in the school are involved in outreach programmes which include, for example, mentoring learners at the neighbouring township in the lower grades. The learners involved in such programmes find the experience very enriching. The following statement demonstrates a tension in the extent to which parents have become more protective of their children and the effects of being cushioned in the name of "safety",

> *I think we have a problem with learners' work ethic. But I think that's common to schools everywhere. But I think its part of this growing social trend that learners want more and more done for them which is ironic in the outcomes-based education environment where they are supposed to be proactive and take charge of their own learning. Certainly this upper middle class bracket we are dealing with at …(School B) is becoming less and less in taking that initiative. We have no strategy yet of dealing with that at the moment.*
>
> (Interview, School A Principal,
> 21 August 2001)

Asked what the source of the problem might be, he said,

> *I think it's also because we live in quite a threatening violent society, those parents who are affluent enough to do so, are protecting their children more and more and as a result children are not exposed to the things that they used to be exposed to a generation ago. As a result, children don't take decisions. Things are done for then within the high walls of the electric fences. I think this is a much broader issues and in terms of society, it would be interesting what the impact of this new generation is.*
>
> (Interview, Curriculum Director – School B,
> 30 November 2002)

The struggle for personal and professional recognition in "I" versus "we" contexts

Learning in schools as organizations takes different developmental pathways and occurs at different levels. Mulford (1998) defines these stages as different pathways to learning namely, individual, group and organizational learning. One of the distinctive qualities of the two schools is having individuals who are highly motivated to excel and be able to see the results of their own actions. These schools have talented people who are committed; they create distinctive schools as organizations. Both schools have experienced different types of successes at different levels and at different phases of individuals and schools lives. Participants in both schools have demonstrated great pride in their achievements, feeling that they have managed to succeed against all odds. At school level, part of the schools' success is the ability to identify opportunities that other schools have might not have seen, in exploiting those opportunities rapidly and fully. Like all organizations, schools seem to be challenged as learning organizations by socio-cultural changes where people, especially individual employees, are seeking a deeper sense of meaning from their work lives - want to enjoy their work, feel respected and that they are making a contribution (Rolls, 1995). In learning organizations, learning by individuals is not valued unless it contributes to and benefits the whole organization (Kerka, 1995; Marsik et al., 2000).

Having worked hard to be where these individuals are, the selected participants in the study seem to want more recognition for their achievements. In learning organizations, promotions and increased status are reflected in salary increase and improved working conditions. Unfortunately this is not the case in schools. Instead, flatter structures meant increased workloads with no increase in salaries. For example, there are no financial incentives for teachers who were elected to school governing bodies or for those selected to lead the different teams. Shared decision-making and the notion of empowerment require teachers to do more managerial work that is not compensated. Rewards are intrinsic rather than extrinsic. For example, one teacher in School A earned himself the title of Mathematics and Science teacher of the Year in 2001 in his region but he feels

his efforts of helping in learner improvement are not recognized and is considering leaving the profession.

For teachers, doing more means moving further and further away from the classroom where they initially belonged. An example is one of the participant's complaints about his management role in the school. This interview was after finishing a Masters in Education degree with a distinction and had been given an important management role in the school,

> *I'm going. I'm actually leaving teaching. I'm going into the commercial world. I'm going into management consultancy. And the reasons, there is a variety of reasons. One of the reasons is that I haven't really been excited and stretched and challenged about my work. One of the problems in being in school management is that one moves away from the classroom and the classroom was always my first love. And since I have moved away from that, anyway I'm moving into the area of management. It seemed to me that there is no reason not to spread the net a bit wider if you like in terms of what I could be doing. The other issue, in fact there is a couple of other issues and other reasons as well. One of them is simply in terms of my own career and the way I have been managed in the school which has led to conflicts on my side within the school.*
>
> (Interview, Curriculum Director, School B, 30 November 2002)

Stu is clearly frustrated. In the school's attempt to model a learning organization from a normative perspective, individuals are required to do more and more of management work. This has implications for whether professionals will continue working in their schools even when the learning provides them with opportunities to look elsewhere. Although the skills gained in being given management duties are appreciated, the more teachers are overloaded with work, the more they feel the quality of their work in the classrooms suffers. Somehow they feel dehumanized and deskilled as they are moved away from what they know best. Stu attributes some of the problems to the following:

> *I think that the school leadership and management structures are very inadequate in that there's an attempt to get too few people to do too much, as a result the quality of the work suffers. Hence, I'm talking about leadership groupthink. Certainly, leadership is often too much bound up in administrative routine issues and are not able to take a strategic view. That's a key problem. I think teacher workloads are too much although we are moving to address that.*
>
> (Interview, Curriculum Director, School B, 30 November 2004)

School successes are not seen from a collective point of view but quite individualistically. Teachers, especially at School A, see school successes as extensions of themselves:

> *The lack of job opportunities made me to equip myself with a winning edge. This makes me to perform my work professionally and always try to advance myself, so that I stay/remain at the helm of changes. I have helped the school reclaim its position as a pace-setter beyond any comparison…I intend to leave teaching and become a Communication Practitioner…This will not be an abandonment of teaching but climbing on to the higher platform to serve my nation with greater responsibility*
>
> (Mdav, Teacher, School A, August 2001)

Trust is a crucial element in learning organisations, particularly from the normative perspective (Mulford, 1995; Rolls, 1995). In this study, I assumed that leadership that is open to the other members of the school leads to trust. As stated earlier on, Muntu had applied for a promotion as a deputy principal. When there were delays in making the decision of whether he would get the post or not, he attributed the problem to school leadership and the failure to be open about the reasons for not coming out clearly about their final decision.

The above quotation is an example of how trust can easily be undermined when there is a lack of openness. Muntu is an example of a teacher who feels betrayed

and does not trust his organization, especially the people in authority, as he points out. The statement he makes also contradicts what is expected from learning organizations from a normative perspective.

As part of learning to adapt to a changing educational contexts, teachers as professionals have to be multi-skilled and be able to make meaning of the changes imposed on them by the external forces. However, there seems to be a tension between what teachers are employed to do which is mainly about teaching and the extra demands that, for example, come with the curriculum changes. The many responsibilities outside teaching tend to take teachers further and further away from the classrooms. Because of the many demands that confront schools, there is a tendency to ignore or fail to detect problems facing the school and to be sensitive to the individual's "mental representation'" of the school and for teachers to make meaning of their new roles:

> *The job is far too administrative and not strategic enough in terms of the bulk of work that I do and I've made various attempts to change that situation, made recommendations about restructuring which has not been followed. And I have been recently been passed over for promotion and they had somebody who is actually junior to me in the hierarchy ... when I think I'm probably the best person for that position.*
>
> (Interview, Curriculum Director, School B, 30 November 2004)

One of the characteristics of learning organizations is to develop new forms of thinking as part of responding to the changing environment (Moloi, 2002). Both schools in my study have developed, in some respects, forms of thinking that show that they are aware of the changing school environments. For example, new forms of thinking are reflected in the way educators are committed to ongoing learning in order to be 'mobile' in the profession. Attention to their profession enables them to leave the teaching profession when they feel the system does not favour them. This form of new thinking and learning is used by individuals as an escape route and not for organisational learning. Individuals want their work to be

recognized while they work in environments they feel are rewarding from both a personal and a professional perspective. Incidents of effective team learning are not common.

Innovation versus the quest for academic excellence

Some of the accountability policies that confront schools require them to demonstrate their abilities to innovate and experiment. Schools' capacity to innovate is seen as adding value to the students' learning. But no matter how innovative schools can be, if innovation does not contribute to academic excellence, it is not seen as valuable to the school. In any case, pressure for academic excellence, particularly in School A, leaves very little room for innovation. Hoy, Sweetland and Smith (2002) maintain that in order to understand how the academic press of the school influences student achievement, there is a need to consider how social norms influence the behaviour of group members. Hoy et al. (2002) define academic press as 'the extent to which the school is driven by a quest for academic excellence and how it shapes the normative environment of a school and has a strong influence on teacher behaviour and, in turn, student achievement' (p.79).

In the South African education system, Curriculum 2005, outcomes-based education (OBE) and the Revised Curriculum Statements (RNCS) require teachers to demonstrate innovative teaching that will enable students to be innovative in turn. Although both schools are clear about the purpose of their goals and what they aim to achieve, competition is still regarded as the ultimate mechanism for change and this is still difficult to give up even in the new curriculum that is so generous with the way learners and teachers are to share knowledge. Kofman and Senge (1995) argue that 'there is nothing intrinsically wrong with competition. It can be great fun. It can promote invention and daring. The problem is that we have lost the balance between competition and cooperation precisely at a time when we most need to work together'. The new curriculum was introduced without changes in some structures, for example, like timetabling leading to a lot of confusion. As practitioners were grappling with the changes and the desire to be innovative, there were still those elements of school

cultures with a degree of control in the activities performed during specific school hours with a certain amount of supervision (Christie, 1999). At School B, the attempt by the Curriculum Director to change assessment practices to be in line with the new curriculum was met with resistance.

One of the elements of innovation is creativity. The efforts that only focus on what Hoy et al. (2002) call 'academic press' seem to delay innovation by both teachers and students. Motivational factors in innovation include support in being creative, being heard, noticed, encouraged trusted, appreciated and valued, informed, helped to clarify ideas, helped to develop skills and abilities, and challenged and extended. The school climate, especially at School A, leaves very little room for either learners or teachers to be creative in the way they learn. Even in matters of discipline, school leaders, teachers, as well as learners, prefer corporal punishment despite efforts by the National Department to ensure schools do not apply such disciplinary measures.

At School B, innovative practices were visible but the very people who were responsible for those innovations did not feel that their efforts were sufficiently supported and valued enough. For example, the participant who has eventually left the school complained that the school was focusing on wrong priorities which were more administrative at the expense of academic issues. The complexity of schools with school leaders being pulled into different directions and the demands by the school system sometimes clash with the individuals. In the case of that participant, there is a strong possibility that since he was contributing so much to the system, he felt he deserved respect by being heard and his opinions respected.

As part of responding to external pressures, the schools have had to engage in some form of professional development. In mid-2001, I attended a strategic meeting organized by the Mathematics, Science and Technology Department at School A. The meeting was to reflect on the challenges they faced with the introduction of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) and Curriculum 2005. It was clear from the discussion that the members felt there was inadequate support

from the Department of Education (DoE). They felt the facilitators sent to the districts to train them often had limited knowledge of the new curriculum. Discussions in the meeting focused on the strategies to be developed to ensure that they are on board with OBE and Curriculum 2005 to continue being one of the 'champion' schools in the Gauteng Province. The Head of Department lacked skills of chairing a meeting. The details of the meeting were not reported to the principal to link the decisions made at departmental level to organisational level decisions. This showed a collaborative culture that had little relationship between organizational learning, change and implementation. Sadly, School A principal, whom the whole school held in very high esteem for his hard work in the development of the school and its academic excellence, left and got a post in the Department of Education in his district.

At School B, planning was more calculated. The principal demonstrated a clear understanding of the changes in the education arena and their implications. To ensure that they were ready for the new curriculum, when OBE and Curriculum 2005 was introduced in secondary schools in 2000, the principal made a report of what was already achieved as part of their planning for the new curriculum in the coming year. Part of the planning included: both high school and preparatory school attending conferences and workshops on OBE and 2005 throughout the year, 2000; two of their members had also received a formal qualification at UNISA (University of South Africa) on OBE in the previous year. This built confidence in some of their members in their preparation for the new curriculum; meetings were also held with representatives of all feeder Prep schools, both to ensure coordination with what was being done then in their Prep schools and to develop greater awareness in what would be expected of them at the High school when they start introducing OBE in grade 8 the following year; in the last term of the year, they engaged in intensive workshop programmes involving staff in both High School and Secondary school; each subject and learning area worked towards familiarizing itself with the requirements of the new curriculum; and detailed plans were made on how the new curriculum would be implemented from the first day of Grade 8 teaching the following year.

Vulnerable teams in resilient hierarchies

As tasks become complex, schools are expected to rely more on teams' expertise. The new curriculum seems to have encouraged schools to have, for example, the establishment of planning teams or work teams according to learning areas. This was particularly evident in School B during staff development workshops. There are also project teams which were also more evident in School B. Examples of such teams are discussed in Chapter 4 and these include teams involved in outreach programmes. The findings in the study reveal the vulnerability of teams as a result of resilient hierarchies. On one hand, school teams play an important role in a changing context like the one experienced by every school. On the other hand, those teams become threatened by layers of hierarchies. School functioning depends highly on decisions that are external with some degree of autonomy. But within a delimited domain of authenticity, schools for example, still depend on detailed learning outcomes prescribed by the bureaucrats at national level.

The findings in the study revealed that school members that are affected by the decisions but are not part of the decision making processes feel alienated and that even affect the school turnover. The people mainly affected are mainly those at lower level but play important roles in leading school teams but still feel their roles in the teams are not adequately recognized. The turnover means schools lose the expertise and experiences of important individuals. This is especially crucial as the study has revealed that there are no written policies in the schools relating to organizational memory,

In School B, for example, it is not clear how the school tried to see the connections between Stu's departure and the decision at top level not to give the director the position of Deputy Principal. It is not evident whether the decision-makers tried to engage in analytical solutions as what Senge (1990) describe as double loop learning. The impact of the departure is also not explored although parents express the concern during the CIE Survey in 2001. Parents mourn the departure of quality teachers and no deep reflection takes place to try and see where the problem lies. The statements uttered by parents show that the

departure of quality teachers is seen as a threat. This is because the departures threaten the performance of learners and other areas of the school performance due to portions of the institutional memory being affected. The principal has expressed high admiration of the teachers in the school. However, it is not clear if he was involved in the decision-making process at the initial stage why the curriculum director was not given the deputy principal's post or the motives behind that choice. This is based on the assumption that even within the decision-making bodies, there are hierarchies as some voices dominate other voices. In such actions, the interactions of decision-making bodies are lost. An example of such is in School A where one teacher feels he has contributed a lot to the school but was also denied Deputy Principal. The other one feels the school should have been sympathetic to the financial problems he had and because they failed to understand his problems, he was seriously considering leaving the school. As a result of such decisions, we see such affected strong team members in the school exploding with anger and somehow the commitment to the goals of the school is seen as starting to wane.

> *I don't believe, for example, that the kinds of skills that I bring to the school are sufficiently valued by the top leadership…In terms of the job I do at the moment, the job is too administrative and not strategic enough in terms of the bulk of the work that I do and I've made various attempts to change that situation, made recommendations about restructuring which has not been followed…And I have recently been passed over for promotion...*
>
> (Interview, Executive Principal, in School B, 30 November 2002)

In School A, the head of department who had applied for a deputy principal post was also bitter with decision-making bodies when he felt there were some people who were sabotaging him from getting the post he felt he so deserved. When asked about his professional contribution at the school, he said,

> *I have helped more than 400 matriculants to get bursaries. This is an achievement considering that I only joined the school on*

10.04.2000…I am doing my best to encourage learners to follow those careers which are highly needed by the country e.g. pilots, engineers, actuaries, doctors, chartered accountants…I've connected the school to the following companies, organizations and institutions i.e. Prize Water House Coopers, Metropolitan, Total, Eskom,…Love Life,..I can Foundation.

(Muntu, teacher, School A, August 2001)

Hierarchies are known for having greater distortions, especially when decisions are communicated at lower levels. For example, the failure to promote Stu in School B matter might have been deliberated at different levels why he was not appointed as Deputy Principal. But by the time the information reached the affected applicant, it was brief and no reasons were stated why he did not get the job. The assumption is that the issue was deliberated at length at top level of the school and a true decision was made. The difference is in the manner through which the true deliberation was communicated to the affected member, Stu. The reason given to him was not satisfactory to a staff member who felt he had contributed effectively to the school as a team member and for that reason; he left the school a bitter person. The example gives us insight to why deliberations at top level may not necessarily be what is communicated to affected members not involved in decision-making and that gives us further insight on tensions between teams, individuals and hierarchical structures Linked to this is the idea by Moller (1998) who observes that although relationships in schools may appear relational and dialectic, power relations are easily identified.

The leader-democracy paradox

The findings in the study reveal that school leaders, especially at principal level and governance level are, to some degree caught in a constant struggle as they find themselves pulled towards two main directions - state mandates, on one hand, and staff/parental expectations, on the other hand. The same example stated above, where school leaders in School B were expected to make a decision about Stu's promotion, show how school leaders can find themselves in

having difficulty in making certain choices and moral decisions on whom they owe their loyalties to

At the heart of schools as learning organizations is to promote professional communities with an ultimate aim to develop learners. The data from the research show several situations where school leaders provide those opportunities for their staff to practice their professional autonomy but still practice control. However, their zones of control seem to be limited by, for example, their lack of influence in classroom practice and that is clearly articulated in the experiences by School A principal. The principal had nothing to offer to improve classroom practice at classroom level because he had problems coping with the newly introduced outcomes based education at secondary level. In such circumstances, the legitimacy of leadership becomes questioned and yet the principal may have focused more on fulfilling the mandates of the Department of Education. Rolls (1995) regards a transformational leader as charged with the responsibility for helping to transform organizations through fostering growth and leading cultural change as well as conditions in which employees have the supporting psychodynamics and infrastructure.

The conventional way of looking at principals is to consider them the highest authorities in the schools. With the new conceptions of leadership which are in line with learning organizations, principals need to model the changes subordinates are expected to adopt or implement. The findings reveal that the principal feels a sense of powerlessness and despair as a result of the curriculum changes. He resolves his dilemmas by considering leaving the school which he does the following year. The principal's lack of understanding of the new curriculum and his reluctance to learn it provides little hope for them to support the teachers to cope with the curriculum changes.

In School B, the principal believes in learning teams as well as individual learning for the benefit of the school and others even outside the school. Positions are fewer at school level to allow people to climb the career ladder at school level. The principal has played an encouraging role in getting staff members to learn

and advance themselves in their career. He made the following statement in one of his speeches,

> It is critical that teachers set the example in terms of being lifelong learners. Each teacher should ask himself or herself "what have I learnt this year" and teachers must engage in their learning in significant things. I am pleased to report that several staff have furthered their studies this year…This will enable … (school) to play a small but significant role in the development and training of teachers, not only for the school but also for the country as a whole.
>
> (Headmaster's Annual Report in School B, 18 November 2000)

The study also reveals that teachers in both School A and B are encouraged to further their education using different learning routes. The assumption is that teachers will then be able to cope with the school changes, especially at curriculum level. Unfortunately, for school leaders who sacrifice school time for teachers to study often have no guarantee that the teachers' learning is an investment to the schools. The general trend as, observed with the participants in the study, is for teachers to be engaged in upgrading their skills and knowledge and then leave their schools for better opportunities. The acknowledgement of the principal that such learning is not just for the school but for the whole country is significant in that this becomes the case when the school proves not to be rewarding for the teachers.

The study shows that most of the learning that takes place in schools seem to take an individualistic stance and, as such, often frowned upon yet such learning contributes, directly or indirectly, to organizations where the individuals are based, their communities, societies, and the global world. It is interesting to learn from the School B executive principal as he encourages teachers not to learn for their school but for the world. One of the problems, and perhaps the most important about schools as learning organizations, is that schools see themselves as just a system and not part of a whole system that extends to the society and the world at large. This suggests an adoption of multiple models of understanding schools

which include the following: how schools engage in the learning processes, the different levels within which learning in schools as organization takes place, and other forms of learning already taking place in schools which, in turn, might guide schools' actions in view of the educational changes taking place.

In this chapter, I have focused on the tensions and contradictions of the learning orientations in schools as a result of internal and external pressures. While doing so, I have tried to reveal the tensions and contradictions between school-oriented practices and realities, on the one hand, and the taken-for-granted assumption about schools as learning organisations, on the other hand. Rather than developing new constructs, this chapter has refined old frames for looking at schools. Through an examination of discords and insights into school realities in a changing environment, the chapter has highlighted the role of school leadership in developing schools as learning organizations. The chapter has also revealed the disabling tendencies of schools as learning organisations.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools as Learning Organizations: The Journey

> *There is no such a thing as a learning organization…It is a vision that sees the world as interdependent and changing. A learning organization is always evolving…You never arrive…you can never say 'We are a learning organization'.*
>
> Solomon, 1994: 59

This chapter concludes the findings about schools as learning organizations. As most of the arguments in the study show, the idea of schools as learning organizations presents tensions and contradictions, as the definitions of learning organizations are themselves elusive. The conclusion focuses on the following elements of schools' learning orientations: the focus on maximizing learner achievement; personal problems; the individualistic nature of learning; the collaborative style of learning; competition; learning contexts; communication across boundaries and communication via written or non-written policies; gender dynamics; the struggle for stability in a constantly changing context;

Conclusions

The nature of learning in schools as organizations reflects a deep *commitment to the same goal* which is improving the lives of learners. In this study, school leaders demonstrate a belief in excellence in both learners and school staff as part of securing that commitment for success and continuous improvement. School leaders have succeeded in creating productive and disciplined environments. Despite a positive ethos, good relationships, confidence in leadership and management in both schools, commitment to high level of achievement, and effective teaching, the commitment to the school by individual professionals is not sustainable. The study reveals that both schools face the challenge of teacher turnovers. Cousins (1996) concludes about the concept of learning organizations that, 'not many schools or school districts currently bear much resemblance to such a profile but it seems clear that organizational change and development in this direction can only enhance reform effort' (p.646). The commitment is focused on actions to reinforce what the schools as social units are

made to believe in which is to maximize learner achievement. There is no evidence of a commitment to each other. Based on a number of disgruntled individuals in the two case studies, we can conclude that there is still a need to balance the commitment to learners' needs and to harness the individual members' deep needs and aspirations which are often not brought to the fore.

In both case studies, people are seen battling with *personal problems,* which in turn, affect their professional lives. Whyte (1994) warns of splitting family and work as 'life does not seem to be impressed by arguments that we ignore our deeper desires simply because we happen to be earning a living at the time' (p.69). This suggests that the prevalence of the 'personal' is not enough and that professional excellence alone, despite learner success is not enough to foster a learning habit among all school members. While the aspirations for improvement are quite admirable and represent what schools stand for, the desires of those who work in schools cannot be dismissed simply because schools are where they work for a living, earn a salary, and are employed. Unlike in School B where people are able to go in and out of the system whenever it suits them, those affected in School A find themselves fighting within the system in a manner that bring order to their lives.

The study reveals that the school *learning system is still individualistic* in nature and the social interaction continues to be limited. It starts from the classroom arrangements where teachers are responsible for their individual classrooms. As a result, the learning system both for individual teachers and their learners retard personal intelligence developed through the process of socialization. According to Whitaker (1998), personal intelligence 'generates personal qualities, skills and knowledge that enables us to develop and sustain relationships' (p.16). The study has shown that those who have cultural capital and those with little or no cultural capital exhibit personal intelligence differently. Although the schools have established cultures, the people in them are lacking in critical voices. There is so much dissatisfaction about how individuals experience the individual school cultures but there are no forums where true deliberation can truly take place. Although individual development may not necessarily have tangible outcomes for

the organization, a developing individual is likely to make a richer contribution to it (Kydd, 1998).

The *collaborative learning style* causes tension with individual learning at staff and learner levels. While groups are, of course collectives at school, people are at different learning levels. Professionals at different levels often find themselves crossing boundaries to gather new ideas, skills and knowledge from outside the school community. Such members come with fresh perspectives which are sometimes used to benefit the school as a whole. Instead, it equips them to be able to challenge the school system which is inevitably dominated by power dynamics, external controls, and directives. Those in leadership positions miss out on the stages that involve conflict like when some school members ahead in their learning feel they have contributed enough for their schools to be recognized especially through promotions. The problem is perpetuated by school leaders who either ignore cultural dysfunctionality or fail to detect when the school culture has become dysfunctional. Such awareness would help in that those who come with new frames can be used to solve school problems.

Linked to the issue of learning to learn collaboratively is the challenge of *competition.* Some school values are deeply entrenched and threaten schools as learning organizations. Although both schools are clear about the purpose of their goals, they are facing challenges from some of the values they have not considered crossing or violating. In societies at large, competition is still commonly regarded as the ultimate mechanism for change and this is still difficult to give up even in the new curriculum that is so generous with the way learners and teachers are to share knowledge. When Kofman and Senge (1995) analyze the cultural dysfunction, they argue that 'there is nothing intrinsically wrong with competition. It can be great fun. It can promote invention and daring. The problem is that we have lost the balance between competition and cooperation precisely at a time when we most need to work together' (p.19). In both School A and School B, learners demonstrate a strong sense of understanding the need of encouraging one another and to work together. This is reflected, for example, in those who have had the opportunity of being in leadership positions in their last year of

school. In School A, learners are constantly reminded by their peers of the poor backgrounds they come from, hence the greater need to succeed. In School B, academic and sports competitions have been nicely balanced. Most importantly, learners in School B which is a middle class school are involved in community projects where they help learners in disadvantaged schools in the neighbouring township. However, the idea that parents are sometimes over-protective of their children features in the study and may limit the learners' goals of helping those who are disadvantaged despite their fond memories and pride in supporting them.

The *learning contexts,* which are aimed at improving teaching and learning, occur as a matter of routine rather than having clear objectives of what has to be learnt especially at professional level. This is more visible in discussions during meetings, briefings, and even staff development sessions. As reflected in School A, a public school, teachers' needs and institutional needs are not carefully identified and there is no follow-up on the decisions taken for continuous learning. In School B, a private school with adequate resources, there is a well-organized training programme. The person who has been playing a leading role is the Curriculum Director who has now left the school to become a management consultant in a management company. Colleagues are given opportunities to learn what is considered useful for coping with the present educational trends. Unfortunately, training is neither monitored nor evaluated. As a result, some teachers sometimes find the staff development programmes irrelevant. Programmes need to be designed closely with the people who will use what they have learnt. This would also help in making people accountable for what they have learnt and to use it when the need arises.

One of the crucial elements of organizational learning that seems to be missing in the findings in this study is the nurturing of conditions for open dialogue and tolerance for openness. Although there is *communication* across boundaries as a result of shared values, schools still have more opportunities for formal meetings and not for personal and informal communication where people may re-examine their values and beliefs without feeling threatened. There is evidence in the study of how school leaders are open to diverse views although it is not clear how they

act on those views. This is especially true of School A where the principal encourages learners and teachers to express their views in writing but it is not clear how he responds to those views except when he justifies the persistent use of corporal punishment. There is so much resentment of authority by participants at professional level in both schools among staff, parents, learners, and even support staff, which leadership does not know about or ignores. One way in which people demonstrate this kind of resentment is the surprise departures, leaving a vacuum in the schools where they have invested so much of their energy. Since nurturing conditions for open dialogue is crucial, Watkins and Marsick (1993) maintain that the biggest gains come when leaders themselves model tolerance for diverse views, willingness to take risks, and other learning practices. As long as people do not work from a model of free and informed choice, it would be difficult for them to engage in dialogue with one another regardless of status quo. This suggests that the success of a school as a learning organization lies in the quality of communication rather than the normal routine meetings dominating school activities.

There is a *lack of written policies* in both schools which is another form of communication. Both School A and School B were not able to produce written school policies when asked to do so. Even during the staff development programmes and during the strategic meetings, there were no minutes taken or notes that would be accessed by school members whenever there was a need. Cousins (1996) argues, one of the problems for schools and school districts 'trying to become learning organizations has to do with the media within which information is transmitted, communicated, stored or retrieved (p. 645). Schools mainly use verbal communication and school managers rely on tacit information and that information may quickly be forgotten. Cousins (1996) proposes a three-pronged solution: first, a development of systems that do not intrude on ongoing organizational routines and are monitored regularly, second, training to enhance learning capacity; and finally, is transforming the mode of communication from verbal to written. Since that could be threatening as subordinates are often intimidated by written warnings, for example, school leaders have a challenge of developing personal mastery which could enable them to explore people's

underlying feelings in order to make what Argyris and Schön (1994) consider the 'undiscussable' to be 'discussable' and even 'correctable'.

Despite the increasing attention being given to gender as a central feature of all aspects of social living, *gender dynamics* remain unresolved irrespective of contexts. In School A, located in a disadvantaged community, the gender relationships can be seen as a cultural problem. In School B, a school with cultural capital and a boys' school, the school attempts to promote maleness and the development of masculinity among the boys to be able to take their place in society. Women teachers are mainly in schools where cultures still favour male dominance. In both schools, there are no women in the most senior positions and yet female teachers are a majority. In School A, I observed that woman teachers say very little or nothing at all during meetings or workshops. In School B, one of the most affluent schools, women are so much on board about the changes especially with the coming of the new curriculum but there is still very little recognition in terms of promotion. Angus (1993) draws our attention to those symbols and rituals to offer a space for critical reflection and promote the development of new social imagination grounded in a new ethic of freedom and social justice. For example, in School B there was a teacher I was so keen to interview. When I approached her, she told me the interview would not help either of us. When I asked her why, she told me that she was leaving the school to a neighbouring school to be a deputy principal. Although she did not sound bitter, she said that although School B is dominated by female teachers, there are very slim chances of female teachers to get promotions.

The study suggests that schools have not yet developed tools for *awareness of turning points, disjunctures, and triggers for change.* As the cases show, booth schools are constantly *striving for stability*, which suggests that change in schools is seen as undesirable. Despite the new structures and modes of behaviour that change brings, there seems to be a conflict between the consistent school goals and the creative power of undergoing change. This may be attributed to pressures beyond the schools' control and a lack of models to follow in order to give up what has been successful for them in the past. The principal in School A (who has now

left the school) is a good example of lessons learnt that what worked a few years ago is inadequate to compete in today's schools as the future is unpredictable in the educational arenas. As April et al. (2000) argue, trying to work towards constant stability retards growth and development. A learning organization is a place that adopts a willingness to identify and challenge its existing paradigms (Rolls, 1995). Instead, the principal could not cope with the changes and preferred to leave the school. Although one is humbled by the way the principal transformed the school and how he worked hard to promote student learning, he had not been able to develop his own personal mastery in times of change. Flood (1999) defines personal mastery as a means of developing one's proficiency. He likens personal mastery to a journey with no ultimate destination and a lifelong discipline. It does not mean achieving dominance over other people or things. In circumstances when school leaders are faced with tough decisions like what was experienced by the principal, there is need for one to begin to clarify or even his or her own vision. This may be possible in the business world where this concept of learning organizations comes from but the very nature of schools suggest that most of the changes are dictated externally, especially at policy level.

The study reveals some *contradictions in society* and how those contradictions affect individuals in shaping and being shaped by structure and culture. Schools' capacities to learn and their contexts differ and the same goes for individuals. This determines the extent to which schools engage in the process of learning to change. Despite differences in capacities, there are certain problems that they have in common. The study confirms the gloomy picture painted by Senge in an interview by O'Neil (1995) when he said schools are not learning organizations as teachers are still oppressed by trying to conform to rules, goals, and objectives. Rules in themselves are not a problem but it is the conformity to them that becomes a problem. Conformity to rules does not often give people room for creativity which is encouraged in learning organizations. Schools have formal and informal rules that govern members of the school community as well as professional standards that govern the staff. Despite the school efforts to adjust their composition to look like other schools which Hanson (2001) calls the replication process that results to *homogenization*, they have different capacities

to respond to change. Sometimes the pressure to be like other schools leads to manipulation where a school may resort to shortcuts in the way they learn. In School A, an example is that of the learning method which promotes the high number of passes in Grade 12 which they call the SQ and 3 Rs – 'survey, question, reading, reciting and revision' method. An example in School B is during one staff development workshop on 'tai chi' as a strategy for stress management. The majority of teachers did not understand how the strategy was related to their work, as there was no prior preparation for its significance.

Despite the changing school environment that has been experienced in South African schools in the past decade, schools are anxious to keep *schools as stable environments* to fulfil what they stand for. The people in both schools still believe in development plans and strategic plans. Unfortunately, those plans are often not implemented or if they are, they are overcome by other competing new plans that need immediate attention. This is partly because of the speed at which change in education is taking place where events are often overtaken by other events and where the demands and pressures are often external. Hargreaves (2000) and his colleagues remind us that schools operate in a postmodern society characterized by uncertainty, paradox, complexity, and ongoing change. They warn that since change has become such an obsession it has become an exhausting process and that if people are forever in a state of becoming, they never have a chance to simply be.

The *socio-economic backgrounds* of individuals in schools shapes the direction people take as they respond to change. Such backgrounds also determine the levels of learning and the capacity to survive against all odds. Although this observation cannot be generalized, the individual stories of teachers in School A reveal that people's personal and professional growth has been affected by difficult times starting from childhood and that family background continues to matter in the way students perceive their world and their relationship to it. This also has a direct influence on how they learn individually, in groups, and as an organization. As Tsui (2003) argue, 'what may begin in the early years as small differences in preparation can in time lead to greater disparities in skills and

abilities' (p. 326). Conversely, past experiences and periods of uncertainty have provided some school members with a sense of self-empowerment. In disadvantaged schools, people who have been able to achieve their goals under difficult circumstances take a lot of pride in their achievements but at the same time crave for strong recognition, especially from their peers and seniors. Similarly, the spirit of success against all odds seems to be accompanied by dysfunctional learning experiences that continue to be passed on to the present learners. This suggests a need to develop approaches whereby people rethink the meaning of where they come from, what they exist to achieve, and what others can benefit from their experiences. The individual histories means that we need to acknowledge that past experiences can reinforce slow learning as people are bound to keep repeating the errors of the past. This will be possible to do if, for example, school leaders are able to navigate their own personal growth. This present challenge for schools goes with the existing socio-cultural changes where employees are seeking a deeper sense of meaning from their work lives. In times like these, schools like the learning organizations (Rolls, 1995) talks about, require leadership that will help organizations deal with deep issues of personal growth, vision, trust, creativity, purpose, mastery, and cultivation of individual and collective spirit (Rolls, 1995: 102). Perhaps we need to consider a development of 'dialogue consultants' where space in schools is created for people to share their individual baggage and to begin to analyze old problems and adopt fresh approaches to learning.

In times of change and upheaval, one begins to see the extent to which childhood experiences have shaped teachers' behaviours and how those behaviours, in turn, influence their learners' behaviours. In both schools, the participants' actions reflect a tendency that reveal a desire to strive for stability in an unstable world. In School A, the psychological discomforts that come with the problems they face as a result of their disadvantaged backgrounds leave them *disillusioned* instead of giving way to fresh approaches to dealing with old problems. There is a strong suggestion that for people in schools to learn in times of change, existential questions of who they are, where they come from and why they are where they

are. This finding concurs with April (2000) and her colleagues when they argues that the search for balance, order, and harmony in life is an illusion.

The concept of learning organizations from a normative perspective places so much *value in 'doing something' as a sign of learning rather than 'simply be'*. This suggests the idea of being seen to be doing something all the time. The idea of 'busyness' as a badge of honour is well put in April et al. (2000),

> We are turning what used to be static objects (nouns) into dynamic actions (verbs). Things of 'being' are turned into things of 'doing'. Many of our body parts have become verbs: eyeing, nosing, shouldering, elbowing, mouthing, heading, backing, fingering, toeing. The state of being in dialogue has become a verb: dialoguing, and has triggered the development of a whole new professional species…(p. 6).

This above statement suggests that the one who sits quietly and reflects on life is really not working. The danger of this form of organizational learning is the likelihood of adult professionals to suffer from burnout as so much value is placed on the doing and not the being. This also affects the quality of learning to those given extra responsibilities. Similarly, Hargreaves et al. argue that people who are forever in a state of becoming never have the chance to simply be (Hargreaves et al., 2000). A relevant analogy that Hargreaves and his colleagues present is that of taking swimming lessons while drowning which has implications on how learning in schools takes the different direction it takes. Reflection still features as one of the critical elements in learning organizations irrespective of what frame one looks at it.

The learning organization model emphasizes collective learning. There are several instances in the study that show that individuals are *starving for personal recognition,* especially those who seem to be contributing more to teaching and learning and have become multi-skilled as a result of being involved in advancing their careers. There is a state of despair and frustration as people want to be seen as doing something and thereafter, they do not feel fully rewarded. Many of the professionals are involved in the advancement of their careers and learners are denied of their childhood as parents and teachers want to constantly engage them

in things that will not let them stay behind. Placing value on one disadvantages the other. This means developing a new set of skills such as the metaskills of increasing awareness of paradoxes, of self and others, of vision, and of power and group dynamics (April, et al, 2000; Hargreaves, 1998, Wheately, 1992; Senge, 1990). In these watershed times, the idea of *creating a community of each other*' where people share their experiences and 'learnings' in ways that enhance organizational learning in school contexts need to be explored. This can also help close the gap between old teachers who are experienced but not necessarily into change and new teachers enthusiastic to learn for their own reasons. Because most of them feel they are not well-compensated for their contributions, they are not loyal to the school system and this has resulted to a huge teacher turnover especially in School B where there is a rich culture of learning to change. Parents see financial rewards as a solution to the problem yet there is a need to dig deeper into why good people are leaving and a deeper analysis of the culture needs to be explored.

Although one may be inclined to condemn schools that they do not fit the learning organization model especially from the normative perspective, schools still have elements of *bureaucratic practices* like passive acceptance of decisions from authorities, controls, rigid rules and structures, and layers of power which no longer have a place in organizations of today's world. These school experiences lead to a limits in the decision-making processes and make it difficult to achieve an integration of learning. Unlike corporate organizations, schools face the challenge of relying more on the external environment which restricts them in their thinking about the extent to which they can play innovative roles. Outside pressures define the limits of discretion while the internal conditions provide space for initiation. There are heightened perceptions of uncertainty among staff during the transition as the parents and government, in particular, have changing expectations. Principals are left with huge responsibilities making them directly accountable to those external pressures. Because of the positions they are in, they even develop no tolerance for trial and errors. If learning organizations are about openness and trust, the hierarchical structures in the schools do not make it easier for all affected members to see the connection between *final* decision and

true decision. For those outside the decision making process, it would be difficult to come with a true answer of the decision made, and those involved in the decision making process are often not obliged to provide honest answers to decisions taken to their subordinates.

There is an increased appreciation of individual learning as schools are confronted by the changes but it is unfortunate that schools are still lacking in the strategies for effectively *exploiting human and intellectual capital*. Teachers, for example, are faced with the normal constraints of time and budgets to use what has been learnt to maximum levels in their schools. Although organizational learning literature makes it clear that individual learning alone is not enough to effect learning across the system (Marsik et al., 2000), there is evidence that schools as organizations benefit when individuals are encouraged and supported to learn and share what they have learnt.

Given the rapid changes that are taking place in the educational arena, schools still lack the capacity of building a sound *knowledge base.* Instead, there is a lot of assumption that what worked a few years ago, is still adequate to compete in today's schools. In such circumstances, schools run the risk of losing the knowledge invested not only in their physical objects but also in members of staff who seem to be exiting the school system. Although the principal in school A seems to be autocratic and in some cases irrelevant to the changing South African environment, there is a lot to learn from him. Similarly, Stu in School B is a good example of how important it is for schools to build a sound knowledge base. Hanson (2001) in his discussion about organizational memory maintains that 'To go forward, schools, like any type of organization, must possess a sound holding environment of past experiences or they are destined to drift along repeating errors' (p.638). Schools are experiencing a turnover which affects mainly the quality of staff schools have resulting into a deficiency in organizational memory. Sadly, it is not easy to analyse the source of the problem in a way that will inform their decisions and future actions.

Most schools still lack leaders who embody the characteristics of *leaders who have a mastery of the "five disciplines"* as identified by Senge (1990). Senge) emphasizes personal mastery as the most important discipline of all the five. School leaders are supposed to be learning faster than their staff and teachers are supposed to learn faster than their learners.

The changes that schools are experiencing are similar to those postmodern society is experiencing. Postmodern society 'is synonymous with chaos, uncertainty, paradox, complexity, and ongoing change' (Hargreaves et al., 2000: 122). The idea of schools as learning organizations in normative terms becomes even more appealing as schools are experiencing pressures to change. Schools are expected to be responsive to the market forces and be more efficient in the allocation and utilization of resources. While uncertainty has brought learning opportunities to some participants in the study, others are not sure of how they will use the learning in teaching and so regard learning within the education system as unrewarding. A stronger trend evident in this study was of people's desire to develop themselves as individuals who could remain competitive in a changing environment.

Like anywhere, schools are adopting the idea of *teams as a way of life*. The teams that schools generally have are lacking in structure. People often come together on an ad hoc basis, they do whatever tasks they need to do, and they fade back to their usual working styles characterized by individualism. The individualistic nature of learning in schools leads to people being able to develop their own learning agendas some of which are at cross-purposes with those of the school. This cannot be blamed on the system because deep down, individuals are social beings. Robbins and Finley (1998) remind us that despite that particle of us that craves isolation, our sense of ourselves withers without contact with others. Other problems are as a result of confused goals, unresolved roles that, in turn, lead to bad leadership. In such contexts, it becomes difficult for leadership to keep the vision alive. In learning organizations, teams are encouraged to work together such that they create synergy. School leaders need to support individual teams

such that in their working together, they create synergy. Teams need to be rewarded and within those teams, individual behaviours as well.

The study demonstrates the need for decisions to be in retrospect, analysed, understood and given meaning for schools to grow towards learning organizations. School leaders, especially principals, as middle managers find it hard to nurture learning as they are face with solving complex problems. The changes that have affected schools in the past decade in terms of, for example policy change and curriculum requires them to make many decisions each day. As a result of the many problems to solve and the many decisions to make, they resort to quick solutions some of which contribute to dysfunctional practices and actions. In School A, the principal who had worked hard to develop the school to national recognition did no longer identify with the purposes of the changes and the vision of teaching and learning. Sadly, the principal did not end there by contemplating leaving the system, he left the school and he is now a subject advisor in his district. This demonstrates a gap between espoused theories and theories-in-use. Given the many commitments that school members have to face, it is very difficult to avoid those short cuts in solving their problems and making quality decisions. In the staff development instance in School A, participants were quick to generate solutions to the existing problems. It is not clear how they develop and work out their solutions as such issues are beyond their control. In view of the decisions taken, the contexts within which they operate were not explored to deliberate on a range of decision options or alternative course of action.

The study has also shown that if leadership had recognized the different needs of the individuals, their personhood, human and professional potential supported, their performance in the school would have been enhanced. Members of the school community are involved in individual learning which is not necessarily emphasized in the literature on learning organizations but that kind of learning, if well nurtured, could be used to feed the collective knowledge base. Whitaker (1998) emphasizes the importance of organizational culture and the environment to the release of human potential. Most of the selected participants have also shown remarkable devotion to their work especially to keep the good name of

their schools. Failure to recognize these diversities has led to some departures on the part of teachers and some in management positions and some have somehow flexed their muscles in terms of supporting learner achievement. This is partly because they are caught up in their own bitterness about the things that concern them and which have nothing to do with their professional lives.

School leadership is caught up in the complexities that have come with the constantly *changing environment.* This is especially so because 'followers' still require those in leadership positions to be in control and this is rooted in the way people are socialized. As school leaders try to make sure there is stability in their schools in the face of external pressures, they also have to take the blame when things go wrong. One way to deal with the problems schools are facing is trying to interpret the problems by looking at the developing patterns. For example, School A could not detect the problem of why there was a drop in students' performance in 1999. The principal and the students attributed the problem to the abolishment of corporal punishment. At the end of 2002, School B lost the curriculum director who left very bitter for having been denied a position he felt he deserved. A quick solution was to get a replacement. Environmental scanning would have been appropriate in order to deal with the problems schools are facing. But this will still not be possible if school members

The extent to which school principals can play a supportive role at school and classroom level is limited. This is as a result of their limited powers. Principals are school leaders at middle level who are expected to play a key role as change agents. They are also expected to play a leading role in classroom practice. This is complicated by the individual autonomy which is encouraged in schools. In School A, for example, where the principal cannot come to terms with the outcomes-based education (OBE), there is no clear communication that has taken place between the classroom teachers and the principal about how the changes have affected the teachers or the principal's role. Instead, the principal resolves his dilemma by leaving the school. The study challenges the moral or immoral decisions that those at leadership sometimes have to take as a result of such dilemmas. One question that remains unanswered is the extent to which the

principal's departure in School A is justified as he feels he cannot cope with the demands of the new curriculum. Another challenge is the loyalty to the system when there are other pressing personal issues. This leaves a lot for decision makers to think about the morality of their decisions at the expense of their subordinates. There is need to think through how school leaders leave with dilemmas while keeping their sense of integrity intact. Murphy, Yff, and Shipman (2000) observe that among the issues for the development of education for the 21st century, the most important is that these fundamental shifts in the context of education and the internal dynamics of schooling is the need for the reconstructed views of the role of school managers (p. 18).

Leadership is about creating and sustaining contexts of productive learning which is relevant to benefiting the learners without neglecting the personal and professional needs of staff. This implies radical organizational change in schools for the change of behaviours, attitudes, and practices. The study seems to support the evidence by Solomon (1994) that there is no such a thing as a learning organization but this process of learning should be regarded as a journey. This is a challenge to dig deeper not only on how schools learn but how they think they are learning. It is difficult to decide on the lens to use when looking at schools as learning organizations. Perhaps like May (1994) the best is to view learning in schools as a sustainable resource and not as a limited commodity. This suggests further research on how learning in a context of change can be sustained and even be transferable when necessary. This suggests a deeper conception of the school culture and the purposes of schooling. It is first about the understanding of the organization of schools and how it impacts negatively or positively on the staff, students, and parents.

Implications for theory, practice and policy

Despite the complexities in the learning organisation model, there is still a need to try and make more sense of the concept in schools as it holds many promises in enhancing the educational change efforts. The two case studies reveal the power of sociocultural contexts in shaping the way people think and act. The differences are also reflected in the learning orientations of participants in the two schools. There is also a need for a deeper understanding of leadership from a distributed perspective in schools as they experience ongoing change.

The prevailing kind of leadership in schools is that of *positional power* where most of the powers still reside with the principal as the school figure head. Such resilient structures are a result of external mandates and they persist even though there are elements of shared decision making in schools through governance structures.

The new governance structures have come with new responsibilities and the line between school leaders and teacher leaders is becoming more and more unclear. This allows no room for reflection on what is learnt and to move towards more effective action. Action technologies become appropriate in such circumstances. Examples include participatory action research, action science and action learning. School leaders need to encourage these forms of learning so that there is no heavy reliance on support from people at the top of the hierarchy. The findings further suggest the need for the institutionalization of research partnerships with both internal and external partners. That also has further implications of research funding even at school level.

Similarly, the spirit of success against all odds seems to be accompanied by dysfunctional learning experiences, especially with those who come from disadvantaged communities. That continues to be passed on to the present learners. Despite resilience and survival against all odds, individual histories means that we need to acknowledge that past experiences can reinforce slow learning as people are bound to keep repeating the errors of the past. This

suggests a need to develop approaches whereby people rethink the meaning of where they come from, what they exist to achieve, and what others can benefit from their experiences. This will be possible to do if, for example, school leaders are able to navigate their own personal growth. Perhaps we need to consider a development of 'dialogue consultants' where space in schools is created for people to share their individual baggage and to begin to analyze old problems and adopt fresh approaches to learning.

The findings suggest the need to be more culturally sensitive to what goes on in schools. It would not be enough to think of how school leaders can work within those tensions but to also to find out about the school leaders' own perceptions of how they think they can resolve the tensions and how they can work with those tensions. The kind of leadership that seems to be envisaged is the one that develops the skills required in action technologies which, for example are action learning and action science. Such findings point to more organized learning for school leaders that is more focused and practice-oriented. If this kind of research is the way to go, there is need for commitment in resourcing in terms of funds, time, and space.

Experiences of the school communities in this study point to the need for school leaders to build structures and processes where people can begin to value the significance of simply "being together". This is emphasized by April et al (2000) who argue that when people bond as organizational members, they not only acknowledge one another's presence, but are even able to question one another's assumptions. By so doing, individuals and team members in an organization can also learn to trust one another, a crucial condition for growth as a learning organization. This also means that meetings can no longer be simply about plans but occasions for people to appreciate being together to engage in conversation and in the process of creating a vision.

The realisation that some schools, teams and individuals are 'smarter' than others in pursuing their goals takes into consideration that acquired knowledge is not equal when it comes to organizational, team and individual learning in problem

solving. The ability for schools to understand and shape the change process means acknowledging that achieving learning at any level is difficult to understand and need to develop appropriate learning styles.

The study suggests that schools are likely to be experiencing having people who will pursue their career goals and thereafter leave their organizations to seek for better jobs elsewhere. This cannot be frowned upon except that it has implications on knowledge management in schools. Since many people in schools are engaged in self-development as a result of insecurities brought by educational changes, this warrants further research especially in seeking the relationship between lifelong learning and learning for the organization one is working for. Research is needed on how to tap that which people are likely to take away from their individual schools as they move towards developing learning communities or even learning societies.

Learners seem to make good mentors to their peers and their voices need to be made stronger. This is mainly reflected in the lessons they share with their peers when given an opportunity to do so. It would be interesting to find out the extent to which they receive peer support and how this can be taken further in a form of formal programmes.

The recurring tensions between school and home and those who are always at school being blamed by parents warrant further research for a smooth relationship all in the name of benefiting the child. More research on worthwhile activities to improve these relationships is necessary as people want to live in environments where they can live with meaning and feel they are contributing meaningfully to the surrounding environment.

In this study, I have examined the nature of organizational learning practices in the two Gauteng secondary schools in order to identify the tensions, gaps and contradictions between the learning organizational model and its applicability in schools in general, with specific reference to the changing South African context.

In addressing the research questions, I provided the following: rich descriptions of the school learning practices; contextual 'triggers' that force school members to reposition themselves in ways that seem to characterize learning organizations; elicited discords between corporate values and school-oriented practices and realities and by so doing discovered positive and negative influencing factors towards schools as learning organizations; and the way school leaders continue to face the challenge of the 'fit' between what the external environments expects of schools as learning organizations and school internal pressures and practices. Although the three perspectives on learning organizations worked well in the two schools, further investigation is needed in a larger samples, including primary schools. The three perspectives mapped in the study have laid a foundation for further research on schools as learning organizations. The three perspectives on learning organizations, as mapped in this study, serve as a springboard for informing practice and points at different pathways in helping schools to learn not only about themselves but also about the surrounding environment.

The theoretical arguments in the concluding chapter together with the analysis linked to the previous chapters presents an appreciation of schools as learning organizations while acknowledging the many tensions, gaps, contradictions as schools travel the journey of learning organizations. Most of the school experiences reflect an understanding of the way individuals, teams and schools as organizations are receiving the idea of being in learning organizations and how other forces like external authorities exercise their authority on the schools. In both schools, there is a strong aspiration of individual members to be recognized for their contributions to the schools. As a result, they defy what we have always believed about individuals being shaped by structure and culture. Instead, when structure and culture does not recognize them, they leave the system. I hope, therefore, that the implications of the findings in the study do not apply only to schools in South Africa. Such theoretical insights can possibly be used more broadly in order to illuminate thinking about how best schools can learn in an ever-changing environment. The window provided by the study is one of the first steps in engaging into a deeper conversation about schools as learning organizations. Taking our cue from the corporate literature about learning

organisations, we as educational researchers need to see ourselves as bridges between the domain of the *possibility* of schools as learning organizations and the school *realities*.

CHAPTER NINE

ADDRESSING QUALITY CONCERNS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Surviving the Crossroads

> *Finding your way through the forest of human interaction requires a blend of science and humanism. Reason and logic are needed to chart your way through the woods. It takes painstaking planning, analysis, and execution, testing the ground every step of the way.*
>
> *(Fetterman, D.M., 1991: 87)*

This reflective chapter attempts to assess the robustness of the research. It also assesses possible research flaws, particularly those of a methodological nature, and the extent to which they were overcome. Critical scrutiny of this kind can be viewed as a strategy for improving quality in qualitative research. Buskens (2002), in her discussion of the concept of reflexivity maintains that,

> From this reflective space we learn from our experiences. This is the relationship we need to go to when we have crossed some lines and must get back on track in our striving for quality. This is the place where we, after having realized we crossed a line, learn what happened, take responsibility for it and move on (p.17).

In this study, I have learnt the value of acknowledging lifelong learning as a researcher and I have also learnt to accept that my research can only do that much as seasoned researchers have often reminded me.

In this introduction, I also briefly present a mapping of perspectives on which I reflected on the study and the way the flaws were overcome: the passion for the adoption of the emancipatory discourse; a passion for research though drawings and images; competing perspectives about learning organizations; my cultural positioning which could affect my analysis of schools in different contexts; the selection dilemmas although necessary but limiting; my outsider position making the undiscussable discussable; and stories of learning.

Adopting an emancipatory discourse: easier said than done

At the initial stages of the study, my approach in determining an appropriate method of enquiry was informed by three sources: (i) My experiences as an organizational developer in a project called Kgatelopele (w*e are developing)*, where I was previously working for Heads, Teachers, and Industry (HTI); (ii) my desire to involve participants in action research for mutual benefit; and (iii) my personal experience as a teacher. It was on these bases that I considered action research as a proper emancipatory discourse for investigating the applicability of the learning organization model in schools. I had also observed a growing interest, across a range of social sciences, in the methods employed in action research for experimentation, participation, and development of understanding and solution of problems through dialogue.

My conviction that action research was the way to go also rested on the observation that most authors who advocate for reflective practices support action research, especially in the form of empowerment research or participatory action research. For example, Argyris and Schön (1996) argue that, 'if social scientists tilt toward the rigour of normal science that currently dominates departments of social science in American Universities, they risk becoming irrelevant to practitioners demands for usable knowledge' (p. 85). Not only is participation important for meeting the demands, it is also 'an essential step in social transformation' (Lather, 1986: 263-264). Since my initial interest was also in schools in marginalized communities, I had hoped that I would fulfill a moral right of participants in matters that would generate knowledge about them and 'an essential step in social transformation' (Lather, 1986: 263-264). Thus I designed action research instruments to bring participants together once in a while.

Experiences in the field proved otherwise. The fieldwork started when secondary schools were being introduced to Outcomes-Based Education (OBE). Tensions ran high. Teachers were reluctant to engage in anything they considered as extra work. Participants were concerned about the amount of time they were already putting into trying to cope with changes that had come with OBE. Being involved

in action research meant that they would have to acquire certain basic research skills, perhaps through training. Considering the teachers' workloads and the time limits set for my study, this was not possible. This meant redesigning the instruments. Although a few of the teachers were eager to participate in action research, I chose not to follow this route for two reasons: First, it was the control dilemma whereby the research would benefit only a few in the schools. Second, was a moral concern that the research would empower and benefit a few.

Having lost out on action research, I designed interview questionnaires that would still also allow participants to reflect on their own practices and to get come to understand the purposes of the research. To enable and encourage reflection, I kept a close touch with most of the participants either by phone or by e-mail. Whenever I visited their schools, I would take some few minutes with them and I found them giving me information about other developments in their personal and professional lives. I treasured their responses. The nature of questions asked during interviews tried to develop the kind of self-analysis, awareness and critical reflection which action research would have achieved. An e-mail from one respondent confirms my sense that the interviews achieved what I had hoped they would achieve.

From: ["E…" <e…]@acenet.co.za>
To: <022njabs@mentor.edcm.wits.ac.za>
Subject: …as promised
Date sent: Sat, 24 Nov 2001 15:52:08 +0200

Dear Njabu,
Although I have soooo much work to do, I really enjoyed the interaction today and believe I have learnt some more . You were very professional in your presentation and approach and I really felt at ease in an (for me) unfamiliar situation - yet another learning curve/experience?
I attach my CV for your information, as promised, and look forward to more interaction/communication - like you I am really passionate about what I do and just love to get involved in meaningful development and/or change.
We have had some problems with our e-mail attachments - if you do not receive this please let me know and I will send again but from [School B] and not from my home PC.
Kind Regards,
J… E….

Drawings and images: The taken for-granted assumptions

Prior to the actual study, I was fascinated by the idea of learners making drawings that reflect school practices. As much as the drawings are subject to many interpretations, I had hoped this method will be useful in directing my analysis especially in comparison with other findings. Such a method would be used to interrogate or examine learning experiences of what they learnt and how. Learners would be directed to engage in drawings that would reflect the school culture and their attitudes about their school. Part of what will be interrogated is that which reflects school's values. According to Weber and Mitchell (1996), drawings as a method can reveal what could have been ignored in learning. The visual images that will be selected are representations and repositories of meaning as well as mediators of meaning between the social and the personal.

> Drawings are a compelling source of data that has seldom been used in educational research. For adults and children alike, drawings can express that which is not easily put into words: the ineffable (Dieske, 1985) the elusive, the not-yet-thought-through, and the subconscious (pp.110-111). Drawings provide people with a good opportunity not only to reflect their personal feelings and their attitudes toward people and situations, but also to express the group values (p.109).

When the actual study began, I started with School A in trying to elicit information about what they liked and disliked about their schools. The learners in such marginalized communities were not familiar with drawings and making images illustrating certain practices. When I returned to the school to collect the data with those drawings, all the learners whom the teacher of English Language had helped to select were quite happy to submit written essays about their school, their teachers, school leaders, and about themselves and their dreams and aspirations.

Competing perspectives: Challenging encounters

When the study began, I was familiar with one perspective on learning organizations and that was the *normative perspective.* Most of my earlier readings revolved around Peter Senge's (1990) book, *The Fifth Discipline,* where he discusses at length his five disciplines: personal mastery, team learning, mental

models, shared vision; and systems thinking. As the study progressed, I realized that the concept of learning organizations can be viewed from other perspectives as well perspectives. It was then that I included the other two perspectives: the capability perspective and the developmental perspective. This affected my analysis since I had to take into consideration all the three perspectives selected for the study.

In the process of analyzing the data, it was difficult to shift from the perspective I was familiar with and now and gain I would find myself looking for interpretations in the normative perspective. It was helpful to consider the relevance of other perspectives since the applicability of this model to schools required me as a researcher to wear different lenses which could only be understood in the light of the other perspectives apart from the one that has popularized this concept. What I found crucial was to make a conscious effort to keep in mind the damaging effects of splitting my analysis into opposites. The development of such understanding on my part helped, for example, in understanding that the schools' state of being does not necessarily have to be less valued than schools where lots of action is taking place. For example, I began to see the downside of action without reflection which also led to burnout. Had I stuck to the normative perspective, I would have easily concluded that schools are not learning organizations.

My cultural position: an analysis trap

I was an insider because of my cultural orientations with the school. In my analysis of the stories, I was conscious of the differences in the schools in terms of their contexts but the challenge was not to see the stories as just artifacts. Boje (1998) warns against what he calls the 'stories-as-objects' methods. Instead, he advocates for 'stories-in-context methods'. Narratives from both schools required participants to relate school practices in relation to their groups, individual and team contributions to the development of schools as organizations. My orientations to one of the cultures which dominates school practices in School A, and my preferences of the other and my deeper understanding of the school

climate especially in School A was a limitation in the way it influenced my analysis. I was caught up between a culture that I sympathized with and a culture which was foreign to me and had many advantages compared to the one in School A. In some cases, I had a greater appreciation for those with a cultural advantage and sometimes felt that there was a lot more about learning organizations to learn from the two schools than meets the eye.

Selection dilemmas: To choose or not to choose?

The selection of schools and the participants in ways that is convenient to you as a researcher is necessary and at the same time it can be limiting. I was known in school A prior before I was involved in the study. Before I was involved in the study, I was already known in School A as a development practitioner because of my previous work in the Kgatelopele I project. School A principal used to be invited to make motivational speeches to some principals who were in the project and who seemed to be facing many challenges as South Africa was in a state of transition. School B was selected because I knew the Curriculum Director. He was a Master's student in the course on *Issues in Educational Change* which I had taught.

When I came to both schools, I came with foreknowledge about the participants. That convenience in selection and coming through senior people could easily get me into trouble in terms of trust between the participants and the researcher. Because of the possible dilemmas as a result of my selection, I had to investigate more about them among their colleagues and learners to convince them that they had been selected on the basis of their important roles they play in the school as a collective and as individuals. Again, what people were interested in portraying were positive things about themselves and their schools. I tried to overcome this limitation through careful selection of individual 'cases', whatever the recommendations from the schools. This was to ensure selected participants had rich contributions to their schools and had considerable knowledge of their school cultures. In selecting 'cases', I also tried to ensure, and had diverse professional

perspective in terms of how they learn to change as individuals, groups, and schools as a whole.

The micropolitics of schools: dilemmas of my 'outsider' position

As a researcher, I could sense that there were some issues which were 'undiscussible'. During fieldwork, I was determined to make the undiscussable discussable and to make sure I was able to get quality responses from participants. In School A, the 'undiscussable' included the tensions between the principal who is now gone and the deputy principal. The data revealed that the deputy principal was not popular in the school especially among learners. Apart from using corporal punishment which the learners knew was already illegal, some of the reasons they revealed were that he used to call them names and that embarrassed them among their peers. He was also criticized by the learners for smoking dagga, and according to the learners, that dagga made him 'drunk' and ended up calling them names even more. I missed an opportunity of questioning the deputy principal on such acts because he was not one of the selected participants and yet his responses were likely to enrich the data even more about school learning or unlearning practices. The relationship between the principal and the deputy principal was very cordial. Most of the time when I went to the principal's office, I would find the guidance and counseling head of department most of the time I visited the principal's office.

In School B, not much was visible except when I interviewed the curriculum director who had applied for the post of deputy principal and was rejected. One lady teacher who was mentoring one of the teachers in the school asked me not to bother interviewing her because she was leaving the school the following month. When I asked informally the reason for her departure, she told me she was going to one of the neighbouring school where there were possibilities of being promoted. She said opportunities like that for female teachers in School B were very slim. Instead, it was often men that were promoted to senior positions possibly because of being a boys' school. Again, if the study pursued to question such practices, it would come up with richer data and to examine the school

leaders' taken-for-granted assumptions. As stated above, the schools were selected because of the good elements/characteristics in them. Towards the end of the study, I designed a tool that was aimed getting them to open up more on their experiences as learning to learn is an emotional activity. Surprisingly they revealed their bitterness and some were even threatening to leave their schools and some of them left even before I completed fieldwork. I feel the research would have been richer if I was able to capture more of those issues they were bitter about.

As the research unfolded, some of the tensions emerging in the models of practice made it clear to me that there were deeper issues to be understood about the two schools. These included the relationships, for example, between educators and parents, and the dilemmas faced by school leaders in recognition of individual efforts in contributing to the school as a collective unit. In trying to dig deeper into the stories about the school practices, how individuals were supporting collective learning, and the leadership role in providing the relevant learning systems, I found that most participants were resorting into what Argyris and Schön (1996) call 'defensive routines'. When the interviews were about to reveal something negative about them or about their schools, they would often make explanations that would make everything look positive. The clinical approach adopted during interview sessions was helpful in making participants understand the participants' experiences and the challenges they were facing in their careers as individuals and as professionals in their respective schools.

Anecdotal Sessions

Within the methodology, I had built in time to capture some of the staff development sessions especially because there was so much to learn with the coming of the new curriculum. School A lacked direction with meetings that did not even have agendas. Since I had my own 'agenda' as a researcher and an outsider, I found myself interfering and that influenced the sessions in a particular way. But my fear was that if I ignored the 'disorder', I would leave the school with no data concerning that which they considered to be a strategic meeting. When I consider the decisions they took and which never materialized, I am tempted to

conclude that some of those suggestions were suggesting that the participants knew what I wanted to hear and not necessarily what they ought to do in view of the challenges that lay ahead.

Description or Interpretation

In this study, I have tried to distinguish between *description* (what one sees) and *interpretation* (ascribing meaning to what one sees). This is also demonstrated in the way I have outlined the analysis chapters (Chapter Four, Five and Six). Chapter Four is a descriptive analysis of what I could see in both schools which is more about their learning practices. Chapter Five is based on the autobiographical stories of individuals as the assumption was that the stories of who they were, where they came from and why they were going where they were going were crucial in understanding the link between schools as a collective unit with individuals actions responsible to bring in desired changes. In my past experiences as a teacher, a postgraduate student, an organizational development practitioner, and a postgraduate lecturer, I have observed how educational changes are often received on the ground. Examples of the problems that characterize the educational changes and, a lack of long-term commitment to help people in their anxieties and in times of frustration or despair. Because of such prior knowledge, I found myself pushing them towards the emotional aspects of their work especially during times of learning to change. By so doing, I am likely to have missed out on some of their gains in times of experiencing change. This is as a result of the understanding that change always means extra work on the part of practitioners. A good example of such a weakness was the revelation that some key individuals in both schools were leaving their schools and leaving teaching and others were contemplating for 'greener pastures'. What was more interesting was that those greener pastures were outside the education system.

There is strong evidence in the data that a lack of recognition within the school system was a major factor in pushing key individuals to seek for greener pastures outside of the system, despite their considerable professional achievements within it. Although I interpreted some of these departures as short-comings in school leadership, from a systemic point of view the problems may be more widespread

and complex. My own experience of gender politics, enabled me to interpret the departure of one of the women teachers at School B, and her reluctance to participate in the study, as a result of gender imbalances in the school leadership structure.

Keeping pace with the rapidly changing target

The data collection process started in 2001 and lasted in 2003. When the study begun, I was quite happy to get people who were instrumental in promoting learning of learners in their schools. In School A, for example, it was the principal and in School B, it was the Curriculum Director. Both left their schools. By the beginning of 2002, the principal in School A had left and had found a job in the district. The Curriculum Director in School B made a surprise resignation as he had found himself a job in one of the international management consultants firms. These were key participants who I would have liked to be in contact with from time to time throughout the study. The principal in School A was difficult to contact and yet there were so many issues that I would have liked to discuss with him following what was emerging from the data. The former curriculum coordinator was willing to be contacted anytime as he was going to continue living in Johannesburg. We kept in touch through e-mails and telephone calls; however, that contact was short-lived.

Back to Schools with Data

When the study began, I felt it was necessary for me to go back to the schools to discuss areas of agreements and disagreements with them and also for moral and ethical reasons. This was not possible because of the time pressures and my funding was quickly running out. By failing to go back to the schools, I missed out on their interpretations of some of the behaviours and events to further explore alternative explanations that would, in turn, inform my own interpretation and open up new possibilities of richer data. This was also going to help me to make up for the action research I had hoped to do for people to reflect on their daily practices and begin to questions their underlying assumptions about their behaviours.

There is still a need for researchers to make a conscious effort to go back to the schools with the data for hearing further voices of schools in ways that a normal research would not achieve. Schools miss out on such information that promotes reflection among school members and to me as a researcher. Going back to the schools with the data would help me to avoid jumping to conclusions about the participants' experiences in their school environments. It would also help participants in giving them time to 'slow down' and reflect on their practices, values, assumptions, fears and desires.

Examples of what would be taken back to the participants would include their stories and what learners say about their schools. In their stories, I had sensed their excitement about their achievements which were mainly against all odds; this was coupled by a certain degree of frustration as their expectations were not met in a form of recognition. I missed out on how much those stories would be internalized and it would be interesting to watch how those participants would make the data grow richer and making it more complex. The teachers' stories and the learners' stories revealed that each one of them, especially in School A, have suffered trauma and abuse either in the eyes of parents, teachers, or even among their peers. Such experiences were never discussed publicly and that offers no critical reflection on the part of the teachers. This would have offered teachers with alternative approaches to dealing with learners. This would not be possible for teachers to easily understand unless the works of critical theorists like Bahermas are simplified for schools instead of remaining ivory towers. It would have been even easier for me to discuss critical reflection even before I asked participants to write stories about themselves and their schools.

Apart from helping teachers grow professionally, there is also a need to restore our own humanity as researchers by going back to the schools even after having completed the study to discuss the findings. Taking the transcripts along would be very helpful to manner justify the conclusions. The case studies and their cases are rich with details and are able to engage one as a researcher in an inspirational and compelling. It is important for researcher to develop a democratic attitude that allows space for reflection and invite the participants to join in the co-construction

of knowledge, develop their intellectual capacities through their data, and engage them in praxis for a collective understanding of their world about them as individuals, groups, teams, and as a collective unit.

Stories of Learning

Initially, I had not considered how my thinking about organizational learning, my constructs and their thinking based on the stories participants wrote would lead me to seeing a particular reality and to begin to appreciate some ideas and values in learning organizations over others. For example, I had planned to also examine organizational learning practices by looking at collaborative practices and had not considered the source of how they interact, the manifestations of that interaction and the influences that accompany those practices and I now see the latter as having great policy implications. Regrettably, that was beyond the scope of the study and, as a result, I could not further engage participants more on their life histories to reflect more on those stories in relation to the concept of learning organizations.

In my experience of working with schools in marginalized communities, I was stuck by two different kinds of practitioners. There were those who were doing very well under remarkably difficult circumstances in schools that were generally performing poorly, yet their human potential and intellectual capital did not seem to be recognized. Then there were those who were doing far from well. I sympathize with both groups because I could easily associate with them. I understood their cause, their aspirations and their motivations. I have always had a sense that school problems are deep rooted than what those who experienced them would say. Such experiences in educational contexts that were changing, I grew interested in connections between the personal and the professional in the participants because I felt that connection was a neglected dimension and yet it captures the idea of schools as learning organisations from the different perspectives.

In this reflective chapter I have considered the challenges I experienced in developing and conducting this study. Whatever the frustrations and pitfalls of

research, the process of reflecting on alternative ways of engaging with the study has helped me to understand more fully my research role and its related ethical, epistemological and practical dilemmas. While the adoption of an emancipatory discourse was easier said than done, the reflections in this chapter encourage me to conclude that the research process provided some of the enabling conditions for emancipation, both for me and for the research participants.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Professional Learning Questionnaire, School A and B

1. Goals and origin

Joint Reflection as key to learning: its objectives and its origin, since when (year) does it exist

Possible data sources

◊ Characterstics of the meeting: clarity - about the goals and means of this form of learning

◊ Reflective practice characteristics: relevance and needs - origin

1.1 What were the aims or goals behind having that meeting?

_____
_____
_____
_____

1.2 How did the idea originate? What needs and relevance was it based on?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Changes experienced leading to joint reflection and its relation to local or national policy plans

Possible Data Sources

◊ Macro level policy - recent policy and infrastructure

1.3 What is the relation between the changes you are experiencing and the local/state/provincial or national policy plans?

_____
_____
_____

Other observations/remarks related to the goals and origins of this innovation

1.4 Are there other observations or remarks related to the understanding of the meetings?

_____
_____
_____

2. Organization of departmental meetings

Organization of departmental meetings when, where, and how often

Possible data sources (professional development characteristics)

- ◊ When, where and how often
- ◊ Programme length

2.1 How are your meetings as a department often organized?

_____
_____
_____
_____

2.2 Any other comments on the way the meetings are organized? Please comment below?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Towards alternative courses of action(s)

Keeping the wheel of learning moving: depends on both knowledge of existing practice and on the ability to invent or search for alternatives

3.1 What do you consider to be the most important things that you have learnt from the last meeting?

_____
_____
_____
_____

3.2 How would you like to apply what you have learnt both in your personal and professional life?

_____
_____
_____
_____

3.3 How would you like to see yourself grow personally and professionally after what you have learnt in the meeting?

_____
_____
_____
_____

3.4 What do you foresee as possible barriers?

_____
_____
_____
_____

3.5 How do you think those barriers can be overcome?

_____
_____
_____

4. Specific Needs and Priorities

Specific Needs and Priorities: At different levels (needs of the whole school, groups or individuals)

4.1 Based on what has emerged in your meeting, What would you consider to be the needs of the following:

(i) The whole school

_____
_____
_____

(ii) different groups of staff (Please specify which group(s))

_____
_____
_____

(iii) The needs of Individual people in the school

_____
_____
_____

(iv) Your own needs as an individual

_____
_____
_____

4.2 What do you think should be the school's priorities to satisfy the whole school needs, group needs, individual needs as well as your needs as an individual?

_____
_____
_____

5. Further Thoughts based on the issues that emerged in the meeting

Thoughts on further tasks to be undertaken

5.1 Any other important considerations that you think may have been left out or not well addressed and yet very important? Please explain.

Name_____
Grade(s) you teach _____
Learning Area(s) or Subject(s)_____

Thank you very much for contributing to the study. Please include your name if you don't mind. Having your name would be helpful for me especially when interesting things come up from your response and for follow-up purposes. I would like to assure you that whatever you say will remain confidential. If you get stuck with the questions or want to discuss something with me concerning the questions or the study, please do not hesitate to contact me in the following numbers and e-mail:

717 – 8232 (W) or 082 357 7048 (Cell)
e-mail: 022njabs@mentor.educm.wits.ac.za

APPENDIX 1A

Strategic Planning Meeting - School A (4 September 2001)

Teacher 1: This is our staff for the department of Natural Science, we have Mr [...] who teaches Biology, Mr [...] for Biology, Mr [...] teaches Maths, Mrs [...] for Maths and Mr [...] for Agricultural Studies.

HoD: As you know towards the end of every year we have this kind of meeting where we discuss our problems and how we can deal with them the following year. What we'll be talking about today educational training and overcrowding of some classes and teaching of Grade 8's and 12's, first, we'll be talking about training, is it necessary to have training for next year?

Teacher 2: We should have and it's necessary to have extra training, because one day of the week in not sufficient enough and have more training on OBE.

Teacher 3: We should have started the workshops now but we can't say we'll have extra training next year while having Grade 9's as far as the school is concerned that's why we encounter so many problems with the Grade 8's. I think if we can have teachers teaching Grade 9 only next year and be trained as soon as possible I think it would great advantage.

Teacher 4: I also feel we need to be trained particular by representatives from the department but on the other hand, we need to empower ourselves as far as OBE is concerned because at times you find that some of the facilitators who come from the department do not have the knowledge of OBE itself. Also we as individuals also need to enrol with well renowned institutions which can in a way compensate for the weaknesses of these facilitators, which can be in way compensate for the weakness of these facilitators which are provided by the department because for the few projects I've attended so far I'm not the only one who felt that the facilitators themselves did not have adequate knowledge about OBE itself so they have to know what's going on they must know the aspects of OBE because when they are asked about things so we need to compensate the facilitators mistakes from the department.

Observer: So what you are saying, does it mean you need a different kind of training from the facilitators from the department?

Teacher 4: Not necessarily but to provide for the lack of knowledge in some aspects of OBE because some of the facilitators don't know exactly when they are asked about the 'nitigrities'?? of OBE. The facilitators themselves you find that there've never been in class teaching OBE, they have been trained in the traditional way yet we as teachers are supposed to understand the training of the people who don't have that much experience. Maybe if we have programmes where we train the trainer we might do well.

SILENCE

Teacher 4: In other words we are taking other people's children and we are making them guinea pigs as we are guinea pigs when we are being trained by

those people unlike if we have a situation where by during holidays teachers are thoroughly trained even if it's not for the whole year but at least four weeks or so and then we meet for subsequent meetings after the training session to discuss such problems that are encountered. I think we do need training this year so the Grade 9's next year are familiar so we really need the training, even if we spend a lot of money it's okay because we need it, because the children need that kind of learning for next year because it's going to be new for some pupils.

Observer: So you need training from the department? What if the department can't provide the training so what are you going to do as a school?

Teacher 5: If the department fails to provide us I think we as a school have to go out there and find somebody who is more knowledgeable than us as far as OBE is concerned to come and train us.
Teacher 4: There are other Institutions, which are involved in constant research as far as OBE is concerned. We need not to entirely rely on the services of the department.

SILENCE
Teacher 4: Because some of the facilitators themselves are not that knowledgeable as we expert them to be as far as OBE is concerned and coming back to the point of what we can do as a school to equip ourselves as far a OBE is concerned, point number one could be , one teacher once mentioned that we need to meet constantly so that we can rub off knowledge to one other that is OBE knowledgability so in that way we can rub off knowledge in an informal set up as to what one has gained from whatever source even though it could not be sufficient enough but it could make different.

Teacher 5: We have a problem with the Grade 8's as well as the Grade 12's, we have teachers who teach Grade12's and teaches Grade 8's. I'm teaching Grade 8 and 12, I'm having a problem with the portfolio for Grade 12's and Grade 8's. I'm struggling with the OBE so how can we solve this problem next year?
Teacher 5: Next year is could be better if we have facilitators who'll be teaching Grade 8's up to Grade 9's and of OBE others from Grade 10's and 12's. I think it could be crucial.

HoD: Yes what Madam is saying here we need teachers who'll concentrate on OBE only and the group that is flushed out because sometimes you find a situation whereby like myself I teach Grade 8 two learning areas Grade 9 and 10 and I'm sorry to say but find that most of the classes are overcrowded. There are teachers who by now, I don't know their names and it's September now, I keep asking them everyday and the next day I forget. Right now I understand we have to go to OBE classes and attended periods in class and the school is overcrowded because giving the number of classes and number of teachers you find that we are in a serious predicament.

Teacher 6: So how can we solve this problem?

Teacher 4: Since there'll be four classes going up, we need to take down three classes as we will be scanning down gradually not uprubtly don't think it would work like that so that we have manageable classes in terms of members.

Teacher 2: So you reckon that next year we have three classes.

Teacher 4: I'm not implicating it in that way but we have four classes of Grade 12 this year for all the 134 students in Grade 12 and the 134 will not be here next year so how about taking on average 40 per class with three classes which makes 120 we are now scaling down, take a look at the input and the output not the grades between.

Teacher ? : We also said you have a problem to discuss, you took about three weeks to discuss the problems we have in Maths so now we're going to have a similar problem because we'll be having three extra lessons.

HoD: You're saying if we take we'll be having three classes next year that means we'll be having three classes with Grade 8. It does not work like that because this year we are having nine classes, unless we are going to sleep around the location of that every learner passes because of OBE. The push, push situation is not going to work. I think there are those who are going to make it given the performances so it's not a guarantee that because we'll be taking three classes next year and a nine classes at Grade 9 plus those who are going of fail, I'm not looking at it like that.

Teacher 6: So you're saying we must have teachers teaching Grade 8 only and Grade 12 only.

HoD: Yes, but it's not easy as that in terms of numbers because we are under staff.

Teacher: You many find that many teachers in Grade 8 are having the very same problems like us we are four and it's another factor which we have to deal with so don't be regulars if we can limit the number of teachers per learning area for instance if two teachers share a same learning area per Grade because it will be easy for us to meet unlike many.

Teacher: We need to remember the reasons why we're having teachers in the same learning area, the reason was that we need to involve many people as possible everyone must be involved with OBE because we were trying to do our best that at least everyone gets contact with this new system.

HoD: I think it's not necessary for us to go back and say let's all get involved in this whereas we have seen that the old system is not working. In fact the system is of OBE is demanding, that is why when we started this meeting. The Madam and I said let there be teachers responsible for Grade 8 and Grade 9 only not in a situation where a teacher teaches Grade 8 and Grade 9. Like us we have to deal with portfolio for both Grade 8 and 12 and again you find the classes are overcrowded.

Teacher 6: If we say every learning area at least there should be 2 teachers. I think that could be possible at least everyday we can meet and discuss what to do the next day and those who are teaching Grade 8 and 9 are not suppose to teach Grade 10 and 11 and 12 because OBE is very demanding, you almost have to work everyday and you must be prepared everyday so next year we make sure we have teachers strictly for Grade 8 and 9 as well as others for only Grade 10, 11, and 12.

HoD: Ok then let's discuss the overcrowding in classes, how we can solve overcrowding in classes.

Teacher 6: There'll be issuing of forms so I think we should have a number of at least 120 students which means we must issue 120 forms not more so that even if we talk about overcrowding we must be able to say we have this students we don't need more learners to come and overcrowding our classes.

Teacher?? : We have discussed this issue previously and we agreed to the fact that since some of our students will be leaving us especially the Grade 12's and we agreed that our admission committee do not admit more that 150 per Grade to minimise the overcrowding we are experiencing in our classes.

Teacher ??: Are we going to push our Grade 8's to Grade 9's? The way I understand, Before I started teaching in this OBE when I asked the Grade 8's why all of you passed Grade 7? And they said that our former teacher told us that no one is going to fail so I was trying to investigate this thing of pass one pass all. So I don't think we'll allow this pass one pass all.

Teacher 5: Because if we allow this we'll have a problem when they are in Grade 9 because you find that some of them don't even know how to write their names.

HoD: I've attended some workshops some four years ago, but it's not a matter of push push definitely some learners should remain behind because they can not cope with the OBE, there must be learners who remain behind if the fail.

Teacher 4: The real problem with us is we do not get the file. The thing that really tells you that this learner has developed up to this level therefore you can provide this in their weaknesses that's why we have a problem of saying the learners all passed but that's not the issue, the issue is were they developed to standard?

Observer: In terms of training, what are the recommendations on that one?

Teacher 4: We must have more workshops and register with different Institutions to get more information about OBE.

Observer: Can you tell us more about how you're going to do that if you say you plan to have more workshops?

HoD: The facilitators who once came from the district office, they said we're at liberty to invite them if we happen to have a problem in a learning area and we once invited them so we an also do that in order to try and answer and understand.

Observer: From what you said earlier you say some of them don't have the expertise in OBE, how are you going to bridge the gap between what they can offer and what is missing?

Teacher 4: As I said we need to improve ourselves, there are many institutions excluding the varsities like one other centre I know, they do offer workshops on Saturday so one can empower themselves these with particulars in other areas and one other thing which is meeting constantly also can help because this OBE is an learning curve for most of us so I think if we can meet regularly one can learn something from their colleagues.

Observer: So your recommendations are that of having workshops and meeting regularly and also talking about getting facilitators from outside and getting assistance by enrolling with different institutions. Can we crush that one because it is also our area of concern as well and we'd like to make a follow up because the other problems are the results of some?
Teacher 1: If the department sends us someone to work with in the workshops let them make sure that they send someone who is more experienced or more knowledgeable enough.

Observer: Since you've said that the department is not always useful. We are concerned as what you do as a school since you've a school that strives for excellence and most of the things that you've archived up to now us not via the department but via through yourself so that is why we are interested in you own initiatives. You can't keep going on blaming the department. What it's failed to do and it will continue not to do. We are more interested in you as a school as a department in the school.

Teacher??: There were schools who were identified by the department especially those who had performed good and I managed to attend one of their workshops and it was so interested, it's the compilation of the old and new system.

Onserver: So you would like to go there yourselves and find out?

Teacher 5: Yes and one way of empowering ourselves by trying to go that extra mile since we see that. The department cannot provide for us I also think meeting with Primary teachers can help they've been doing OBE for four years. So they've more experienced than us and you find that some of the Grade 8 learners know more so it differs from school to school some are more knowledgeable. We've invited this year some although on a small scale some teachers from Nomimi senior phase. HOD and two guys who teach there and showed us what should go on there in OBE so I think if we can in a way form partnerships with them so that we can have the OBE unfolding as a chain of events. Because you find that

experience a problem of learners coming from different schools mostly beginning for the year because you find that some have been taught this way and some the other way. So you try to amalgamate the aspects of all the learning areas; and in my own point of view it should have been that learners from a school go to a certain school, because you find that source come from there and there so that's why we don't have some of their files.

Teacher 7: There's this show on SABC 3 called Educational Express it starts at about 10 but weekdays it's unfortunate that it's not on weekends.

Teacher 5: I believe our children know about OBE, at some stage you must allow them to lead in my lesson. I sometimes let them lead, give them some aspects you want to work on they do give me some good ideas.

Observer: Are you saying there is more to gain from learners?

Teacher 5: Yes they're very helpful because some learners even showed me their files while I was totally in the dark.

Teacher 4: One thing we must be clear about and not try to repeat but we must have specialisation, teachers who are well orientated with OBE they should be the ones who teach Grade 8 and 9 and others concentrating on Grade 10, 11 and 12 but those teachers must be well trained, we must be qualified as far as OBE is concerned and then deal with Grade 10,11,12 as others will be specialising with Grade 8 and 9 because I think it's a problem for the teacher who is a facilitator at Grade 8 and you find that they also teach Grade 9,10,11 and 12 class. So to form a certain specialisation one must be trained to focus on one class unlike teaching the whole school and changing in this class. They're OBE style and the other class loosing traditional teaching. The teacher really can't cope and if the learners can observe that you end up getting frustrated and I think what makes Primaries with OBE is that the teacher is facilitating one Grade everything so that makes them better than us.

SILENCE
Teacher: If we want to enrol and get more experience, we need to visit some Primary School. There's one Principal I know he once told me that since the teachers are concentrating on one class. They could even write a book about OBE the way they are so used to it.

Teacher 6: I believe if we want to control our numbers we'll have time so we can do what we want to do. Get involved with other teachers who have different views because when you teach almost every period a day you hardly have any time to yourself. Because when you get home there is a pile work waiting to be marked so I think we could use some help and I think we should also limit the numbers.

Observer: Can we brainstorm on the recommendations before we declare our part over?

Teacher 4: I think the recommendations were that we have to meet regularly, which I think it's what we are doing to a certain extent even though not enough. So we probably have to come up with internally which might not be followed to the latter at stage because, school is a school and being a school there are some few disturbance there and there at times so we need to come up with an eternal as to this is how regular we meet. Another recommendation was that we should meet with Primary School teachers and that can lead to us maybe partnering on of the Primaries of which we feel that the teachers there are the key to help us as far as OBE is concerned. As we mentioned that the teachers there have been in OBE field long enough whereas us we've been doing OEB for 8 months. Some other guy said "you'll understand OBE at the end of the year." So it's part and parcel of learning hence in a way we are taking other people's children and we're making them guinea pigs. And we also need to enrol with other institutions because I've witnessed it myself personally that other institutions get the OBE knowledge even before it reaches the facilitators at the department.

Teacher 7: There is a show on SABC 3 called Learning Channel on weekdays buy learners can catch on weekends, it starts at 10 in the morning. I think it's really educational and students can benefit.

Teacher 5: I think we should also include parents as much as we can because with this OBE there's a lot of money that needs to be dished out and in some instances, you find that the school's resources are stretched to the limit so I think if se involve parents and tell them about four aspects of OBE especially the administrative part of it which needs to be looked at because we buy textbooks and you find that they're wrong so it does require some money because of some instance we are incapstated by the fact that there is no money to run the OBE thing. If there was a budget especially for OBE and if we need a budget specifically for OBE we need to raise school funds and parents can also pop out some money time and again for OBE related matters.

SILENCE
Teacher 6 : To some certain extend I did mention that we can learn a lot from these youngsters now that they know and absorbed these things, we should make use of them it can contribute a lot.

Teacher 4: As I said earlier you find that teacher A teachers Grade 8 OBE and the very same teacher teachers Grade 11 and 12 the traditional way and the same teacher has 44 periods a week. So as a school we need to come up with some form of specialisation. Let the teachers for OBE teach only OBE and have other teachers continue with the learners who are taught the traditional way of teaching but in the meantime they must seek learning in OBE so when the task come they are ready to offer lessons the OBE way.

Observer: You also talked about inviting facilitators?

HoD: We have invited them before and we're planning to invite them again to see the practical part of it because theoretically they've said some things but we know that when they're inside the class is not the same because the entry of learners is

not the same, so we need to be flexible. But we need to call them to present the lessons the OBE way so that we can see what needs to be done.

Facilitator: This one is for long term you also talked about considering the cut of numbers in admission.

APPENDIX 1 B

Professional Learning Questionnaire – School B
The Professional Development Workshop on The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

The One-page Innovation Description

At the beginning of the last term this year, 2001, all the staff members including the senior members of staff in both the primary and secondary schools at [School B] were invited to a workshop. The workshop was facilitated by Brian Smith and Jonathan Black who run a successful practice in educational and counselling psychology. Smith and Black have an alliance with the Franklin Covey Leadership Centre (SA). The two facilitators work with individuals, families, school management, parent bodies and private companies. They argue that: (1) Working faster, harder or having a positive mental attitude does not bring about major changes required of us in today's fast changing world; (2) Instead, there is a need for a Paradigm Shift - a totally new way of 'seeing' the problem; and (3) The greatest Paradigm Shift of all is from the Clock to the Compass - a shift towards leading your life guided by what is important, rather than what is urgent (www.franklincovey.co.za/edcation.htm, 2001).

Using *The 7Habits of Highly Effective People*, Franklin Covey Southern Africa's mission is to inspire change by igniting the power of proven principles so that people and organizations achieve breakthrough results. As a reminder, the Seven Habits by Stephen Covey are: (1) Be Proactive; (2) Begin with the End in Mind; (3) Put First Things First; (4) Think Win-Win (5) Seek First to be Understood, then to be Understood; (6) Synergy; and (7) Sharpen the Saw. The focus of the workshop was not just on Covey's first 2 habits but an invitation to reflect on things that matter most in human lives or the development of the 'self. Positive human energy, trust, communication, proven principles of productivity, balance and inner peace, dependence, independence and interdependence, bonding, leadership in increasing the quality of life of its people were some of the issues that were also dealt with for people to strive towards achieving a healthy balance between personal and professional development. The workshop was concluded with some form of crafting the path to learning using critical questions each individual may ask himself or herself as a basis for personal management and to use those like a compass for a clear direction. the challenging questions were: What do I have? What can I do? What do I want to be? The principal, [...], in his closing remarks linked the principles of the 7 Habits with the Marist ideals. He also praised the staff for their potential in making things happen and he was captured as saying, "We've got so much here...".

The study tries to unravel the process of learning in a context of change. Change in this context, is defined as a process of learning new ideas and things (Fullan, 1992). Charles Handy in his article, *Managing the Dream,* calls such a process 'the wheel of learning'. In a way, the study explores the journey to individual or team learning taking into consideration the concepts, skills and insights gained through the professional development workshop.

1. Goals and origin

Professional Development as key to learning: its objectives and its origin, since when (year) does it exist

Possible data sources

- ◊ Professional development characteristics: clarity - about the goals and means of this form of learning
- ◊ Professional development characteristics: relevance and needs - origin

1.1 What were the aims or goals behind having that workshop?

- Encouraging staff to maximize their personal effectiveness as part of the broader pragramme of staff development
- Improving life skills of staff. If we improve personally, we will improve professionally
- Staff interaction; Personal growth of each staff member
- To enhance the effectiveness of staff

1.2 How did the idea originate? What needs and relevance was it based on?

- The workshop was proposed by the principal in the primary school responsible for co-ordinating whole-school development. It formed part of a series of personal development workshops held during the year.
- Can't comment
- A need for professional growth for each staff member so that each become happier and more willing members of the staff body
- The staff need for personal growth; an attempt to avoid staff stagnation; new methods of doing things

Professional development: relation to local or national policy plans

Possible Data Sources

- ◊ Macro level policy - recent policy and infrastructure

1.3 What is the relation between the changes you are experiencing and the local/state/provincial or national policy plans?

- Very little direct correlation except in regard to the circular changes everyone is wrestling with. As an independent school, we have very little contact with development initiatives in the state sector
- We are all moving towards OBE
- This course was not directed at professional growth
- Would not be aware of the plans.

Other observations/remarks related to the goals and origins of this innovation

1.4 Are there other observations or remarks related to the understanding of the meetings?

- (blank)
- No
- The course gave us time to reflect on our personal stages of development towards effectiveness
- (blank)

2. Organization of professional development sessions

Organization of departmental meetings when, where, and how often

Possible data sources (professional development characteristics)

◊ When, where and how often
◊ Programme length

2.1 How are the workshops on professional development often organized?

- Usually once per term. Responsible members of the SMT arrange workshops availability. There is a common thread but it is not always made explicit
- ?
- At the beginning of each term for a day or half a day
- …on a termly basis

2.2 Any other comments on the way the workshops on professional development organized? Please comment below?

- (blank)
- can't comment
- Some have been on topics which did not seem as relevant as this one
- (blank)

3. Towards alternative courses of actions

Keeping the wheel of learning moving: depends on both knowledge of existing practice and on the ability to invent or search for alternatives

3.1 What do you consider to be the most important thing(s) that you have learnt from the workshop on the 7 Habits?

- In problem-solving, a focus on "seeing" in new ways rather than "doing" more
- Setting most important priority in life
- Take time out to look at things differently. There could be a better/easier way of doing things
- My ability to relate to other in a conflict situation i.e. Win/win outcome

3.2 How would you like to apply what you have learnt both in your personal and professional life?

- Managing a very teaching and administration and leadership workload
- Set goals in both and put first things
- Slow down more regularly to plan and "see the bigger picture" at school and at home
- I would like to live, both personally and professionally according those outlines.

3.3 How would you like to see yourself grow personally and professionally after what you have learnt in the workshop on Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People?

- Becoming more effective as opposed to efficient (doing the right things rather than doing things right)
- I feel like I was already on the 7 habits paths and this just further encouraged me
- Pass the ideas to my pupils by example
- If I am able to apply 25% of what was presented, I would be happy

3.4 What do you fore see as possible barriers?

- Very heavy loads on school leadership
- Time
- My own inability to slow down. I always seem to be stressed by deadlines and keep pushing towards the to the exclusion of all else
- My personal preconceived ideas

3.5 How do you think those barriers can be overcome?

- Effective prioritization and delegation
- (blank)
- Consciously telling myself to slow down and look at what I am doing – I can work smarter
- Through the attendance of these sessions

4. Specific Needs and Priorities: At different levels (needs of the whole school, groups or individuals)

4.1 What would you consider to be the needs of the following:

The whole school

- Need a more exciting and innovative programme
- Keep positive

- A group vision a goal to work towards
- The whole school should approach its life along these lines

Different groups of staff (Please specify which group(s)

- Teaching staff need to teach beyond the "delivery mode" into proactive curriculum design
- Needs to focus on goals
- Subject departments clarity on the changes in the curriculum and education as a whole as it affects each department
- (blank)

The needs of Individual people in the school

- *(blank)*
- *need to implement goals*
- *to be confident to lead others*
- *(blank)*

Your own needs as an individual

- *Strategies to inspire others to go beyond their comfort zones*
- *Take plans into action and take time out to enjoy life*
- *As in I and iii*
- *I would like to see myself implementing these ideas*

4.2 What do you think should be the school's priorities to satisfy the whole school needs, group needs, individual needs as well as your needs as an individual?

- The first step needs to be an audit of what staff wants. The development can be prioritized. Development must be explicitly de-linked from appraisal
- Keep staff and learners happy. Remove unnecessary stress from staff load
- Good communication; offering choices for courses at beginning of term. Highlighting other courses during term time

5. Further thoughts on professional development activities

Thoughts on further tasks to be undertaken

5.1 Any other important considerations that you think may have been left out and yet need to be investigated further? Please explain.

- (blank)
- No
- (blank)

- (blank)

Name_____
Grade(s) you teach _____
Learning Area(s) or Subject(s)_____

Thank you very much for contributing to the study. Please include your name if you don't mind. Having your name would be helpful for me especially when interesting things come up from your response and for follow-up purposes. I would like to assure you that whatever you say will remain confidential. If you get stuck with the questions or want to discuss something with me concerning the questions or the study, please do not hesitate to contact me in the following numbers and e-mail:
717 – 8232 (w) or 082 357 7048 (cell)
e-mail: 022njabs@mentor.educm.wits.ac.za

APPENDIX 2

Interview Questionnaire with Staff - School B

Introduction: Introduction to the study; clearing ethical issues; etc.

Thank you for meeting with me and participating in the study. I have some questions concerning some successful change processes and strategies your school is involved in. The questions concern individual, team or organizational learning processes in a context of change. The questions are part of a study where I am investigating innovative practices based on people's understanding of where the world is moving and who are introducing relevant changes that will ultimately contribute to learner achievement.

Please be free in your responses. Your responses will be anonymous and will remain confidential. Your consent will be sought if your response has something interesting or important that might benefit others internally or externally. The tape recorder or video camera is strictly for accuracy. The interview should take us approximately one hour.

Before we start with the interview, please spend a few minutes to review the description of the recent workshop aimed at developing and supporting the human potential. *(Pause)* From your perspective, is this accurate? What would you like to add or subtract? *(Record)*

Background: To examine the teacher(s) motivations by looking at the thinking behind the innovative practices and where they get the influence (e.g. training, experience, profile etc.)

1. Tell me about yourself - your professional preparation (e.g. degrees, how long as a teacher, HoD, principal (Choose the appropriate title), how many schools, teaching experience, management training and experience) etc.

2. What professional courses have you got that have helped you in your innovative capacity considering the position you hold?

3. What other professional development workshops have you been involved in apart from this one?
b) Were they beneficial?
c) In what way?
d) What are your developmental needs that you still consider unmet so far?

History of Professional Development: How it started, history of its innovativeness, who was involved, etc.

4. I have learnt that every beginning of term you have such workshops, how was it started? Who was involved? What do you think is innovative about it?

Professional Development in the School: Micro, Macro and Meso level factors on how professional development is conducted in the school and the kind of support needed for innovative practices as well as barriers (e.g. vision, infrastructure, facilities, policies etc.

5. What is your vision in connection with professional development? In what way do you think it synchronizes with the vision of the school?
important by this learning experience?

6. What kind of support is available in the school to sustain your learning and growth? Is the support adequate?

7. Who has played a significant mediating role in your professional development?

8. What school policies have helped in framing your professional development activities?

9. Are there local or national policies supporting this professional development? If they are there, please describe them.

Professional Development as an Innovation: The major focus of the Study. How learning opportunities are embraced; Strategic opportunities rooted in the contexts that stimulate and sustain professional learning and growth; Details of its innovativeness to be captured here.

10. Tell me, how did this idea of having a workshop on Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People come about? Whose idea was it originally? What were the original intentions and ambitions or specific needs it was trying to address. How well do you think it is (or will be) achieving its initial goals? What was your role in the initial planning? Who were the other key players? Were there any barriers to implementation or problems experienced? Please explain.

11. Considering what is in the one-page description of your recent workshop and what you can remember of the workshop, please say more about what strategies, knowledge and perspectives you would like to learn more of based on the workshop experience (e.g. in relation to your personal or professional goals, its relationship to teaching and learning, etc.)?

12. How do consider embracing the skills, knowledge and the insights gained in that workshop?

13. What support and resources would you need to make your learning experience worthwhile?

14. How would you make sure your learning also contributes to learner achievement(s) or learner performance?

15. Would you need special training to achieve some of your goals? If yes, how would you obtain that training?

16. What special skills do you think you have that many other may not have? How would you maximize them?

17. How would you like this professional development initiative evolve as an innovation? What further barriers do you foresee you have to overcome as a school? What sort of support would you need to overcome those barriers?

18. How would you like to see yourself evolve both as a person and as a professional? What barriers do you foresee you have to overcome? What sort of support would you need to overcome these barriers?

Teacher Practices: Teacher's belief's in relation to the 7 Habits and the way it effective classroom practices. Focus – methods, roles, collaborations, and how teachers personally and professionally benefit from the 7 Habits.

19. Because of the curriculum changes, what changes in teacher practices have observed? How are they supported? What are the possible barriers and do you think they can be overcome?

20(a). What is the positive vibes in the school that need to be maximized?
(b) What are the negative vibes that pull the school down?
© What do you think needs to b done on the negatives?

Learner Outcomes/Achievements: students' activities/roles e.g. students as researchers, peer tutors, team members, consumers, etc. Their interaction with other learners, interaction with teachers, collaboration with others internally or externally.

21. In view of the changes that are taking place in education, how have the students' roles maximized such in being researchers, peer tutors, etc?

22. How do you address issues of equity and gender in the school?

23. How do you hope to continue to maximize your results?

24. What do you do as a school, as a department, as individuals to make sure that these learners are prepared for the outside world?

Other: issues of importance that need to be addressed

25. Are there any other issues you feel have been left out but important for the study and for the school? Please feel free to say anything?

Thank you very much for your contributions. You have been helpful indeed. In case something has been left out and you want to discuss further, feel free to contact me.

APPENDIX 2A

Interview Questions with Director of Curriculum Development (30 November, 2002)

NN: Professional Preparation
SF: Well, I've been teaching for 13 years and I was trained at the University of Cape Town where I got a BA Honours in English and my HDE. I taught for five years before I became an HOD. So I have been an HOD for eight years now. But in fact more than an HOD because in fact 2 years ago I was made director of Curriculum at [School B]. Since that time, I time I have complete an M Ed.

NN: What other courses have you done apart from the courses you have courses you have done for the degrees you have mentioned?
SF: I have done quite a bit. I have done the certificate in OBE (Outcomes-Based Education) through UNISA and then I have done quite a lot of short courses, particularly educational management courses… and then, of course because I'm quite heavily involved in one of the teacher Unions, I'm quite involved on Curriculum study panels. Not just unions, for example, just this last week-end I was part of the Independent Schools Panel providing information to the Minister on the new FET (Further Education and Training) Statements. So, I have got quite a wide exposure to curriculum policy.

NN: Based on all that you have done and what you have achieved, what motivates you?
SF: I love to learn! And I think I have a genuine interest in policy issues as well and also organizational development issues in South Africa. One of the things that concern me in South Africa is to get teachers to learn more effectively (he pauses) which is why, of course, my MEd dissertation was on that area.

NN: Please tell me briefly about your MEd research.
SF: It was a case study on the potential of using internet- based learning to improve teacher development outcomes surrounding curriculum 2005 and quite suggestive results in terms of getting learning communities going in schools and allowing virtual mentoring which alleviates a bit of costs in doing school-based development on the kind of scale we need in South Africa _____.

NN: Apart from the courses you have mentioned in development, any other short courses you may have left out? **SF:** Nothing comes to mind at the moment (laughs) because I have done so many.

NN: How beneficial were the courses, like the curriculum course that you have done, management courses, just to name a few?
SF: The management courses have been very helpful. Certainly, they got me to think in a more strategic way about how organizations should function. And I found most of the curriculum stuff not that helpful, in particular, the OBE course I did at UNISA. I thought was not hugely helpful at all. One of the problems with distance learning, of course, learning is how you get genuine outcomes based interactions going and they didn't succeed in that. So it ended up being quite

theoretical. At the end of the end of the day the assessment was all about memorization rather than demonstrating skills which was disappointing. So, a lot of the OBE stuff I learnt on the job.
NN: In terms of your own learning and your self-development contribution to the school, based on what you have learnt, I understand you have made remarkable contributions to the learning of the others general. Please explain to me more about that.
SF: As one of the Heads of Curriculum, one of my broad portfolio or part of my portfolio is to facilitate the instruction of the new curriculum and so I have been involved and obviously running workshops and also mentoring individual teachers and heads of subjects on how to implement OBE and _____. I was just playing an advisory role and coordinating.

NN: How has been your help generally received?
SF: People were initially reluctant. People were very afraid initially of change but I think there has been a big build-up on enthusiasm and buy-in over the last couple of years. I would say it's probably been a 3- year process getting to where we are now. But I think they still have reservations about implications for their practice. But they are quite enthusiastic about the concept and they try it out in their classrooms.

NN: So what would you say about the attitudes towards OBE in general?
SF: Most people think it's a good idea conceptually. There are lots of problems about teachers learning practically how to do it. But I think most of the problems are that a lot of teachers sit and wait to be developed rather than going out proactively and finding ways to come to grips with the issues, and obviously there is always a change of reserve elements in any school and then one battles through with them. But I think we have made success even with those.

NN: I'm sorry, just to take you back about your staff development programmes. For example, last year, I came to your school during one of your staff development programmes. That one focused on Stephen Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Successful People. Another one was at the beginning of this last term (in September 2002), you played a critical role or explaining to the staff about the history of OBE tracing it from its political agenda and its significance for addressing equity issues in South Africa through story-telling which I found interesting. Please tell me, how do you organize these workshops?
SF: What we do, we took a policy decision some time ago that we have 2 staff development days at the beginning of every term and we have tried to interpret that staff development in very broad ways, for example, that Covey course, Covey workshop was useful in developing people on their personal impacts in their jobs although not all of them (courses) are not necessarily teaching oriented; whereas the presentation or workshop that I gave at the beginning of this term was more specifically more curriculum directed and we had people from the IEB (Independent Examination Board) to talk about the trial of the ETC and all those thing and; I was just giving context. To try and do so in kind of accessible and unthreatening ways and make people understand why they are in the situation they are in.

NN: Interesting because the people who talk about organizational learning see story-telling as a way of encouraging people to engage in dialogue. Did you feel like people were receiving it positively?
SF: In fact it was very well received. In fact, I have had quite a lot of people coming to me in the next few days after the course and said now for the first time they understand what is going on, and I think there's a big lesson there in terms of the assumptions made by policy makers about how much teachers really know the broad terrain in which they are working. And very often they know very little. Even very competent well-trained, experienced, able teachers.

NN: That's in interesting. And the school in general, or maybe your school leaders, how do they support these programmes?
SF: School leadership is very enthusiastic about that development programmes and I think they see it as quite an important element of who we are an organization. Yah, and there has been quite a lot of creative ideas as to what we should do on these training days. Like for example, the Covey course, we had various speakers over the last courses ----------. Also, obviously because we are a Marist school, we are also involved in that network as well. So for example, the start of next term when all three Marist schools in Johannesburg are coming together at Sacred heart to do a workshop on the vision and the ethos of specifically of the Marist education and with the spiritual component as well.

NN: Which ones are those?
SF: That's [School X], [School Y] and [School B].

NN: Which people would you consider to have played a major role in your staff development programmes and the way they are beginning to view the changing nature of their role in the school as an organization?
SF: I would say two people have made the biggest contributions. First, it's [the present principal], the Head and myself.

NN: OK. And are there any national policies of school policies that you have or use to support these training or staff development programmes?
SF: Not written policies. No. We have a much less concretised situation. I think a lot of the time; policy is this conceptual rather than written. Which not necessarily a good thing. We need a formal one.

NN: What do you see as problems if there are no written policies?
SF: The biggest problem when we don't have policies written is the institutional memory problems. When a key person leaves, no one quite remembers exactly the way we do things because it isn't in writing. We know that's a problem. Anyway, we've had this situation probably for 4 or 5 years at St David's – stability in terms of leadership. People in the same slots for a substantial amount of time. As a result, we kind of naturally developed a way of doing things. In a way, those are the weaknesses where problems with organizational memory come to the fore.

NN: Does it mean that there is stability and not much of staff turnover?
SF: There's been a turnover in the teaching staff but not in the leadership.

NN: So, back to curriculum and development workshops, where I think you play a critical role, are you saying teachers are receiving these workshops well and leadership is supportive? What problems have you had in the past, with the workshops, programmes and other areas where you are involved?
SF: I think the biggest problems in the past is where we have taken some things quite literal and where teachers have not necessarily understood the relevance to their work. So, for example, a couple of sessions, one of our sessions we've actually brought in 2 Tuchins and they went through a process of like moving meditations and kind of oriental philosophical thing about stress management which I thought was very interesting but a lot of teachers thought their time was being wasted because they couldn't see its direct relevance to their work and I think we could have communicated the purpose_____.

NN: Any problems with gender issues, cultural issues in general?
SF: I don't think we've had much in the way of problems bearing on cultural issues. The biggest cultural problems we've faced is that often we had a workshop-based format in discussion groups and often we found that the predominant culture in the school is that sort of white-Anglo kind of culture which is very open to that kind of discussion and people do make contributions in groups and so on. Whereas people who are not from that predominant culture often feel intimidated and are very silent and their voices aren't heard in those discussions and that's a problem.

NN: Do you encourage them?
SF: We do encourage them and the problem it is, of course, quite a hegemonic culture and so it's very difficult to make those people to feel comfortable in exposing themselves in those forums. So that's a cultural problem. The gender issue, I haven't been too aware of the problem issues relating to gender but I think partly because the vast majority of members of staff are women.

NN: Yes…
SF: But I do think that there probably isn't an incentive because most people in management are men.

NN: That's what I would also like to find out.
SF: No, we've had women in management positions in the past. But at the moment we do have a kind of an anomalous situation where_____ in the structures in the school there is only one woman involved. We have had then in the past but they have always been a minority. And I think part of that is a fairly old-fashioned concept on the part of the senior leadership of what the old boys' schools leadership should look like in terms of role modelling, discipline, those kind of things which don't make sense to a certain degree but obviously has cascaded effects into other areas of the organization like the ones we are talking about now where the repositories of knowledge and expertise, and so on are male and are receptacles are female. I think there are some gender issues there. But I don't think it has impeded the development programmes itself in a big way. But I think it is a potential break on people's participation.

NN: How aware of these are the teachers, that it's about maybe role modelling for the boys and also that they can't get that far with management positions?

SF: I think that women in the staff are aware of the rationale. I don't think they buy it. I think they are quite cynical about it and certainly some of the more feminist-oriented people are quite angry. I think it's an issue that the organization is gonna have to face sooner than later.

NN: But is it like, because they are angry about it, they would like to leave the organization.
SF: No. No I don't think the impact is that serious at this point. And also I think recognizing that a lot of people are on the lower tiers of leadership – the heads of subjects are women. But I do think there is a glass ceiling, yes at St. David's. Yes. Invisible up there

SF (Later in the interview): The transformation of gender which really important is not really a priority in the organization. It's a very conservative organization in terms of that. It's the maintenance of the ___values___ for generations___ but that is a positive selling point to the clients. One of the reasons why parents send their children to [School B] is because [School B] is a kind of organization and a school which they went to for generations ago. There's a particular culture which is conservative, religious based boys school. They play rugby. It's a rough-tough place where boys are made to be man. And in a sense it's completely inappropriate for the modern world. I've taught there for a very long time and I believe there are many valuable things but I don't believe it's transforming itself in the way it needs to transform itself. The culture and gender issues are part of that.

NN: Apart from individual strengths, what unique qualities do you think your school
has that are very positive?
SF: The key strengths of in my school are, firstly, the high quality teachers and people there I'm sure can agree with me, are quality teachers, a vast majority of them, world class teachers. I think the physical facilities of the school are very impressive and they provide a good learning environment and a good teaching environment. I think it's a very well-resourced environment which is very useful where many schools are not in that.

NN: Something that you think could be changed?
SF: You mean some major weaknesses? Yes, I think there are a number of them. I think that the school leadership and management structures are very inadequate in that there's an attempt to get too few people to do too much, as a result the quality of the work suffers. Hence, I'm talking about leadership groupthink. Certainly, leadership is often too much bound up in administrative routine issues and are not able to take a strategic view. That's a key problem. I think teacher workloads are too although we are moving to address that.

NN: and?
SF: And I think we have a problem with learners' work ethic. But I think that's common to schools everywhere. But I think it's part of this growing social trend that learners want more and more done for them which is ironic in the outcomes-based education environment where they are supposed to be proactive and take charge of their own learning. Certainly this upper middle class bracket we are

dealing with at St David's is becoming less and less in taking that initiative. We have no strategy yet of dealing with that at the moment.

NN: So what do you think should be done? Do you think it's about not having to struggle for anything?
SF: Yes, it's about that. But I think it's also because we live in quite a threatening violent society, those parents who are affluent enough to do so, are protecting their children more and more and as a result children are not exposed to the things that they used to be exposed to a generation ago. As a result, children don't take decisions. Things are done for then within the high walls of the electric fences. I think this is a much broader issues and in terms of society, it would be interesting what the impact of this new generation is.

NN: Coming to working in teams. How is it like at your school?
SF: I think there is a lot of variety. Some teams work very well, some teams work very badly. Teams that work well are the teams that are focused on one common task, and a really enthusiastic and very involved team leader. So, for example, the Mathematics Department is a very effective team. The English Department I think is a very poor team.

NN: I thought the English Department is the most effective team since that's where you belong?
SF: Very quality people and I'm the leader of that team but my responsibilities are so heavy elsewhere in terms of senior management that I don't get time in growing that team. Of course, there are also a number of key players in that team who are also part of the senior management. So people are being pulled into too many different directions. So, that's a weak team.

NN: So it's a weak team with a potential?
SF: It has a huge potential provided its managed properly.

NN: And issues of collaboration among teachers, teachers and parents, leadership?
SF: There's quite a lot of collaboration between teachers which is one of the strength of the staff. We are working to grow collaboration with parents; it's one of the sorts of goals, one of the medium term goals. There have been a number of things to do that, Our pastoral care system has worked quite harder to involve parents.

NN: What problems do you foresee as problems in collaborating with parents?
SF: As an independent school, one of the parents is that parents see themselves as clients and a school as a service provider, which it is but they tend to see it in a much more commercial model, they are buying a service and therefore they don't want to have necessarily that kind of supportive involvement we would like them to have. Very often their involvement in a level of complaint, "I'm spending money then why things are not happening the way I want them to happen. And so there's that constant negotiation that as a professional educator this_____ and they re not always ready to listen.

NN: Would you then say that they are generally not helping?
SF: Of course I'm generalizing. There are parents who are very supportive. But there's a certainly a trend and…

NN: Do they help the children in their homeworks.
SF: I don't think that they do. But the issues are more about parents blaming the school rather than allowing the children to take responsibility if things don't go right and of course there are family responsibilities as well because very often it's not the fault of the school. But parents won't hear that message.

NN: What do you think of Rolls statement in this questionnaire? I like this quote because it's relevant to my research. She says, "Change is constant, the only way to adapt is a learning organization, to continually learn and be change-responsive and to re-invent the reality and the future. To transform organizations will sell in the future will be those organizations that are able to gain commitment at all levels and continually expand their capacity to learn…" Think about your school. Do you see this statement as true of [School B] in terms of adapting and being a learning organization?
SF: I think to a limited degree, there is a commitment to developing staff. I think there is too much reliance on a handful of experts which I think it's ultimately disempowering for teachers. And I think also, ironically, one of the disadvantages of having a highly experienced teaching staff is the level of change reversness ----.

NN: Sorry, I missed that?
SF: Because many people have been teaching for a long time, many of them are reversed to change. Not all of them but many of them. So that's a problem. I think the commitment in terms of the senior leadership of the school to that idea of a learning organization is often a more of a lip service than reality. I think there's a lot of willingness to run workshops and to send people on courses and there's no problems with that. The school spends quite a lit of money on sending people to gain certain skills but it doesn't often translate in practice in people's daily work in terms of the kind of allocation of responsibilities and making space for people to experiment and to learn. That we are not very good at.

NN: What would you consider maybe as dilemmas the school is facing or the gaps based on what the school wants to achieve, which is critical, but has difficulties translating into practice?
SF: The key problem is a question of making financial resources available. Budgets are very squeezed and as a result teacher workloads are quite high. I think we're understaffed for the complexity of our organization and as a result, there isn't really the flexibility in terms of the way we manage our current financial resources to give a teacher a lighter teaching load in order to experiment with new teaching techniques or to kind of put together an experimental team and those kinds of things. So, people are sent on courses they come back really enthusiastic and full of new ideas but they don't have space in their day in order to do what they want to do and that are the sort of source of frustration and demoralization. And that problem comes from Board level, from the Board of Governors who themselves are from a business background and in terms of the financial management of the school, I don't think they often acknowledge the centrality of

the human resource, the teaching resource, the people. They want to scale down, in fact, the budget they spend on people and I think strategically it's a big mistake.

NN: So, how do you think this problem can be solved? Think of what is often called as system's blindness, do you they are not aware of these problems?
SF: I think very often than not, very often the priorities of school leadership are around things like administrative systems, financial management etcetera, and those things are get priority in terms decision-making about core business which is about teaching and learning. That's one of the things I've tried very hard to struggle against over the last few years and not with a great deal of success I'm afraid.

NN: And I have heard that you might be leaving the school. Please tell me more about it, where you are going, why you are going?
SF: I'm going, I'm actually leaving teaching, I'm going into the commercial world. I'm going into management consultancy. And the reasons, there is a variety of reasons. One of the reasons is that I haven't really been excited and stretched and challenged about my work. One of the problems in being in school management is that one moves away from the classroom and the classroom was always my first love. And since I have moved away from that, anyway I'm moving into the area of management. It seemed to me that there is no reason not to spread the net a bit wider if you like in terms of what I could be doing. The other issue, in fact there is a couple of other issues and other reasons as well. One of them is simply in terms of my own career and the way I have been managed in the school which has led to _____ conflicts on my side within the school. And I don't believe, I don't know how much of individual and the political detail you want. I don't believe, for example, that the kinds of skills that I bring to the school are sufficiently valued by the top leadership because I think, sometimes core business issues sometimes do come second. And also, I think, one of the factors, in fact two other factors, one of them is the financial factor that I'm finding it very difficult to survive with what I'm earning in education. The other factor is that there is a vast increase for curricular workload in education. As somebody who taught at Grade 12 and Grade 12 levels this year, I don't…I think a lot of teachers are going to come to a conclusion very quickly that the workload is unsustainable. And I think that's the curriculum implementation problem in this country generally yet there is a huge disincentive to teach.

NN: Please tell me more about this part where you say you feel you were not properly compensated.
SF: Well, the first thing, in terms of the job that I do at the moment, the job is far too administrative and not strategic enough in terms of the bulk of work that I do and I've made various attempts to change that situation, made recommendations about restructuring which has not been followed. And I have been recently been passed over for promotion and they had somebody who is actually junior to me in the hierarchy _____ my head when I think I'm probably the best person for that position. The kinds of key priorities that I have been talking about for some years have not materialized in terms spending priorities on those kinds of things. And I have become quite disillusioned about the extent to which what I think has been quite a high impact role that I've played at St. David's to the extent to which that

has been recognized by the head or the executive head. I think a lot of the times they don't see the impact that I have made and I don't think it's because it's invisible but it's because their eyes are focused on other things… and I think the wrong things, strategically.

NN: Ok. I see. Not necessarily based on your school leaders, what do you think others can learn from what you have just said?
SF: Well, it all the things I was talking about earlier where the first priorities are around administration and about finance and about marketing and not about teaching and learning as is the central element of what we do. And as a person who's sort of responsible as an overall coordinator of teaching and learning in the school, that's an immensely frustrating situation to be in.

NN: In terms of the skills and the knowledge that you have and you are taking with you, how much of that is stored in what they call the organizational memory?
SF: Quite a bit of it I think because I've had a very hands-on role with the teachers and helping teachers coming to grips with new practices and so on. So those things stay. What I think the school is going to do and will not be retained in the organizational memory is the understanding of the broad strategic policy environment which education is working because my understanding of those issues I don't think has been absorbed by the organization to the degree. To some extent it might be, for example, in that presentation which I made when you were there but that's very sketchy. The sort of details up-to-date involvement, the cutting edge involvement, the understanding of the politics of curriculum and those kind of things, I don't believe that there's anybody else in the organization who has that capacity.

NN: So are you going to be coming back to your school to help them as a consultant?
SF: (He laughs) I doubt it. I don't think they can afford me.

NN: Stuart, it's been a great pleasure talking to you. Thank you so much for your time and the information you so willingly shared. I was looking forward to this interview. If there are gaps in my analysis of the interview, please don't be surprised if I send you an e-mail to ask you one or two things.
SF: Absolutely.

APPENDIX 3 A

Interview Questions with School A Principal

NN: A lot has been said about your school and of how it strives for excellence, about how as a school you engage in this process of continuous learning, that's why we chose your school. Can you tell me more about yourself, your professional preparation, degree, how long as a principal, how many schools, teaching experience and training and management experience?

Principal: I'm Mr […](not his real name), I did my training in […] College, thereafter I worked for two years because teaching was not on my mind at all but my mother insisted I must take teaching and after some time I felt I should take teaching because I didn't know what was on the other side of the ??**.** When I joined teaching the money side of it was peanuts basically when I started teaching my class, I had my younger sister so that's what motivated me. I thought of every other learner as my younger sisters and brothers. I took me some time to enrol with a varsity because I thought I was not the type who could do it at university until my former principal appointed three of us and said we have to do the upgrading course that was 1982. But the two stumbled along the way then I went on the achieve my senior certificate and went on to obtain my senior Education Diploma. It was during that time when I used to study with others at UNISA, so my work rate was very limited. I would study and take their books and smuggle them, then consciously or unconsciously when we were studying one of the guys would say you too also are studying with UNISA. Then that's when I started to ask myself am I really different from the three other people. Is this person saying this because he thinks that I can't cope? So the next year I decided to enrol just to see the difference. After a struggle I managed to get my degree, so I realised that there wasn't much difference immediately after that degree I was appointed as principal of my present school and as a principal you have to set the rules and establish a culture. I forgot about the degree, when I enrolled with WITS for B-Ed but I de-register so this is my background.

NN: So what other professional development courses have you got to help you in correspondence with your improvement?
Principal: Not much besides the improvement programme organised the department and the one I attended, which was conducted by HTI, it was quite exiting about leadership but unfortunately that programme was clashing with matric exams, normally when examinations come I would come too agitated, I have that of anxiety if the exams were written in January but it's December and so I couldn't.

NN: What other innovative activities have you been involved in your school both as a principal and a teacher, last time we were here you told us about some few problems in Maths?
Principal: That could be a difficult question but because some of the things I see them being implemented by the department. I look back and say but I have been doing this thing for some time without any directing from anybody, the most important one is this MST for Maths Science Technology Project, which was

launched by the minister of Education. I realise that it was long, we started with MST, back from 1996 so this is what gave me pleasure.

NN: Tell us more about how you started it and so on?
Principal: For us to start this called MST, we realised that some subjects our students are doing are taking them nowhere subjects like Bible Studies but after that what else? So we agreed as a staff that we should call parents and let them know that every learner it will compulsory for them to do Maths so we replaced Bibs for Maths from 1996 and by 1999 the whole school was doing Maths, that is why when you look at our results we were squandering in the 90's by 1999 we dropped to 86%. Basically because of Maths, despite that the results went down a bit basically but it was a good achievement as it was a good mathematical percentage considering the quality of improvement. Learners at first think Maths is a difficult subject, basically because of what we say to them and also the parents who experienced Maths contributed. But when they realised they have no place to hide and some of the motivations, with regard to Maths telling them that it's like any subject if you can pass other subjects with Maths and other thing is the people who did Biblical Studies are not doing well so they mustn't really think that there's any subject just to pass it but since last year our results have improved generally and our Maths results were the best in terms of quality that's why we got so much distinctions in Mathematics.

NN: And coming to the schools history and innovations in Mathematics we'd like to know more, can you tell us how the school started?
Principal: It started in 1993 with 753 learners and 14 educators we were using a 'platoon' system and that is we used to resume our classes from 12 o'clock and knock off at 5 o'clock , so the school started basically because there was that call from COSAS saying every child should go back to school so Orange Farm it find itself having too many learners that so two Secondaries were established instantly ours and another one called Vulanindlela. We cater unfortunately from Grade 9 to Grade 12 when Vulanindlela took all the Grade 8'sand part of Grade 9, so the Junior group were in one school which is 1.5 Km from where the seniors are based there were four schools there, 2 Primaries and 2 Secondary School. Primary started in morning until 12 and Secondaries from 12 to 5 o'clock and down there, there were 4 Schools, to three Secondary School and one Primary so we started at 12 with Primary and the 2 Secondary would start at normal time so the only thing is we differed in time, when the Primary knock off at 12 them we would start at 1 o'clock with Secondaries because the Principal didn't end the petition period shorter than one o'clock. So we went the whole year without textbooks and furniture and the only textbook we had was in November, learners would come the paint tins because when they brought along chairs they would be stolen and they used to write on their thighs and was a good experience. We registered 210 grade 12 and I'm glad to say that 15.5% of that number passed but having said that is was best percentage from a district, because our contenders registered 9% but our two exemption came there and there from the very same school that did not have furniture but what is my importance is during the winter holidays my staff told me that for us to get a proper school we need to consolidate these learners how about utilising the extra classes of the whole school. We bought the juniors to the senior were so we stayed 3 weeks in the school starting

to reshape the school and otherwise that we would be working throughout the holidays would become the tradition of the school.

NN: Is it true that some of those learners used to forge the results that year?
Principal: Yes it's true, some of the students forged because when we were giving learners there were no documents. It was simply what learner's had written down in a piece of paper, once a learner says I'm in Grade 12 the performance said no you don't belong there but there was nothing to do because we could not prove.
NN: Who were involved in the starting of the school and what significant events happened then. Already you've mentioned that some learners with forged results; can you tell us more?
Principal: When we started we were three, our present Deputy Principal, Mam Sebe and myself. The significant event for me was we used assemble a big rock. There were no formal classes and then we were told that the only place available was at Driefontein, the stable of horses so we were transporting our learners using Putco buses but we went there for only one week. I realised that the place was not conducive for learning the place was meant for horses not human beings in term of ventilation and sanitation. There was only on tap belonging to a landlord when he was angry he locked the gates and see to finish. So I decided to withdraw my learners and I looked for accommodation from the two schools. All other teachers joined us already when we were already accommodated in the two schools that I've mentioned.

NN: What critical problems that you can tell us of when you started and how were they handled and who was at the forefront?
Principal: There were many problems which some of them were caused by the fact that the Mr Mandela was recently released from prison so everything was chaotic considerate that there was that Mandela spirit. We had learners from Sebokeng who were travelling by train without any payment because of the chaos and we also had learners from Soweto travelling for free to school so it was a matter of two bulls meeting in one place which was the school. The most important thing was they did not come to school to learn but they came to Orange Farm because each wanted to promote their culture of where they come from and that was something we had to fight with our lives. At one stage I closed down the school, I said if anyone wants to come to school they must come with their parents on a Sunday and failing which they withdrawn themselves and those willing to come with parents did so. In a way I was testing the support of the parents and I'm happy they supported me. We stopped out that hooliganism from that day. It mustn't appear, as we're a school of angels we started roughly.

NN: In other words you're saying you get some of the support from the parents?
Principal: Yes they supported.

NN: Coming to the school's achievement what has changed from the time you started to now?
Principal: Not much has changed because we started manufacturing ourselves and we're still manufacturing ourselves. We started showing them our cleaning heels and we have become pace setters. I must say we have something to boast

about, we are the benchmark of Gauteng Province and also think we are benchmark nationally considering the seminars me and my staff have attended and most of those documents were sent nationally so it is not suprising Ignicous Jacobs was here, and told the staff that some of the strategies he implemented with the EAZ schools he took them from the school.

NN: What is the schools achievement from the last few years till now, you've mentioned that there hasn't been much change in terms of you being pacesetters and you're looking at some sort of school achievement.
Principal: The school achievement is that we went up in terms of quality results as compared to the quantity because in the past we were selective in terms of doing our things. To say you can do Maths and you do Social Sciences but today we're saying whether a child has taken said Science stream or Commercial stream but at the end of the day the child must be employable and for them to be employable and Maths is the key.

NN: Who would credit for all those achievements?
Principal: I would give credit to my staff for understanding that we can all dream. I also had a dream and they supported my dream even it they knew that this man is taking us to hell but they supported me.

NN: We interviewed some learners this morning and they're giving credit to the Principal. What would you say?
Principal: I don't think learners would give credit to me now but when they're out of the school they would say he helps us. As it is for now they feel I'm oppressing them. You know as a learner you want to be free at times and so something that you're not authorised to do while at school or at home without parents. So they say the school is strict but what I gathered last year when I was in the matric dance, I simply popped out and notice I realised that they did appreciate what I did for them though minor it might be but they did appreciate it.

NN: What would you say have been the triumph as a Principal like where the student come back and thank you could be one of the triumphs?
Principal: Our tradition does not allow is to praise ourselves. I'll use the words of Benjamin when he says "a person becomes what he is because of what people say about him, personally when I look outside the streets and see our ex-learners, who are employed, being somebodies that gives one a great satisfaction. The most important triumph of course it that as a school we are in a position to draw out learners from so called Model C schools an example is my first born son he Matriculated in this school. I allowed him to come to this school just to show people that I was not conducting an experiment with their children. What I do with their children I also do with my child. And our Deputy Principal also brought his child from and ex-Model C school ever since we've been having a lot of them here in such a way that in one of the Model C school meeting where the numbers are dwindling. They would say the number is dwindling because schools like Aha-Thuto. If our educators are not going to pull up their socks the learners would be moving to Aha-Thuto so that shows we've doing something.

NN: We learnt an expression from the learners that there's nothing ordinary about ordinary people and ask them where they found this profound statement and they said they get it from you?
Principal: They were lying.

NN: What about the one of the break having two sides of it but at the end of the day its break.
Principal: We say so many things when we motivate them that they do not have to compare themselves to other people. Any other person is unique as a person you look at your background first, and say am I doing what is going to correspond with my background and please my parents or am I doing what's going to please my peers at the end of the day it's one slice of bread.

NN: What would you say makes your school distinctive or different from other school and what do you think you have as a school, that you consider hard that other schools cannot copy or what gives you this competitive edge?
Principal: In one sentence I would say I think we're doing uncommon things commonly well by that I mean for instance starting school at 7 o'clock is very uncommon. But we've done it so well that its been copied by others too in such way that there's no need to wait at the gate at 8 o'clock and say learners must still come in, by then everyone is in the school premises so the question of late coming has been drastically reduced by doing this uncommon thing well.

NN: We've had your triumph now can you tell us about the crisis you've come across?
Principal: If you're management there are always in a crisis, if you try your blow may not succeed, when you're dealing with people you must know you're dealing with a heard of cats. You can't drive them but you can lead them basically what I've seen as a crisis not only with Aha-Thato but other schools too, is to say us as managers we tent to think people will do the right thing and forget that we've planned this. There're planning this so it's not always they're going to do the right things they are still going to sabotage you, that is why I find it very important that as a Principal I have to be in the classroom. I must know exactly what is going on in the classroom.

NN: What subjects do you teach?
Principal: Geography and I can produce 100% and still be able to manage my office. I don't see why other teachers cannot do that but if I can stay in the office and expect things to go well in the classroom; I'd be surprised at the end of the year when I get so many stories. Children are indiscipline, uncooperative in class and so on but I can only diagnose those few floors when I go to the class.

NN: How have you been dealing with people who've been trying to sabotage you or try to resist some kind of initiative that you try?
Principal: The fact of the matter is the school is performing well but that's not a 100% and doesn't mean that my staff and my learners are sharing the same dream , but about 80% of them have affiliated into this vision that the Principal had and the 20% will always pull into other way round and that's a good school because the 80% is always on position to streamroll the 20%, so one of the

subjects that are missing are the Psychology members even before I acknowledge a teacher I'll always ask commission members and say teacher so and so has been coming late frequently and you people as a virtue of Psychology members you are as you understand the e policies of the government these are the policies that need to help me so that they get into the teachers. So what do you do when a teacher does this you need to help me, so they would call the teacher and say whatever they want to say and that way I'm involving everybody so that at the end when the teachers becomes too difficult to handle at the end they may say we tried but we failed.

NN: How do you feel about the way your commission handles matters?
Principals: I think the strategy I'm using is working but I'm not saying some of my staff don't get late but it's very limited though they were teachers coming late at about 10 o'clock but it's because they were using train but under normal circumstances no. By 8 o'clock everybody is in the premises even the latest. One of the policies we're using its not written anywhere but applies to all teachers as well as pupils, is when one is sick they should report. It's a hidden policy but it works because the question we're going to ask is why didn't you report. This is based on a permit that every event cost schedule before you cannot be upruptly sick. Only those seriously sick will absent themselves but others because they are afraid to account will those little headaches will carry them to school.

NN: Coming to you as a professional, what changes have impacted you as an individual and as a member of society?
Principal: So many changes have happen. The most important one happened is when they banned the stick completely and this have left teachers nothing to clean on in terms of disciplining learners in such a way that as of till now I haven't find a way of disciplining learners besides that it it's a major offence. I normally involve the parent and I realise that it works wonders, the child is totally a different creative outside and the other corrective majors, which have been preached to me, are not working and the one of manual work does not work.
NN: We learnt from learners that they seem to like you giving them corporal punishment?
Principal: In fact they are asked me for it the Grade 12. We normally pose the question here are the results of your pre-successors. Now how you improve them or sustain them and they would come up with all this stories but now of late they've been saying how come you treat us differently from our previous successors because you're no longer using the stick, please us the stick.

NN: You've mentioned the failure of corporal punishment and corrective measures that don't seem to work. What else can you add to that?
Principal: It's the way democracy serves which has been interpreted differently by different people, adults and teachers haven't realise the democracy has responsibility in it, to say you have a right of doing this. It's right but you have a right within certain perimeters you cannot drive your car on the right side of the road because it's not allowed and you're going to infringe the country's rules as it says you should us the left side. So this is what people haven't realised. The other thing that hasn't gone well is the change of the old government to this government is where defiance was used but having achieved what was wanted.

People should have been told that now they must engage in a new struggle, the struggle of uplifting our own government but that hasn't happen, that is why you find a teacher taking his or her child to Model C schools then coming to his or her work place and buy all the newspapers and sit in the staff room and read all the papers. It is a question of not knowing what one is doing, not aware that where one is working there should be productivity and if there's no productivity then that is not work. Somebody said the mistake we make as teachers are easily recognisable in the streets other than doctor's mistakes that is why at the end of the day we have to a school that's having culture. A school has to look back and say it produced so many as 92 exemption and where are they? If those exemptions are still roaming around the streets that means our quality is not up to standard.

NN: Coming to you. What do you think you have as a Principal that other Principals don't have?
Principal: There isn't much difference it's only that I'm a hard worker and I believe in leadership in a sense that I believe to be a leader not be a manager. If you're a manager you give people room to make mistakes and correct them which I think is time wasting. I believe in moving in front and say this is what should be done and they do it. It's not a shame that you tell them because sometimes I even clean toilets with them showing them how toilets should be cleaned because I want even the following day for them to know how if should be done.
NN: In other words you are trying to model a particular kind of behaviour.
Principal: I'm not always around and I'm really not expecting people to get innovative from nowhere, there should be guidelines.

NN: What do you think you could do to further improve yourself?
Principal: I need a raise, if I get a very good Deputy Principal and be able to sustain what I have created up to now I can be in a portion to relax a bit.

NN: What are doing to get that kind of leadership or kind of capability?
Principal: There are programmes that we're running for SNT and staff but I don't think ran well, as a leader, I'm a leader and there are some other books I read, which I think are working for us and I do negotiate to them and share with them but we felt suddenly boastful. I think I'm not an easily pleased person so I think it would take a very strong person to take over where I'll leave.

NN: How do you motivate your teachers?
Principal: What I'm doing is I'm leading by example. I've already said we do have developmental courses for teachers, but in most cases there are courses which capacitate teachers on certain policies, as to motivate teachers they should copy from their leader for instance this 7 o'clock thing is causing problems amongst us as teachers as we are fighting for slots. I started it a chance of punishment to teachers and learners telling them to come at 7 o'clock for a week and when other week pass, I said they should go back to the normal time and they said to me no we seem to assimilate better in the morning shall we go on and I know that punishing them it's not only them, I'm punishing myself so I agreed. I was joined by few teachers but today I'm talking about full respect. Today almost all Grade 12 teachers and it has become a normal thing.

NN: Do you think you're going to sustain this OBE?
Principal: I must tell you OBE is still a problem to me and I wonder how I'm going to sustain it. Time will tell.

NN: What do you want to be as a person or as a professional?
Principal: I want to leave the school. I've done what I think was supposed to be done. I think I must be given a bigger kingdom to monitor where I'll spread my gospel in a broader way because it becomes difficult if I were to tell you the honest fac've been in Cape Town doing motivational speeches but around our district I've never been called to motivate but other district I have. That shows me that I can be in a position to infiltrate other schools. If I can be given another post basically if I can be given another post first I would look at the curriculum of the schools and change it. Is it to look at the word past an achievement try got some distinction because schools have lowered their standards in a sense that they want 100%? If you do away with Biology and off with Psychology knowing exactly that if a child can get double A in Psychology but still get zero credit or percentage to me it doesn't sound very well.

NN: What are you going to do in trying to achieve this dream of leading a bigger kingdom?
Principal: I'm going to apply when the post comes hopefully they're not going to use staff retention and a ward to work on with few schools I can develop.

NN: Have you started networking?
Principal: Not yet because basically I'm waiting for a post and when the post comes I'll apply hopefully I would like to show other people what could be done that hasn't been done in their schools.

APPENDIX 3B

Interview with the Executive Principal - School B

NN: Can you tell me about your leadership role, the interesting and challenging things that are happening in your school. I must say this is going to be strictly confidential except that at some point we might have to use some of the extracts where necessary. I'd like to start with your personal background, about your personal history, just feel free to tell me about yourself, and your professional preparation.

EP: I started schooling at Rosebank Primary which was then at Oxford Road and then went to the Ridge which was an all boys school, very small but happy school and then I went off to boarding school in [a University in the Eastern Cape] and I was there for five years as a boarder, I then went for national military service . I then decided to do a BA at Wits ranging from English and History and I always wanted to teach, it was quite clear where that BA was headed. I followed that up with a HDE at the same university in 1979 and in 1980 I began my teaching career and I started at King Secondary School and I taught there for three and a half years. I then moved to St Johns College which was partly because of the History department, but the move was pretty immature. I loved my time there and in 1994 I was ultimately appointed deputy, the very junior deputy principal because the other three people are senior management team and between them there's more than 100 years of service for the school. So I was pretty much a baby. I did formal management training in the early 90's. I did a certificate course through Damelin on Educational Management and it was a first course of a such that they offered.

NN : Please tell me more about the management course you took.

EP: It was at Damelin in Rosebank, a management school and we looked at things like the financial aspects of running the school, we looked at marketing, accounting, the law and education and it was certainly an interesting course. I also did a Further Diploma for a year in computers and education because I had realised that was an aspect of my own management and for my own personal favour so I did the EVD and that was in 1993/4 and in 2000, I did a business course through the Gordon Institute of Business Science. It was a new school which had just opened down the road here in Illovo and that as very interesting and it was different from anything I've done before. It had no particular educational focus but it just opened up my mind and all sorts of things, we looked at strategic planning, marketing and human resources, it's like a water dining BA and that was really exciting.

NN : Interesting. I hear you've also done some courses at Wits just recently?

EP: That was in 2000 I went to the Centre for Professional Development with Malcom Williams courses which was run by Caroline Faulkner. And there was the Centre for Education Leadership which was interesting and we looked at curriculum and management styles and leadership styles, interesting too.

NN: What innovative activities have you been involved lately in your school? I see you have done so much in developing yourself professionally.

EP: What we've been involved in and spent most of the time in the past seven years is improving the infrastructure of the school. We've embarked on an ambitious development plan, it's called Development Plan 2000, we started that in 1996 and that was to transform the infrastructure of the school as it was lagging behind. There was tremendous uncertainty mainly from the part of little income, mainly from white people about the future of state education so it was like boon time for independent schools, the numbers at St David's High were low and they began growing steadily and I decided we have to improve in the part of the school, so the past seven years ha s been a continuous process of development in building so we built a separate graduation board, we built a high school pavilion with change rooms and we built a new school hall which became the centre of the school, we completely redeveloped that quadrangle. At one stage it was all bulldozed it was [...] and no tree was standing and that was 5/6 years ago and now you can see the quadrangle has been formalised into parts and a movie theatre. One of my colleagues once told me that I had built very early, most heads start to build when they run out of educational ideas but if the school was to compete in this market place, it needed to have a greatly improved infrastructure and also with it went the building of the two computer centres and the introduction of computer studies as a matric subject. Primarily it's been the thrust getting the infrastructure, this year we've just built a new nod block so that little kids coming here next year have got a port. And we've redeveloped the entrance at the gate, the presentation of the school that art that is in Rivonia road which was so ruby and it's now been advanced.

NN: I'd like to know how long you've been the principal at the school.

EP: Now it's becoming the end of my eighth year but my role had changed at the beginning of the year I was appointed executive principal and I still have to find out exactly what that means because I really had to write on my job description and I've also been teaching more than I thought as a head. I probably haven't yet devoted enough time to the strategic issues. So I've been here for seven years as a head and now executive principal which is another innovation to try and change the structure and some of the boring issues.

NN: Coming to the school achievements, one that keeps coming up and I also read about in magazine the achievements of the school like the one in Old Mutual Maths apart from the sports.

EP: I've tried quite hard because boys schools have a poor record and I think that the nature of the school wasn't all that competitive, academically I've tried quite hard to make a far great emphasis on teaching and learning and the achievements perhaps we look at achievement and see that as a dirty word but perhaps that's achievement at all level, try to add value to those kids that are struggling, it's not just about the academic high fellows. There are boys who would win the Maths Olympiads, others are like really talented sportsman and you don't train them, you could sharpen them but those kids come once in twenty

years if you're lucky. It's been remarkable, we've had two winners in the Maths Olympiads in the last five years and for two years we won the Sasol for best high school in mathematics but those are just our top kids. I've been saying we still got enormous amount of work to do to get learners to take responsibility for their own work but you'll find that very few take responsibility or that desire to improve themselves for their own sake, we come from a system where discipline has been top down and where kids don't really take responsibility for their own work, when you walk out of the class you'll tell them to study on their own, there is very little they do to develop their own selves.

NN: Are you saying that most of the school achievements lie in the Maths Olympiads?

EP: We've quite had some participation in the English Olympiads and various other public competitions besides this maths experience and public speeches competition that we enter, that kinds of push the cultures as well.

NN: I also hear you've formed partnerships with other schools in Alexandra? Please tell me more about that.

EP: The two issues, the two things our committee was to start the holy cross in Alexandra which was opposed by the government during the apartheid era to Soweto. Our committee and other in catholic education to try and re-opened that school in Alexandra, one of the problem have been trying to get the GDE to open the property to agree to that and also to decide as to what sort of school the community wants because there's no catholic school in Alexandra. I think it's quite important because catholic schools have a reputation excellence and for good work effort, we're also trying to keep that going and we're also working with Alexandra High School, that has been a personal relationship with Hazel Philips who's been the head for the past fifteen years. It's trying to get matric students from Alexandra particularly in the areas of maths, science and biology, they come here for workshops and they get tutored by our teachers and by some of our pupils, there'll be involved in the practical side of the laboratory just to try give them some hands on experience of practical work which is lacking at their own school. Then we're involved in small programmes which is an interesting programmes with grade 5's from Tembisa. Our grade 9,10 and 11 help these kids from grade 5 and 6 and all these are non catholic schools.

NN: What are educational changes that have impacted on your school, for instance the changes in curriculum?

EP: I think there's also been change in the South African schools act, the whole constitution of the country's changed. The evolution of corporal punishment from boys school was a massive issue because boys school used corporal punishment extensively and now suddenly you have to try and find ways to trying to discipline learners and some teachers never thought about their discipline in their classrooms because it was always a quick phase in the form of a K. So boys school have really struggled in the revolution of corporal punishment but there's also human rights culture out there which is very difficult to deal with, of which

now children demand their rights and there's a parental pressure too, they are no longer partners in education. You'll think of a school like this where parents pay high fees, they no longer see themselves as partners but see themselves as consumers and they start demanding, they demand things and places a huge stress, it's a removal of responsibility from parents towards the school in terms of dealing with discipline, teaching them and the school comes under a lot of pressure but the curriculum like the introduction of OBE curriculum 2005 has placed a lot of demand from the staff to extra time. I think a lot of staff has tried to teach and develop students. It certainly wasn't an emphasis on things like role planning but an emphasis on trying to prepare children to be thinking flexible and well adjusted in the world of work place but we've preparing towards the exams and there's no getting away from that and with grade 11 and 12 it would be lunacy not to prepare your children for their matric exams because at the top end of the school the teaching is very much directed by the examination board but staff instate and re-deepens the school because OBE requires ernomous time, it requires reflection on your teachers practice, it requires a great deal of administrative time and I think staff are just overwhelmed by the ernonimity of it all.

NN: What has been your role, for instance in helping the teachers cope with the discipline issues especially after corporal punishment was abolished and supporting them at the time OBE was introduced?

EP: On the disciplinary issues I can say our pupils have been behaved quite well but we've tried hard to wrestle trying to find suitable systems to implement which puts pupils, punish them, avert. We spend a lot of time talking through issues, a lot of time holding disciplinary hearings talking and after without good results. So the discipline we're still wrestling with it.

NN: But you're no longer using corporal punishment?

EP: No, it stopped a long time ago. In the other issue we've attended lots of workshops and we've encouraged staff to go on go on workshops which were at the old JCE centre at Wits College of Education, we've sent people to specialists courses in order to try and develop more on leadership.

NN: In other words you're saying leadership has been spread in the school to some of the students?

EP: I think a lot of subject heads are not taking responsibility to develop their own skills. They are waiting to be developed from above and I think the staff must take responsibility for their own staff development. Obviously the school will support teachers in terms of resources and financially it puts them through various university courses. We spend a lot of money in training, not just at the top level. Our support staff are all doing an Adult Basic Education Training course at various levels we try to equip them as well and it's part of developing their skills. We submit a work skills plan and we pay our revenue to go into developed schools. One percent of our annual budget salary goes to revenue. And we have an organisation of about fifty employees who have to submit their development skills

plan and an update from the SETA. Its part of the nation building to develop skills and it's amazing in schools like ours how the services are doing it right.

NN: Great. And then, what's there in your school that is distinctive from other schools?

EP: I think what makes us different from other schools is the fact that we have a very strong religious background. We're a catholic boys' school starting with the Marists brothers and the founder of the Marists brothers. He was 100 years ahead of his time, he's just a wonderful man with great fundamental ideas on how to treat children and children of all abilities and backgrounds. The other thing that makes us different as a high school is the size of our school, size is important. It gives us that competitive edge. It's a double edge sword because we're small enough to be competitive but we're also small enough for each individual to be known by the whole staff, not too many boys don't fall on that crack. There are 480 boys in the high school and 600 with primary including grade 0 to grade 7

NN: Generally how have the teachers been responding to some of these challenges that you've mentioned?

EP: I think teachers are tired, a lot of that has to do with our internal plan. I think we need to structure our year better. I think we need to have more staff involved in calendar and what we do, when. I think that has been some sort of top down process and that seems to happen at the same time and we're busy as a school in terms of the ***bearean? programme and things like academic deadlines and house plays, drama production and public speaking competitions, they all seem to be happening at the same time and staff are tired, staff are also tired of getting the administrative portfolio on matric, that's a huge amount of work and they're battling with it.

NN: That's interesting because it's like you're blaming the administration. Do you think you can change some of these things?

EP: I think we can, the staff as a whole, the academic, cultural and sports staff to sit together and plan the year together so that we look at things and how they impact on other things. It concerns me that other schools they're busy adding things on not taking anything away and that sorts of find that resource is time and people are more busy and I've included the kids here as well, the kids are entirely busy.

NN: You keep talking of planning. What about the fact that some of the things might come from outside like those externally mandated?

EP: We've been quite lucky in that. We're not at the mercy of the GDE, I think to a GDE school there're moments where GDE practising management by anguish, they go to ex model C schools because they're allowed to go to model C schools whereas SADTU tells them not to and inspectors in those schools also some schools in the townships. They go into schools that are affected and well running and causing trouble creating headaches for those administrators in those schools.

There really need to be a calling up of under perfomers. I think the minister of education is trying to focus in the under achieving schools. I think there's a lot of work that needs to be done in terms of cultural and teaching discipline.

NN: Then coming the lessons learnt and all this experience, one of them you're saying is sitting down together - the academic, cultural and sports staff. What else do you think?

EP: It's probably what the management talks about and I think that one needs to find a balance between senior management, that would be one way forward and telling staff what the way forward is and involving staff in decision making. I think somehow we need to create time for our staff to be able to air their opinions and views, get the management to talk about their grievances. Things like [...] development interviews; we wait until the end of the year to do the [...] interview which is a threatening exercise because at the end of the year it will never be connected to things like salary.

NN: You're saying that part of the solution is to also use some of these ideas in management, how easy is it?

EP: I think schools perhaps are prepared to do business, schools are not business in one sense, they don't produce products. They are like family and in family you talk about things, you discuss things, you try and resolve issues. I think the role of a head is far more of a mayor than that of being of a CEO. I think a head's role should be compared to the one of a chief executive, his role should be that of a mayor trying to keep all sorts of parties happy. I think we can learn lessons from business in terms of management and leadership, some of those morals but I think what we must take in comparison between a school and a business too far.

NN: I'm interested in what you're saying. You also said it's creating time for staff to speak but earlier as you mentioned that there's no time and there's tension between the two.

EP: There's definitely tension between the two and I think we've got to look at everything that we offer. We need to offer a little bit less in some areas, have fewer sports fixtures, fewer Saturday events and create opportunities. We move towards two days before start of the term staff development so we have two days now to try and talk about things, step in order to try and talk about these issues, in order to develop staff.

NN: Coming to the innovation of the school, which is also one of my interests in the study of schools that are doing well like in terms of their innovative aspects. Can you describe the innovative aspects that have recently taken place in your school? I see your strategy for improving infrastructure as part of the marketing strategy. I'll make an example, I interviewed Julie some time ago and she told me about an IT programme which is the first of its kind in Africa.

EP: It's a library administration thing; it's really used extensively throughout the world. There are like 10 thousand institutes worldwide so I don't know why they're penetrating the African board. And that really was an early initiative, she did the work on it, she looked at local library administration on software packages and she went out and found what she had believed was the best and that was from her own personal initiative. And one of the things that we've really tried very hard is that we appointed a teacher in charge of training. Debbie Cameroon did the mentoring course at Wits and we subsequently sent three teachers on that mentoring course and we've tried hard to do something about the teacher shortages so we've approached people who we think might be good teachers and we've tried to develop them as teachers and they've done the Wits school based HDE, so what that means is that they have a strong theoretical input from the university but they're based in our school.

NN : Are they already at your school?

EP: No, we got out and find them but more importantly is that we've, created time, we've created post promotion post step where an [HoD] e is been put in charge of teacher training and we've lessened her time table, we've given her an office where she can conduct her interviews and play the role of mentor. On a spin over from that of [Head of English Department also playing the role of mentor to other teachers] has also run workshops on lesson deconstruction which is to try and get staff to reflect on their teaching practice. In my generation of teachers, we don't do psychology and I did a little bit of a degree in HDE but I never really thought why am I teaching, why am I going to teach. I just teach with enthusiasm and flair and the kids love it but I've never really thought why I am doing this.

NN: I'm also interested in your role. You said that with [librarian] it was her own initiative?

EP: She got support, so we said we'll purchase the software so we put our neck out, we spent lots of money for that software but she in turn became an agent on that software and is now bringing in for each contract she signed with the school when getting that money back for the software that we bought. It was originally R36 000.

NN: Did it take a lot of convincing?

EP: Yes, she's a very persistent person.

NN: How is it linked to teaching and learning?

EP: That I think is very important, we're trying to get our staff to talk to the teaching staff, not talk about rugby, weather, they must be ready to talk teaching to discuss as part of the professional development to have this course on teaching and part of that. I've talked to the staff the privilege of observation by getting into each others classrooms as peers not as management coming in. I try and remove that top down where you're observed but to come in and talk teaching and watching people teach. You learn so much as an observer and the person being

observed, also you sit and write an observation which is really deconstruction of what happened that lesson. You write down what you see but you don't comment on it and you then go through the lesson of the teacher and saying this is what happened, this boy got up and left the classroom without permission and this is how you responded and this is how you felt and as to why the boy did this.

NN: Tell me about this talk teaching?

EP: I think that effective schools that teachers discuss teaching, they discuss innovation, they invite their colleagues to come and observe their lessons of which they think might be a special different way to innovate and try to get staff to talk about teaching which is very important.

NN: Coming to Derby's work you've also related about this talk teaching.

EP: She's trying to extend what she does to those students at Wits. She's been through me trying to drive, trying to extend that lesson deconstruction process which she does through with the students, we're trying get the staff to deconstruct each others lessons.

NN: And how successful have you been in achieving all these?

EP: You've got to earn high level of trust and I think that with people it all goes down to that their very busy. You hear the staff saying that they haven't been to another's lesson because we never get the time but I think people should create time.

NN: With the mentoring, how do you see yourself and your school continuing?

EP: I think we would like to be seen as a school where students can come and be well trained in teaching, those are huge shortages of teaching, we face a massive shortage of teachers in these. We're trying to put resource's money, time to develop the teachers.

NN: Do you have any policies that are supporting mentoring in your school?

PE: We've got guidelines on how to treat the learners, it's like learnership and also it's like apprentice, learning from the master, the teacher.

NN: And all the teachers are aware about this?

EP: I don't think they're quite aware enough as they should be, we probably need to tell the staff more about what their role is in this action because as soon as she leaves the classroom staff say why did she get a light timetable. We must try and explain to the staff that mentory requires a certain amount of time.

NN: Apart from time and people not being aware, what are other barriers that you forsee?

EP: I think it needs to be re-enforced through management, management's got to set things on, management's got to look each other teach and I think if this seems to be a non threatening thing, developing that peer re-praise I think that goes along the way to removing the stain out of it.

NN : I you going to start?

EP: Yes, [the present principal] and I have watched each other teach, perhaps we need to report back to staff on each other, say this is where it's good and this is all that I observed.

NN: Because they're not aware that you've already started, how is the communication system in the school, do you rely on e-mail, boards?

EP: I think that we'll probably get nailed about our communication. We have regular staff meetings every Monday, those are not discursive discussions meetings, those are administrative meetings where they talk about particular students discussing what's going to be done in the forthcoming week, that's on a Monday. We have a meeting in the staff room in the morning, five minutes in the most with both primary and high school and we say this is what's happening today, we've got a visitor just so to let everyone know what's going on. I think we can improve in communication, we can use other modes of communication more effectively, I think we can use sport more effectively but I also think there's also some laziness, lots of calendar we've got are termly calendars where you've got everything there, the times, the venues etc. A little booklet that goes to every parent and student in the school and often the students they don't take the booklet on time to read what's going on which makes us move to electronics news letter so parents want to receive news by e-mail and we do so. I think we're trying but I think everybody can all improve on that level.

NN : And how is your staff generally in terms of communication, are they able to gel?

EP: They are clicks, I think we all get on quite well, we share a staff room which might add a lot of spirit, we socialise on occasions at the end of term break or during the term we go out on lunch and a large number of people go out there both primary and high school, you always get groups in the staff room, the Afrikaans department in every staff room where teachers who haven't taught Afrikaans sit together, the men seem to sit together, the smokers sit together but in our staff room there aren't chairs some staff rooms you find that you sit on the same chair for 35 days, we don't have that the parking place is always there.

NN: It's this thing about communication because it's usually problematic in schools especially big schools like yours, coming to you I was impressed about what you said earlier on about how you've tried to develop yourself professionally and I see that there're elements of you reflecting on some of things that you'd like to improve as well. Generally how have the educators been in terms of trying to further their skills over the years, you've said that you paid for them?

EP: I think it's pretty good but it's ***tense? for the same people to develop themselves. Some people 've done their masters, some of the old buffalo bulls were energy consumers sitting there in the staff room and they don't innovate, they don't want to entertain new ideas. They've done courses over the years but it's part of now, it's part of developing praises at the end of the year as to what courses you've been involved in and what papers have you written, what workshops have you attended.

NN: Do you write papers as well?

EP: Yes they sure do, for example the head of management development he's quite an active contributor to journals and things like that.

NN: And you're also doing, you quoted something from the journal, do you read more about it?

EP: I would to read more, certainly things like independent education which is an quarterly magazine and occasionally I get that orderly review from Wits, that's part of our educational policy and I try really to read about education, I buy books.

NN: Apart from Steward, do these people who are furthering themselves in terms of their career, do you think they bring it in the classroom?

EP: I think it's brought back in the classroom but I don't think enough is brought back to the staffroom. I don't think people benefit enough from people who go on conferences and courses, there's never time and space built in a report back to staff what I learned.

NN: Again it all goes back to time, are you the one expected to make the decision?

EP: I think I've got to encourage the head of the primary and the head of the high school to say that we need to look at the calendar, we need to look at what we're doing and I think really they don't need to be driven by me.

NN: To what extent do you think your work has had an impact on your personal life, I see that you're a very busy person, what are you doing about it?

EP: Not enough, sometimes I don't go home, the last two weeks has been like knocking off late at night, that's definitely had an impact on my personal life.

NN: So you say you don't know what to do about it?

EP: Short of resigning, going back to become a teacher or a deputy is a nice post in any school, you get to teach, you're part of management position and you've got responsibility but the bulk does not stop there but a deputy is a nice position.

NN: You've said a lot of interesting things about yourself but I'd like you to help me by summarising what you think you have that others don't, you've said about your school but can you fill me in more about yourself now?

EP: I probably don't have a great deal that others don't have but what I do have people say we need the right people to be in the management and they say that we have the passion. I think I get on well with the pupils but I think I have a particular talent in getting along with the boys, teaching the boys about leading the school. I miss that contact now at my new position because even if the contact is stressful it's engagement, when you're engaged with pupils it makes you feel that you're doing something worthwhile.

NN: I saw you the other day when you were calling them, you still have a bit of contact with them.

EP : Yes I teach them quite a lot but I don't intend to do ceremonial occasions which are important for the school, things like the assemblies those are important occasions of the school, the way things are done around here, the price giving, the benediction services, those are occasions that are important to the traditions of the school

NN: I'm still taking you back to your personal development, professional personal development?

EP: I think I need to develop my spirituality a bit. I'd like to spend more time reflecting and praying perhaps become more and more involved in church I think that creating space in my day about 15 to 20 minutes just thinking, reading, reflecting, praying looking for inspiration.

NN: What are some of the things that you've been trying to do a bit?

EP: I went to a workshop at this conference, we had a list of various spiritual books, the books were handed out. Books that reflect on spirituality, I've been looking at some of those.

NN: And the world is moving towards that context that is so confusing. Is there anything that you think you've left out which you think might be of interest to me as a researcher?

EP: I think we've got to go back to the sense of teaching in education, teaching is a modern job, people mustn't teach if they think their work begins from 7:30 in the morning till 2 o'clock, teaching is a hugely demanding but wonderfully satisfying profession , it really is. Those pupils that you touch, those pupils that you give back, some years later they come back and say how much difference you've made in their lives and there's nothing satisfying more than that. It's a noble profession and we need to see that more, teachers need to see that more, we need to see that more profession to the public. The status of teachers is too low in this country, teachers need to be celebrated, they do a great job under difficult circumstances. The same job there's tension where they're bringing in changes I don't know how to get around it because I think that there's a perception amongst the teaching call that all this decisions about class management and curriculum development are being taken often who absolutely don't know nothing about

classroom at all and we might be looking at world class practice and trends that have been tried elsewhere, I think there are some of the things that have been demanded too quickly from staff and I think it's having a devastating impact on staff. I've met teachers particular from the state s service, they've just had enough and they are bewildered by what's going on and they've been demanded to do what it took other countries years to do. We get the climate service, we wanted to know how well we were doing but I don't think we managed the process very well, we didn't prepare the staff, the parents and the boys sufficiently on what we were doing and why we were doing it and what we are trying to archive. The CIE came and ask the staff, the parents and the pupils and they asked them three questions, what are the three best things that go on in your school, what are the three worst things that go on in the school and what would you change if you were the principal. And they came in and did this and it was during exams times in the high school, we didn't prepare our pupils sufficiently enough or our staff and that was a problem, we struggled to get the returns back from the staff, the parents and the pupils so it wasn't based on a very good sample, what happened then after collecting the data, the CIE just came in there and they ran focus groups with staff, parents and pupils, now they told me to choose parents that were saints and sinners. Some parents were dissatisfied and unhappy with the school and we knew that. It was at that point that I think we didn't manage that process because the people who were dissatisfied spoke out far more loudly than the people who were happy and they dominated those focus groups and the same thing happened with the staff and the pupils in the focus groups and I think it led to a very skewed perception and I was hurt by the results, you obviously go through something like that because you go and receive things that you don't enjoy and I didn't think the report was attended staff but by very few parents, they were 36 parents that came in with the report back out of the 800 parent body and they challenged the whole methodology of the thing, they challenged the statistical and I'm sure that the CIE who are probably the best people to do this kind of issues, they've got quite a unit at the CIE that does school quality issues and I'm sure that Mark and his team have moved on a lot since then and I blame ourselves for not managing it all from right to the end.

NN: Was it too much pressure from the school?

EP: I think once again we introduced it at a very poor time.

NN: Thanks very much.

EP: Pleasure.

APPENDIX 4

Focus Group Interviews with learners - School A

Firstly can you tell use about your school, what do you like about your school?
Learner 1: Mostly is the performance and results achieved by our learners also there is good discipline amongst our learners and staff.
Learner 2: What's also appreciable is the fact that the kids around here they understand that they are from poor background so they put extra performance when they get to school. Most kids around here have a **zest** for educational success so basically that's what inspires them.
Learner 3: Our Principal also is our main source of motivation.

Can you tell us more about what you mean when you say your Principal is your source of motivation?
Learner 3: He always tells us stories in the assembly about where he's been and the problems he's had and how he has had to deal with them. So he always tries to give us the boost for our academic excellence, telling us about his own life and how he dealt with his problems so that's one special thing about him, he always tries to give us practical examples of how to deal with problems.

What else?
Learner 4: The principal sacrifice for the school wanting the school to have good results and to see the school doing well.
Learner 2: Another thing he doesn't spare the rope, he beats.

He uses the rope?
All learners: Yes

And you like that?
Learner 2: In a way we do, in a way we don't.
Learner 3 We don't like it but it seems as if it's necessary.

In what way do you consider the stick useful?
Learner 5: For instance when the Principal is not inside the school premises you see students running around but when the Principal is inside the school yard there are not students around there're all in the classes working hard.
Learner 2: It's very funny how the whole school is hanging around one person but that's the reality of it that when he's not around there's disorder but when around there's order.
Learner 6: Also our Principal gives us support.

Can you tell us about the kind of support the principal provides and how?
Learner 7: Like for instance he's approachable, he said we can approach him at any time of the day if we had some problems.

I hear there was a time when some of the students used to sleep here at school because of problems at home.

Learner 1: They still do.

Tell us, how did it all start?
Learner 2: Well, it started with a group in 1996 they had problems at home, they felt that they couldn't study from home, so they asked the school if they could us some classes for study purpose through out the night, it started then till now.

Are there no any misbehaviours here with those who sleep in the school?
Learner 1: No, one thing that should be done is to let girls also sleep in the school because it's only mainly for boys.

Why only for boys?
Learner 2: We are trying to avoid the misbehaviour, we are still young.
Learner 1: But we are brothers and sisters so I see no problems in staying together.
Learner 2: But there can be babies produced from this brother and sisters mentality.
Learner 3: Talking about the principal, he is one of the 'pedigorust'?? teachers I've known.

What do you mean by pedigorust?
Learner 3: He doesn't like facts on life when coming to teaching he always sacrifices a lot and has determination. He always does the best for the school and for himself.

So, them what would you say is you source of motivation?
Learner 2: Well, the prominent one by looking at your current situation like if you come from a poor background you have to motivate yourself towards self betterment.

You've written something for the matrics motivating them; tell us where the source of motivation came from?
Learner 6: There's this other school called Leshata High, people outside were talking about how Leshata is beer than our school so that was our source of inspiring the Grade 12's

What gives you the edge of going on or moving on?
Learner 4: I would say my parents, they give me so much support and pushing me telling me to work hard and also the teachers too but some are bad.

What do you mean by 'some teachers being bad'?
Learner 5: Sometimes you become scared when you approach them they seem a bit distant.

OK, we'll come back on what you just said; anybody else?
Learner 3: Well for me personally my parents the do provide me with motivation, and also my Principal too. For example I once had reading problems, I approached him and told him how I needed his help, and he told me that even if

how bad things went there are always two side of the story, meaning if you face the bad facts of life that you have to make a choice and make a good choice.
Learner 2: Also what motivates the students is the expectation for the community.
Learner 6: I would also say for me an inspiration comes from the fact that after every term examinations top achievers like to top ten get rewarded so it motivates students to get top standards. Also I've learned that in life things don't wait for you.

What would you say is the achievement of [School A]?
Learner 2: The most conspicuous would be that of our potential and it's fundamental for a school to be recognised and the opportunities provided by our school are good ones.
Learner 1: It's all basically based on schools performance like the past matriculants pass rate, the school is associated with big companies which provides stationery which inspires good performance.
Learner 3: Speaking of companies, now I have a chance of being someone in life for the future because the company is preparing us for the future by giving us compositions to write. And I happen to be one of the students who excelled in the assignments so they said if one does well stand a good chance of getting employment somewhere in Van Der Byl so there's a chance of coming to the school.

You said lot's of good things about your school tell us what would you like to see being done or changed in you school?
Learner 2: Sometimes we tend to compare Model C Schools with Township School. One advantage about the Model C School is that the teachers, it's an obligation for them to not bring their family problems to school whereas for in our township we have more of that where teachers bring their baggage to the school which somehow destroys teacher leaner relationship.
Learner 1: I think there should be lots of respect between teachers and students and you sometimes find some, mostly male teachers not respecting students to an extend of proposing to students, we do have a lot of that in our school. Basically I think teachers should acknowledge students as their children other than as boyfriends and girlfriends.

APPENDIX 5

Narratives of Learning in Specific Contexts

Mosh

I was born on the 03 May 1970 , Jagerustrust, a farm near Petrus Steyn (Small town). This farm is 35 km away from Petrus Steyn. My parents have 12 children. From this 12 I'm the seventh child and there is only 3 boys from that 12. I came from a very poor family.

All my sisters and my elder brothers didn't manage to study because of the financial problems. All of them did Std 4. After Std 4, they were forced to work for a farmer (white man) . This farmer was complaining, saying my father has too many children, so they must help him to work. But the reason behind this statement is that the farmers around that area they did not want a black child to be educated or to study further after Std 4. All the farm schools in that area started from Std 1 – Std 4. After Std 4 you were supposed to go to a to township nearby to continue with your schooling.

I did Std 1- Std 4. After Std 4 I refused to work for that farmer, I told my parents that I want to study further. My mother supported me. My friends tried to change my mind , showing me how much monies do they earned every months. But they failed to change my mind. The following year I went to a township nearby, Mamafubedu, where I had to make a major adjustment from a farm life to a township life. I was just staying in a shack of only one room. That room I used it as my kitchen , sleeping room , bathroom, study room, almost everything. I was using a paraffin stove to cook and candles to study.

Every Fridays and Saturdays I was walking 20km to the bus stop. On my way home when I was walking this distance, I was telling myself that I want to be a teacher, even if the wind could come from all directions, I will be a teacher one day. When I was just saying , I used to act like one of my Mathematics teacher (Mr. Mosia) , acting as if I'm a teacher. This was my dream.

As you know that people do change , when I was doing Std 8 , 1989, I stated to change. It was the year I started to smoke cigarettes, dagga and drinking liquor, because of friends. My school performance dropped, I passed Std 8 and Std 9 by chance. In 1991 , I failed Std 10. When the results were published in 1992, I tried to find my name in the news paper, but I didn't find it. It was heart breaking, because it was for the first time in my schooling to failed. Just because my mother was aware that I have changed, she encouraged me to repeat the Std 10 and started to focused. She helped me to register for supplementary and full-time. That year 1992, I stopped all the wrong things I was doing because of friends, I started to work very hard, and I managed to passed my supplementary, that same year 1992.

I'm the first child from this family to got matric cerificate. My parents, sisters and my brothers were so happy. My elder brother, who was staying in Evaton, registered me at Lekoa Technical College, for Electrical Trade Theory, I did N1-N3. After N3 I experienced so many problems, I was forced to seek job, because my brother said he shall not be in position to help me with my fees again. I spent two years working part-time jobs. When I was struggling like this, I reminded me about my dream, I wanted to be a teacher. End of my 2nd year of unemployment, my cousin helped me with money to register at Sebokeng College of Education.
In 1995 I did my 1st year. When I received bursary, I paid back my cousin's money, and I started smoking cigarettes and drinking liquor again, but I managed to stop before end of my 3rd year. When I was doing 3rd year at college, every day during break I was not eating, I was spending my time with my Physical Science lecturer (Mr. Msibi) , he was helping me with computer basics , because the college were not offering computer classes.

After receiving our 3rd year results, I sent my application to different schools. When I was doing this job, I went to one of the school called Leshata secondary school. I will never forget what happen that day. The principal of this school discouraged me to continue to sent my applications to different school. I found him outside the staff-room. I gave him my application, he checked it and he said " Are you a teacher ?" I said " Yes, Sir". He continue " Is this your results?" I said

“Yes , Sir”. He continue again “ Is this not your brother’s results?” then I said to him “ It is my results, but as you can see that there is no Diploma inside, we are having diploma day on the 1st of December. He said “ I don’t believe that a man like you is a teacher.” He took my application, the I left. After all this I went to Aha- Thuto secondary school with a broken heart. Principal of this school took my application without any questions.

In 1998, January, when the school reopened I got part-time job at Lekoa Technical College, February, the same year, I received a phone call from Aha-Thuto sec school, I went there without any waste of time. This was a time at which my dream came true. I started to teach Grade 11 , the same year . It was a challenge to me to teach the Grade 11. I worked very hard , since from that year, 1998. I worked on Saturdays and during the holidays, and I also attended the morning classes and afternoon classes. The very same year our school received computers from Standard Bank as donations.

When I was doing my 3rd year I was so interested to know about computers. So after having access to the computers I wanted to get a teacher who could help me with computers, unfortunately, no one was interested to help me. Every day during break and afternoon, I was teaching myself computer. I was spending three to four hours every day teaching myself a computer.

One of my colleague said to me “Mr Mosh, these computers will make you mad, and I think even at night you do dream about computers”. These kinds of words never discouraged me to continue with my dream of knowing a computer, instead, motivate me a lot. I was working very hard to know computer, without study materials. I was just getting information from the computer and from other people who know computer when I met them. Every Saturdays and Holidays after teaching my classes, I spent most of my time teaching myself a computer. Today people don’t believe when I tell them that I taught myself a computer, really it’s amazing, you can’t believe it. The year 2000, I started computer classes at our school.

In 1999 I started teaching Grade 12, and I managed to produce 64% pass rate and one distinction. The following year, 2001, I managed to produced 84% pass rate with five(5) distinctions. The year 2000, I did HED (Higher Education Diploma) with Sebokeng College in association with Potchefstroom university. While I was a student, I was appointed by Sebokeng College to help them with computer classes. I was teaching the other student the same subject I registered for. Because of producing the outstanding results, the year 2001, kateleng Project, run by Potchefsroom University, appointed me to teach Mathematics (HG), teaching learners from different schools. Teaching learners from different schools some teachers said is difficult, but I find it not difficult but challenging, you must know your work, that's all. During the holidays and Saturdays I used to teach learners from different, so that's why I have found it as something which is challenging.2001 I have been nominated as Mathematics and Science Teacher of the year. What I have experienced is that if you stay focused, you will achieve what you want. In most cases friends are the ones which influence somebody to change, especially if your friends don't have dreams for the future. Whatever you want to achieve is possible if you work very hard. Now I'm staying with my parents, my wife and my two sons.

Mdav

I am […], born on 3 April 1971, the first of my parents 11 children, in the close-knit village of Tshififi , located five km north of Sibasa , in the Northern Province. Signs of being adventurous and inquisitive were my true hallmarks from my early childhood. I was barely six months old, and learning to crawl , when I put my right hand in the smouldering embers. The results were horrific, my hand got badly burnt and constantly became crippled. This deformity laid foundation for indomitable resistance, and zeal to prove myself as a strong person.

Besides all the incessant abuse other children hurled at me because of the uniqueness of my hand, I had never allowed myself to recoil myself into a cocoon of self-blame and self denial. I learnt to be independent and assertive from my early childhood. As a youth I was exposed to both formal and informal education. That I was born into a family of staunch Christians deprived me of some major cultural knowledge and practices. These three aspects have played a crucial role in shaping and structuring of my character. From Christianity I learnt about humility, compassion and love for other human beings. Formal education made me imbibe the western culture. The result was that I became an object of psycho-existential crisis from early years. Not enough chance had been allowed for enough cultural diffusion to take place. In the process I was deprived of enculturation in my formative years.

I started my primary education in 1977. My first day at school was proceeded by some drama. For the time I was rebellious and unstoppable. When my parents declined for register me that year because I was not yet ripe for starting formal education , I burst into tears and stubbornly tailed my friends, when I got school I met the same resistance from my teachers. But I resisted and persisted until they succumbed to my desire. It was a fear of loneliness and not an insatiable desire learn which made me start school early than I was supposed to.

In 1985 I was taken to initial school, for preparation and graduation into manhood. This informal type of education provided me with knowledge of my culture.

Simultaneously, it equipped me with temerity and indefatigable fortitude which should be characteristic of any fully grown and mentally matured man.

1985 had been very important, because for the first time I saw a remarkable improvement in my school performance. Before that I had been very inactive learner who was always at the tail ends of events. This matric rise in my performance had been ignited suddenly found passion for reading and acquisition of knowledge. In 1990 I passed my matric.

From 1991- 1993, the period I spent at Venda College of Education , I had always at the top of the list of best achievers. At the same time I immersed myself into reading political and motivational books. I was recruited into politics by my fellow students who were politically minded. I joined politics because I wanted to stop what I saw as undemocratic and dictatorial tendencies the college management was so stepped in.

After graduation I found myself faced with a bleak future and prospects of securing a post were very slim. But instead of wallowing in self pity, I decided to pour myself into village politics. I made this decision not to attain some political gains, but to be some service to my local villagers. In 1994 was elected chairperson of Tshififi development forum. All along I never wanted my mind to decompose because of inactivity as result of job scarcity. Then I read veraciously and involved youths and self improvement projects. I wrote a number of plays. This galvanized me into forming a drama group called Tshififi drama group. I used my spare time profitably by assisting the then grade 12 students. I was ready to teach them without expecting any financial gains, but to help light the candle of hope in my village.

On 11 August 1994, just as I was starting to lose hope, I got a temporal teaching post at William Themeri Secondary School. I worked very hard and exalted the school from a very low position to a greater height. I obtained status as a teacher of excellence. In 1994 I obtained 96,4% pass in grade 12 English. Then that

achievement had been very monumental in my life and unprecedented in the history of the school.

The following year was bleak and barren year in as far as securing a post was concerned. I was nominated to represent my village in the greater Thohoyandou TLC where I served as head of education faculty. In 1996 I got another temporarily post at Thusalushaka Secondary School. I was employed to teach English and Geography. I left an indelible mark. I so deeply impressed the school that they all wanted me to become permanently employed. I still feel indebted to the principal of the afore-mentioned for providing me with an opportunity to prove myself. I feel I will remain in the red their confidence and trust in me has been quite helpful.

In 1997, due to such longevity of unemployment, and the ever-dwindling prospect of securing a post in the Northern Provinces. I decided to move to leave my nest and move to Johannesburg where I got a teaching post at Aha-Thuto Secondary School. They employed me teach Afrikaans, but a year later was assigned to teach my major subjects Geography and English.

In 1998, was served in the school governing body , which gave me an invaluable experience and insight into understanding the functioning of the school . From 1998 I decided to move away from the periphery and get into the centre of activity. I had to juggle with plenty of responsibilities. I had an unyeilding desire to help in the furtherance of the schools aims. I have a pioneer in the establishment of the school library, guidance department, Creative Writers' Association; I also helped in building bridges between the school and the outside community. I also madly wanted to make a mirror to reflect the school achievement .This desire made me put building blocks of establishing news letter in place. This involves empowering students through assigning them with some task which contributes to the publication. Unfortunately this remains a dream because of lack of funds.

In 1999 and 2000 I was tasked to teach grade 12 English. Not only I achieved a 100% pass, but there had been an impressive improvement in the quality of the

symbols .In year 200I, I enrolled with UNISA for BA (communication science) I intend to leave teaching and become a communication practitioner one day. This will not be a abandonment of teaching but climbing on to the higher platform to serve my nation with greater responsibility assigned to my occupation. Currently I am still studying for my degree and I hope to finish next year.

Appendix 6

Follow-up Questionnaire - School A

Thank you for accepting the questionnaire. I am aware that this is a bad time of the year and I would like to apologise for the inconvenience. However, I have great respect for your input in the study. I am conducting research, which is part of furthering my studies, about the applicability of the learning organization concept in schools and the interface between organizational learning and school leadership. The kind of leadership that I am looking at is the one that takes a distributed perspective. This means that there is meaningful contribution you make in the school that is significant and that is what I would like to capture as well as general 'learning to change practices' in the school. You have been selected with the assumption that you play many significant roles in the school.

A. Your unfinished story: This section is to be filled by the staff members who submitted stories about themselves – where they come from, where they are going and how they want to get there.

"Stories are capsules of unreleased learning…Stories are alchemy. They are medicine, healing, mystery, paradox, power, and many other things, allowing us to feel, taste, touch, see the stories around us…They are the container, the elements, the process, and the trigger of transformation." (Cory and Underwood, 1995:127).

Thank you for the interesting story you wrote about your life. I have found it a pleasure to read. Please read your story again. I have a few questions to ask based on this story about where you come from, where you are and where you think you are going. Please write as much as you can as the information will feel some of the gaps in your biographical details. Some of the questions are partly answered but I still feel you need to be more explicit. Please feel free to use the back of each page if the space provided is not enough.

1. Based on the story of your life and the events that happened in your life, what lessons can you derive from them? ----------

2. What do you think are the root causes of some of the problems you experienced? ----------
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3. What do you appreciate about your experiences that you think is helping you now in your
(a) Personal life? ----------

(b) Professional life ----------

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4. Do you think your past experiences in any way affect you in the way you relate to other people, for example with

(a) colleagues, ----------

(b) school leaders (management and governance) ----------

(c) learners ----------

(d) parents ----------

(e) others who also have a stake in your school like the community members
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(a) Do you have anything that has happened to you recently (especially in your professional experience) that makes you feel like your past is still part of your present? Please explain. ----------
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(b) How did you deal with the situation? Who supported you (if any)?

(c) Did your principal (or acting principal) support you? Please explain.

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6. If you were to relive that life,
(a) what would you do differently? ----------

(b) what advice would you give to others (please be specific on who those others are) ----------
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7. Have you ever told this story to other people, be it at school or anywhere? In what circumstances? If not, why not? ----------
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8. What lessons do you think other people can gain from your story? Or what lessons do you think other people have missed in your story? ----------
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9. (a) According to some learners, the former principal used to share stories about his past life for the learners to be motivated that they can also succeed despite the circumstances. Do you think your story can contribute to any form of

transformation in your school? Please explain. ----------

(b) How can your story solve some of the problems experienced by learners today?

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10. If I were to assume that your story is a success story since you have survived against the odds, would you agree? Please explain in detail. ----------
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11. What do you think you must learn to *let go* about your past that might even be affecting you in your personal and professional life? ----------
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B. Your Learning in the School as an Organization: A Personal Dimension

12 (a) What changes in education have you experienced in the past few years? You may think of those that came with the South African Schools Act (SASA), C2005/OBE etc. ----------
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(b) How have you dealt with those changes at an individual level ----------
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13. (a)In the process of such changes, what has been your biggest contribution to the school? Please explain in detail because you have been selected in the study with an assumption that you have an important role you play in the school. ----------
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(b) Do you see any connection between your present contribution to the school and your past experiences?
(b) What problems have you been experiencing? ----------

(c)What has been your source of strength? ----------

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14. Who has been supportive to most of your efforts to contribute meaningfully to teaching and learning? In what way? ----------
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16. Have you been doing anything that you think is creative and will meaningfully contribute to teaching and learning? Please explain what it is, who supported you or why you feel you were not supported etc. ----------

17. What lessons have you learnt in what you consider your creative efforts in contributing to teaching and learning? ----------

18. Are you happy with the way school leadership has supported you in the process of learning to learn? Please explain. ----------

Would you say your life outside school affects the way you have been trying to cope with the changes? Please explain. ----------

C. Strategies to Enhance Learning in Schools as Organizations: This section is to establish how schools operate in contexts that are constantly changing

Change is constant. The only way to survive is a learning organizaton - to continually adapt, learn, and be change-responsive, to reinvent the reality and the future, to transform organizations that excel in the future will be those that understand how to gain commitment of people at all levels and continually expand their capacity to learn (Rolls, 1995).

18. What qualities does the school possess that you like most? ----------
19. What goes on in the school that you would like to see changed? ----------
20. Do you know the vision of the school? If so, what steps are often taken to ensure that everyone works towards fulfilling the vision? ----------
21. How are people in leadership helping members of the school to:
    (a) Cope with changes while making sure that there is stability in the school? ----------

    Work in teams? ----------

(b) Collaborate (with teachers, parents, learners, with other teachers in other schools and people outside the school? Please explain in detail ----------

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(c) 22. Consider the statement by Rolls above. Do you think your school is trying to respond adequately to the changes going on in South African schools? Please explain in detail by giving examples of strategies used in the school to cope with the changes?

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23. Please explain how the strategies above satisfy your needs and aspirations

(a) as a school? ----------

(b) as an individual? ----------

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25. (a) What do you see as the biggest challenges/problems/dilemmas that the school have to overcome? ----------
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(b) Any suggestions on how those challenges/problems/dilemmas can be resolved? Please explain in detail. ----------
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(c) In what way do you think the problems/challenges/dilemmas directly affect you in teaching and learning? ----------
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E. Leadership: To elicit information on how leadership supports or inhibits change processes.

"We have come a long way since the days of valuing leaders 'who run a tight ship'. We have gone through the phases of a principal 'as an administrator' and the 'principal 'as the instructional leader' to a broader and more fundamental notion of principal as change agent" (Fullan, 1996).

26. What is a good principal (or deputy principal) to you?----------
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27. Consider the quotation above by Fullan (1996). To what extent has leadership in your school evolved? ----------
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28. Do you see your principal as having gained new skills, knowledge or/and attitudes in the past few years? Please explain? ----------
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29. What major contributions has he/she (former principal or acting principal) made to (a)your school? ----------
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(b) to you as professionals? ----------

© To the learners? ----------

(d) to parents? ----------

(e) To the wider community? ----------

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30. How do your school leaders often make you aware of the changes in the school or in education in general? Please explain in detail. ----------
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31 (a) What leadership practices (at any level) are you happy with? ----------
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(b) What leadership practices are you unhappy with? ----------
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(c) Any suggestions on what should be done? Please explain.

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32. Any other comments?

Thank you for your contribution to the study. I really appreciate your patience in completing this questionnaire and your valuable participation.