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**A CASE STUDY OF WHANGAPARAOA COLLEGE:
A TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING ORGANISATION
IN THE MAKING?**

A thesis
submitted in fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
of
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at
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Abstract

The concept of a learning organisation is relatively new to schools and educational institutions in New Zealand. Understanding educational institutions as learning organisations can enable institutions to meet the demands of an ever changing context. In this way, educational institutions can strategically develop as transformative learning organisations that are dynamic and responsive.

This research sought to explore the extent to which a particular school exhibits the characteristics of a learning organisation in its organisational development. The case study was situated in a New Zealand secondary school in relation to its transition from an intermediate school into a full-fledged secondary school. More specially, to what extent is Whangaparaoa College a transformative learning organisation in the making?

The findings presented in this thesis highlight the characteristics of a learning organisation as exhibited by this particular school. While some characteristics relate directly to the five disciplines of learning organisations (Senge, 1990), this research has identified other characteristics that enable a unique way of considering a school as a learning organisation.

The most notable attribute of this case study is the breadth of innovative thinking and practice that was voiced by the participants. The innovative nature of the school is expressed in the positional titles; infrastructure and the ICT influenced pedagogy. Developmental challenges are also construed as learning opportunities. Critically important to this schools development as a learning organisation is the role of professional development for staff as this enhances the formation of a learning community. This research opens a range of possibilities for future research which might investigate the characteristics of a learning organisation in different educational contexts.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Research is a dynamic activity that travels a long and winding trail from start to finish. It is not one single event; rather the act of doing research is a process.

(Anderson, 1998, p. 27)

This thesis is an extension of my interest in teaching and learning within the context of secondary school education. I have been a teacher since 1990 having completed my Bachelors degree in Education from Lady Wellington College of Education, Chennai, India. Since this time, teaching and students have been a significant part of my life. Teaching has not been just a job, but something that kept me alive; my life-line in terms of my personal growth and development. Teaching is such an important part of my life. I love the idea of nurturing young minds and the joy of being around children irrespective of their age. These are some of the reasons why I pursued a teaching career. I wanted to do something I enjoyed and knew that teaching would fulfil this yearning. I joined a school named Bhavan's Vikram Ispat Vidya Mandir which is now known as Aditya Birla Public School. I was totally into teaching and I enjoyed every waking moment of my life. I enjoyed trying new ideas out in my classroom which I thought was pedagogically good for the students.

With the education system being quite structured in India, I wanted to experience education in the west. I had heard a lot about the influence of democratic practices. I wanted to see for myself how these different systems functioned. Thus I took the brave step of resigning my post at BK Birla Centre for Education in 2004 and migrated to Aotearoa / New Zealand; the country where I wanted to be if I left my home country. I was keen to complete postgraduate study in education and felt strongly about the need to be 'part' of what I researched.

My research journey

The thesis represents a significant and challenging personal journey which started as an international student at Auckland University of Technology. The academic papers in my master's programme had a role to play in understanding the research process and what to consider as a researcher when I completed my own thesis. This thesis is an account of the actual research process however the unwritten part of this journey are the changes, decisions and challenges that have had a significant impact on me personally and professionally. The following paragraphs seek to outline some of the important influences that shaped this research project.

One particular postgraduate paper that shaped my research journey was entitled '*Examining Professional Practice*'. This paper gave me an opportunity to evaluate my teaching practice to date. In the process, I made contact with some of my former students in India. I had not been in contact with some of these former students for nearly ten years. The feedback I got from them about my teaching was an eye opening experience in terms of the impact I had had on them. This paper made me relive my passion for the profession and inspired me to pursue research related to my teaching. The other paper that influenced me was called '*Research in Action*'. This paper gave me the opportunity to plan a research proposal and an ethics application. This made me aware of the writing process and helped me when it came to writing the official proposal for my thesis.

A considerable amount of thinking went into this thesis even before I decided on the specific research topic. The primary reason for choosing this particular topic related to where I started my teaching in Aotearoa / New Zealand. The new system and structures meant that I had to learn about the curriculum and the preferred pedagogies. Staff members were forthcoming, very understanding and thoughtful in the way they provided me the support I required to get through my first year at school. I was not a beginning teacher as I had had fourteen years experience as a teacher in India. However, I was a novice teacher in the New Zealand context. I experienced a very positive and collegial work culture.

In this particular school, staff members are eager to learn, try new things and share their knowledge with the others. Since this was my first teaching experience in New Zealand, I thought that this was the way every school in New Zealand functioned (perhaps displaying my lack of knowledge of the education system and my own naivety). I soon came to realise through conversations with other teachers in the school that had worked elsewhere, and with others outside the school that certain positive things that I took for granted, may not be the norm in other schools. This made me appreciate and value my workplace even though at times getting used to the new system was not easy.

I have come to see the benefits of a collaborative 'learning' environment at this particular school. This is a feature of the context which motivated me to conduct a case study of Whangaparaoa College having read about learning organisations (hereafter,

LO). I wondered if I was working in an environment which seemed to exhibit the qualities of a LO having the five disciplines of a LO (Senge, 1990).

Senge (1990) envisages a Learning Organisation as a means of preparing organisations to meet the demands of an ever changing future. According to Ng (2004a, 2005), a LO consists of people who are proficient and successful at learning and also know how to learn as a group. In this way, learning results in change and change leads to more learning which in turn forms an ongoing cycle of development. This school seems to display some of the characteristics of a LO. I wanted to find out through this research, if the experiences of those who have been at the school since its inception reflected the idea that this educational institution seems to function as a transformative learning organisation.

Having decided the topic, I considered the research approach and methods of data collection for this study. Since the purpose of the study was to capture the participants' experiences of the school, I designed this research as a case study. As part of this qualitative research approach, I used semi structured interviews and document analysis as the research techniques to gather data.

As insider research, there were a few protocols I followed before the submission of the research proposal and ethics application. Prior permission from the school's Board of Trustees (BOTs) had to be obtained. After the approval from the BOTs, the ethics application was approved on the 11th of October, 2007. This was just the beginning of a process which had ups and downs (somewhat akin to a roller coaster) and shaped me as a researcher and teacher. The enthusiasm of the participants, the support from the school and most of all the encouragement from my supervisors sustained me.

The concept of a learning organisation is acknowledged in educational institutions around the world. Indeed, research has been conducted in UK, USA, Australia, Canada and recently in Singapore. In New Zealand, it is relatively new to schools / educational institutions. Most of the academic literature from New Zealand on LOs is related to the Schools of Management or Business Studies fields, or alternatively the corporate world. The potential for future research and the growing relevance to the field of education are reasons why I have chosen this topic for my research.

I see the findings of my research as a way of expanding schools' potential as learning organisations. That said, the findings from this research should be used with care when

informing those in the profession. One of the reasons for this is that the research is both contextual and also site-specific. However, the findings might be seen as a tool to facilitate thought and reflective practice (Hayes, Christie, Mills & Lingard, 2004). In this way, those in the teaching profession are given a ‘voice’ through this practitioner-based research project. The research partnership with me as an insider enabled me to hear the experiences of those who were part of the school’s transformation process. This case study presents the participants’ experiences as they are encapsulated through the concept and lens of a LO.

Chapter overviews

The thesis consists of seven chapters. The first chapter outlined my teaching background and research journey which shapes the present study. In the second chapter I have reviewed the literature on learning organisation/s (LOs) and the limitations faced by LOs. The third chapter is a review of literature on specifically leadership of, or within, LOs followed by the rationale of the present study.

In the fourth chapter, the methodology is explained by stating the theoretical framework and the research approach used in this study. The research context for the present study is introduced followed by the methods of data collection and information about the participants. Data analysis, ethical issues and the implications of ‘insider’ research are presented in this chapter.

The findings are presented in the fifth chapter which outlines the themes that emerged from the participants’ data. The common themes across the participants’ data are presented and supported by extracts from the interview transcripts. Each theme and sub-theme is discussed with reference to the participants’ data.

The findings from the fifth chapter are discussed in detail in the sixth chapter. The discussion chapter (chapter 6) analysed four macro-themes that emerge from the findings which help to understand the research site as a learning organisation in the making. These macro-themes are analysed in relation to the literature on LO and leadership in LO and supported by relevant data from the findings chapter.

A conclusion to the research is presented in the seventh chapter. In this chapter I summarise the findings of the present study. The strengths and limitations of this study are discussed followed by the implications of this research in terms of creating and

Chapter I: Introduction

sustaining organisations that exhibit the characteristics of a LO. The directions for future research are presented in the final section of the thesis.

Chapter II: Literature Review: Learning Organisations

Organisations that will truly excel in the future will be organisations that discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels.

(Senge, 2000, p. 14)

Introduction

This literature review provides a framework for looking at schools as learning organisations (LO). The literature review is focused on learning organisations and how the concept originated in the business setting and has been adapted by educational institutions and other organisations. I have drawn literature from business settings to establish the contextual basis for exploring schools as learning organisations. I have also included literature on professional learning communities, as some of these characteristics can be seen at Whangaparaoa College (hereafter, WGP College). The articles used in this literature review relate to the current practices at WGP College; the research site of this case study. The literature on educational policy has been included to not only set the political context in which New Zealand schools function, but also to show how this particular school tries to introduce innovative ideas by adapting a transformative approach.

Most of the literature on learning organisations has considered the concept of a learning organisation as a positive and innovative approach to introduce into the school systems at a time when it is facing technological, management or structural change as a solution or remedy for their existing situation. Many authors (see for example, Amy, 2008; Hayes, Christie, Mills & Lingard, 2004; Dinhmam, 2005) describe how leadership has played a role in introducing the concept and how staff members have used it to move forward with a new idea. There does not appear to be much research on how the concept of learning organisation might be part of a school's culture.

Hence there is a need to look at the bigger picture which includes the concept of a learning organisation and its limitations, the staff within the school, their learning styles, and the type of leadership that will help sustain a learning culture in schools. All these interact with one another and in turn impact and influence one another. By looking at these aspects of an organisation in isolation, we would be contradicting the systems thinking discipline of a learning organisation which is crucial for its overall success.

Education is a complex issue with many factors in play and ‘systems thinking’ is a body of knowledge and tools that enable us to make sense of this complexity. The fundamental principle in ‘systems thinking’ is that a system is a whole, made up of inter-connected and interacting parts (Senge, 1990). Most of the research conducted to date is either an analysis of the learning organisation theory or case studies or longitudinal research where the researchers have experimented with the idea of learning organisation or the type of leadership in a learning organisation. I felt the need to look at learning organisations, leadership, and their limitations consecutively in my literature. My research focuses on the learning culture of a school that is not familiar with the concept of a learning organisation and consider the extent to which its practices relate to the five disciplines of a learning organisation namely, systems thinking, shared vision, mental models, personal mastery and team learning (Senge, 1990).

The role of this literature review is to provide a framework not only to help analyse the research data but also to provide a theoretical base from which the school can learn how to effectively implement the learning organisation concept having already experienced its potentials through its current practice. The literature review has three main parts namely the political influence on education, learning organisation (LO), and leadership. The section on learning organisations is further categorised into five subheadings namely the concept of learning organisation in business settings, professional learning communities, the concept of LO in educational settings, workplace culture, and limitations faced by learning organisations. Since the concept of learning organisations originated in the business setting, I will start with the literature on learning organisations from corporate sectors and I will move on to the learning organisation concept as perceived and implemented in educational institutions.

It is also important to be aware that these organisational changes are taking place within an environment that is influenced by government policies that drive educational change. As a consequence, I have included a section on political influences on education which would not only provide the context in which New Zealand schools exist but also highlights the constraints faced by the schools that are trying to be innovative in the present political environment.

Political influences on education

Public education systems are facing rapid and far-reaching change. In many countries, various policies have been introduced that attempt to reformulate the relationship

between government, schools and parents through the application of market forces. This change is seen right across the world in countries like England, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Chile, Sweden, Poland and South Africa (Power & Whitty, 1999).

Schools in New Zealand exist within a context where, critics of the New Right suggest, neo-liberal educational policies have eroded fundamental democratic values of collective responsibility, cooperation, social justice and trust (Codd, 1999). The influence of this political agenda is to reduce professional accountability to managerial processes backed by reporting systems. Measurable output and accountability has become a formal, externally imposed, low-trust requirement (Codd, 2005). Managerialism in its contemporary form is preoccupied with the notion of quality. Quality has become a metaphor for new forms of managerial control. Objective setting, planning, reviewing, internal and external monitoring are requirements to be fulfilled by an institution. The managerialist approach values efficiency, effectiveness and control devaluing interpersonal trust in the process (Codd, 1999).

The ‘management revolution’ brought about by ‘fast’ capitalism in corporate sectors has strongly impacted many non-business contexts with the result that the organisational culture of most workplaces is now very different from that of a decade or so ago (Senge, 1990). This new work order and the ideas that go with it have had a distinct influence on the way the education system is managed, however the influence is not, as yet, evident in schools. The curriculums and teaching, learning and assessment practices continue to be organised in ways that reflect the ‘Industrial Age’ that existed when mass education was first developed (Beare, 2001; Beare & Slaughter, 1993; Bereitier, 2002).

Codd (2005) argues that business firms operating in a competitive market are considered as input-output systems. A measure of a firm’s efficiency or profitability is the extent to which it combines its inputs in order to maximise its outputs. The process through which it achieves this is referred to as a ‘production function’; that is a mathematical description of the production process through which a given set of inputs results in measurable outputs (Marginson, 1993). When this theory is applied to education it gives rise to what Easton (1999, pp. 149-157) has called ‘the commercial theory of the school’. In the New Zealand education reforms, this theory has been enormously influential in shaping governance and accountability policies (Smelt, 1998). The school is viewed as a ‘black box’ and the educative process is considered to be a production process in which resource inputs are used to produce measurable educational

outputs. In many ways New Zealand schools now function like small business firms. Like other small business firms, schools are required to carry out strategic planning, to exercise efficient financial management, and to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Codd, 2005).

Lee, O'Neill, and McKenzie (2004) argued that neo-liberal managerialism does not seek a fair and equal educational experience for everyone. The time is ripe for restarting the discussion on these issues and social justice in education, rather than allowing the unchallenged dominance of the New Rights' business and managerial models to continue. Now is the right time for rebuilding an educational culture that is truly holistic in character. This is one which provides plenty of opportunities for exercising the imagination of learners and teachers, for evaluating received wisdom, and preserving what is valuable about our system and society as well as changing it. If educationalists and politicians are ready to deal with these issues and engage in a more open, honest and constructive debate about the real nature of knowledge and learning, drawing on learning, curriculum and policy theory rather than the models and values of business and the market, there may be some opportunities for significantly improving the educational experiences of students, raising the morale of teachers, empowering them and valuing their work (Lee, et al., 2004). An understanding of these influences on education is vital to be able to discard irrelevant or ineffective practices and adopt a more learning-centred programme utilising time, staff, and resources (Rolph, 2006).

During the 1990s, state investment in education was prioritised to produce measurable returns on global indicators of increased competitive advantage and economic growth. Thus education became subordinated to the creation of the 'Enterprise Culture', or the knowledge society. These foci were foreshadowed in the Minister of Education Lockwood Smith's comments upon taking office that "education would deliver the skills and attitudes required for New Zealand to compete in an increasingly competitive international economy" (Ministry of Education, 1991, p. 2). However these foundational objectives in education have not been challenged in any way by the post-1999 Labour-led Coalition Government.

For educators, Knowledge Age ideas are deeply challenging. At the same time, however, they offer an important opportunity to think about some of the blind alleys the Industrial Age education finds itself in. It is easy to be cynical about the 'new' capitalism, and to see Knowledge Age ideas as yet another business-led attempt to

restructure schooling so that it is better able to provide the ‘human resources’ needed by the economy at a particular point in time. The ‘new’ capitalism is however, a fact of life in the world outside education but as Lankshear and Gee (1997) point out, if we as educators accept its vision uncritically, we risk hegemony. If, on the other hand, we reject the new capitalism outright, or fail to engage with it, “we risk being left on the sidelines as education at all levels simply aligns itself with the values, visions and practices of fast capitalism” (Lankshear & Gee, 1997, p. 90).

This provides the context of the present schooling system. It also highlights the need for change in teaching and learning processes so as to accommodate the growing demands of a market driven economy. There is a need for a new research focus to cope with the demands of the ever changing economy. A new focus might highlight the need for creating and sustaining concepts like the professional learning communities and learning organisations to assist schools that are striving to make a difference in the educational system (Gilbert, 2005).

A continued significance of managerialism in the current educational environment of external demands and high levels of accountability occurs “because through its neat and tidy, ever so logical and normal processes, it controls and eliminates human judgement: it teacher-proofs teaching and learning” (Gunter, 2008, p. 264). It would appear that managerialism continues to inform educational policy and consequently, impacts on the contextual framework. This is the context in which WGP College is trying to be innovative and transformative. This section provides the background for this research project which looks at ways in which WGP College is a transformative learning organisation in the making.

Learning organisations

Understanding the micro-context of schools requires knowledge about the school as an organisation and the nature, aspirations and influence of the students’ parents and the schools immediate community. Being a leader, therefore, necessitates different ‘readings’ in different contexts.

(Dempster, 2009, p. 25)

In recent years, the concept of organisational learning has drawn the attention of researchers from many disciplines, including specialists in the fields of adult learning, vocational education, and training and school improvement. This reflects several dimensions of contemporary, social and economic change. Among them is the growing recognition that the workplace is an important site for learning. As a result of these

changes, there are an increasing number of public and private sector organisations committed to “continuous improvement” (Boreham & Morgan, 2004, p. 307). The government adoption of an industrial policy of creating a “learning economy” out of “learning regions” and “learning organisations” are also some of the outcomes due to the social and economic changes that are experienced by various organisations (Boreham & Morgan, 2004, p. 307).

A Learning Organisation (LO) is a concept that originated in systems thinking and draws upon the five disciplines of systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, and team learning (Senge, 1990). Senge (1990) envisages a learning organisation as a means of preparing organisations to meet the demands of an ever changing future. Businesses, educational institutions, nonprofit organisations and community groups can be considered as learning organisations. The onset of a learning organisation is often a shared understanding that values learning as an ongoing experience. Every experience is seen as an opportunity to learn (Kerka, 1995).

The characteristics of learning organisations are said to include ongoing chances for learning; learning as the key to achieve an organisation’s goals; individual and organisational performances are linked; interaction and questioning are encouraged to create a conducive environment for open discussions and risk taking; productive work stress is foreseen as energising and reinvigorating; and an awareness of, and continuously interacting, with the organisation’s environment (Calvert, Mobley & Marshall, 1994; Watkins & Marsick, 1993). In addition, Garvin (1993) defines a learning organisation as one that is capable of generating, receiving, and passing on knowledge, while adapting its behaviour to exhibit new knowledge and insights.

According to Ng (2004a; 2005), a learning organisation consists of people who are proficient and successful at learning and also know how to learn as a group. Organisations are continuously learning (Ng, 2004a; 2005). Senge (1999, p. 35), argues learning organisations can "continually expand their ability to shape their future". For Ng (2004b) learning organisations are innovative organisations. Donald Sch n’s (1973, cited in Smith, 2001) theoretical framework of a learning organisation linked the experience of living in a situation of increasing change with the need for learning.

Castells (2000) suggests that the knowledge associated with learning is no longer thought of as if it were the static product of human thought, a kind of ‘matter’ that can be codified in ‘disciplines’ or ‘expert individuals’. Rather, it is now widely understood

as being more like ‘energy’, as something which is defined via its effectiveness in *action*, by results it achieves. It is not a ‘thing’ that can be defined, pinned down, stored and measured, but a dynamic, fluid and generative ‘force’, or capacity to do things (Castells, 2000).

For Castells (2000), the distinctive feature of a knowledge society is that the ‘main source of productivity’ is now knowledge’s “action upon knowledge itself” (Castells, 2000, p. 17). In Castells’ words, it means that knowledge only becomes ‘knowledge’ when it is used to generate something new, something that can be used to generate something else. Castells (2000) suggests that knowledge is now something that causes things to happen: it is no longer thought of as ‘stuff’ that can be learned and stored away for future use. It is something that is produced collaboratively, by teams of people, something that ‘happens’ in the relationships between those people. It is more like a ‘process’ than a product; it is constantly changing, evolving, ‘flowing’ and regenerating itself into new forms (Castells, 2000).

The learning organisation concept holds that knowledge is constantly changing, evolving and regenerating just as Castells notes in the above paragraph. It is the creation and utilisation of something new that results in knowledge. This can be related to the changes that have taken place in WGP College as a result of incorporating technology.

Change involves learning and factors that enable learning should be an integral part of any effort that results in change (Fullan & Miles, 1992). Learning organisations empower individuals and increase their dedication to the organisation, reducing the need for managerial control. Senge's (1996) conclusion is that "over the long run, superior performance depends on superior learning" (p. 413). Since the concept of learning organisation originated in the corporate world, I will outline literature on learning organisations in business settings so that strengths and shortcomings might be evident when transferring a market driven idea into an educational context.

The concept of learning organisation in business settings

The concept of the learning organisation is the result of the rising need for organisations to survive in an ever changing environment. A learning organisation enables all its members to learn thereby transforming itself. The organisation seeks to create a conducive environment for experiential learning and manage this efficiently throughout the workplace so that individual learning can be harnessed to create organisational learning (Rowley, 1998). In the words of Senge (1990), a learning organisation is

“where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to learn together.” (p. 4)

If one side of the learning community is that of ‘community’, the other side is clearly that of ‘learning’, and much of the inspiration for this side of the equation comes from currently notions of a ‘learning organisation’. This is a term which began its existence in the business literature and was then transferred to educational concerns. Its major impetus came when the western business world felt that global changes and competition necessitated a paradigm shift in business thinking, along with new conceptions of business leaders and workers (Bottery, 2004).

What was required instead of hierarchical organisations, were flatter organisations with more multi-skilled workforces, in which, as Casey (1993, p. 43) suggests, “the worker’s ability to learn and adapt becomes more important than his past training.” Part of this change would be achieved by adopting transformational theories of leadership, as leaders seek to lead the new workers through this change (Bottery, 2004).

From such beginnings a wide spread, almost universal, enthusiasm developed for organisations which adopted the following kinds of principles:

- Ones that created continuous learning opportunities for all their members.
- Ones that promoted continuous dialogue and inquiry between members even when (perhaps particularly when) this exposed deeply held and unexamined assumptions.
- Ones which create climates within which people felt encouraged to share ideas and collaborate on developing new ones.
- Ones which could establish systems which would ‘capture’ and further distribute such learning.
- Ones which empowered people towards the articulation and embrace of collective visions.
- Ones which recognised the need to understand interact and adapt to a constantly changing environment.

(Bottery, 2004, p. 175)

Critical reflection and open dialogue were central to such learning organisations. Individuals within a learning organisation needed to be willing to talk about, share and critique their own belief systems, while applying the same processes to their colleagues. Such a challenge was acknowledged as threatening for many but was seen as necessary if organisations and their employees were to break free of outdated, unhelpful, or dysfunctional thinking patterns in the quest for innovative ways of dealing with a

rapidly changing environment. Through such openness, sharing, and systems thinking, learning becomes organisational rather than individual in nature. Knowledge is seen principally as that which can be spoken and shared between individuals (Bottary, 2004, p. 176).

Organisational learning (OL) is an ongoing cycle of reflection and action which is a process of acting, assessing and acting again. This process cannot be taken for granted (Senge, 1990; Argyris & Sch[□]n, 1978, 1996). According to Yeo (2003), the concept of organisational learning has in the past decade or so, begun to play a significant part in organisational studies and management practice. In the 1980s a few companies started realising the latent power of corporate learning for enhancing organisational performance, competitiveness and success (Yeo, 2003). Owen (1991) goes so far as defining the process as learning the business of business.

Rowley (1998) suggests that the aim of organisational transformation, which is brought about by a learning organisation, is to enable the organisation to seek new ideas, new problems and new opportunities for learning so as to attain a competitive advantage in an increasingly competitive world. For proper transformation, organisations must be able to analyse themselves, their processes, structures and their environments to enable recognition of ideal and suitable responses while being able to put them into practice. Without the ability to learn, and learn from their learning, organisations will not have the ability to make strategic choices in respect of structures, process, culture, and product which will result in failure sooner or later.

The theoretical framework for learning is fundamentally based on two substantially different yet common set of principles, namely cognitive and behavioural learning. These principles ensue from the belief that organizational learning is an outcome of understandings of changes that occur outside the organisation and then the adaptation of beliefs and behaviour that suit those changes (Yeo, 2003). A part of this process is new attitudes and as a result a new pattern of behaviour brought about by organizational learning (Schien, 1999). There is also a constant interaction between adaptive and generative trends that are salient features of behavioural and cognitive learning. The key purpose of these learning approaches is to promote creative individualism within organizations so as to empower people. Thereby, the employees will be challenged to find better ways of meeting organizational goals and values (Schien, 1999).

Rowley (1998) noted that in a learning organisation, the learning strategy is the core component of all operations and it is a lot more than a human resource or staff development strategy. An important characteristic of a learning organisation is the way it tries to improve the capacity of individuals to identify and take advantage of learning opportunities. It is necessary to emphasise that all members of the organisation need to take part in individual learning as a vital responsibility (Rowley, 1998).

Levine (2001) stated that people learn when they are asked to change. Learning stimulates change management and on the other hand the creative exploration and exploitation of technology, knowledge and processes significant to the ongoing creation of a learning organisation. According to Levine (2001), the twenty-first century learning organisations and work groups must become proficient in managing change in dynamic situations where multimedia technologies and practices supporting process change, modelling, collaborative and distributed work play a vital role. Skills that prevail in the new workforce are the ones that allow for flexibility, speed, experimentation with rival hypotheses and collective responsiveness.

Organisational learning (OL) relates to the learning of individuals and groups in an organisation, whereas a learning organisation highlights the importance of the learning by an organisation as a total system. In this way, there are systemic features to learning beyond the activities of particular individuals who may come and go. This does not mean that people are not important or needed in the learning process; rather that OL is not reducible to individual learning.

Organisations must be flexible to remain competitive in business environments that are becoming increasingly competitive and complex because a complacent approach towards change can lead to inertia. If organisations do not live up to the competition, they will gradually face financial crisis and will have to be revived in order to survive (Landrum, Howell, & Paris, 2000). Redesigning organisational structures to be democratic learning organisations should make them more flexible and effective in the long run (Emery & Purser, 1996). Employee work teams have also been shown to increase productivity, customer service, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and team commitment (Krikman & Rosen, 1999).

Amy (2008) raises the question: what practices offer hope for sustained renewal of organisations that face a fluctuating environment and unexpected changes brought about by the information age? Organisational learning could provide the required competitive

advantage because of its improved capability for action through shared understanding. In this study, leadership is seen as a key factor in the quest to become a learning organisation because leaders challenge the status quo and assumptions regarding the environment, and guide followers in creating shared interpretations that become the basis for effective action (Amy, 2008).

Voulalas and Sharpe (2005) suggest that learning organisations, which are characterized by collaborative working environments and the flexibility to quickly respond to challenges, function more effectively in contemporary society than in traditional organisations. Organisational change efforts are generally introduced as structures and processes for information flow within organisations, including the setting of roles for allocating resources, and assigning roles and creating mechanisms for sending and receiving information. Structures and systems are set up to transmit information and knowledge within the organisation and between the organisation and its environment. Information flow in an organisation can increase or hinder organisational change and learning (Fauske & Raybould, 2005). Prewitt (2003) suggests that a learning organisation adapts itself in order to achieve its strategic goals enabling the learning of all the members in the organisation. One cannot learn without changing nor change without learning and as such transformation is the key factor in a learning organisation. A competitive learning organisation is an adaptive enterprise which constantly encourages purposeful individual, team and organisational learning to meet changing needs by understanding the dynamics of competitive forces and encouraging systems thinking (Jashapara, 1993).

Systems thinking can help to develop the capacity for putting pieces together and seeing wholes. It assumes that multiple causes have contributed to the current situation and that a single action will also have many outcomes, some of which may be unintentional. This form of thinking provides a framework to see the interrelationships between things and patterns of change, rather than static snapshots. Systems thinking can enable individuals to develop an understanding of the processes of change and how they affect the organisation. In essence, system thinking provides the integrating force throughout the organisation (Jashapara, 1993).

The need for learning as a competitive base has been highlighted by researchers like DeGeus (1988) who thinks that the only source of sustainable competitive advantage will probably arise from those companies which can learn faster than their competitors.

Many current models of the learning organisation are inclined to encourage certain aspects of learning rather than examining their ability to provide a competitive edge. Learning for its own sake is not likely to fulfil this function. The need to address the competitive dimension of learning has given rise to the concept of competitive learning organisations.

Most of the literature on schools as learning organisations refer to learning as a team and highlight the importance of individual learning which characterises organisational learning. On the other hand, a LO creates a learning culture where everyone is a learner and the organisation as a whole supports learning. Professional learning communities (PLC) are in some ways similar to learning organisations. Hence a consideration of PLCs will help understand the learning culture that prevails in some educational institutions.

Professional learning communities (PLC)

Learning communities, like learning organisations, are characterised by strategies that share elements of hope-fostering such as visioning and purposing, team building, facilitating communication, encouraging experimentation and risk-taking, promoting rewards and recognition, facilitating staff development, re-culturing, modelling self-learning, and creating time and space for learning (Walker, 2006). The salient feature of schools as professional learning communities is that they are collaborative learning communities. The learning community considers every member of the community as a learner. The aim of a professional learning community is to improve student performance by teachers engaging in research and problem solving which enables them to reflect on their practice. It promotes a culture that values collaboration and collegiality where staff members work as a team, support each other and share ideas (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003).

Louis, Marks and Kruse (1996) identified five elements that are critical to school professional community. These are shared norms and values that focus on student learning, reflective dialogue, de-privatisation of practice, and collaboration. These elements often support learning by making clear the types of pedagogies valued within the school and by providing opportunities for these pedagogies to be expressed and practised. Productive leadership encourages the development of schools as communities focused on learning by mobilising professional learning communities and aligning their

practices with the development and support of successful pedagogies (Louis, et al., 1996).

The characteristics of strong and sustainable professional learning communities are strong cultures of trusted colleagues who value each other personally and professionally. They are committed to their students and are willing to discuss and differ about evidence and data that can enlighten them about how to improve their practices in ways that benefit their students. They are willing to challenge one another's practice (Stoll & Louis, 2007).

According to Stoll and Louis (2007), a sustainable professional learning community is not a team of teachers meeting after a very tiring day at school, under the surveillance of a matriarchal or patriarchal school principal, to unpack data from assessments a way to work out quick-fix increases in test results. Sustainable professional learning communities make deep and broad learning their priority. They get better achievement as a consequence of putting learning before achievement and testing. Sustainable learning communities renew teachers' energy by stimulating their collective learning and use professional learning community's tools to put into action mandates from elsewhere. Sustainable professional communities work hard to acknowledge and build on the wisdom and experiences of all their members, not just existing enthusiasts who have worked in schools the longest (Stoll & Louis, 2007).

Little (1982) identified four kinds of teacher interaction that are vital to collegiality and professional community. These critical practices are recurrent discussions about teaching and learning, teaching and learning from one another, developing and evaluating teaching materials in collaboration, and observations followed by useful feedback (Little, 1982). These kinds of practices shape the school community making it more of a learning community (Lieberman & Miller, 2004, p. 91).

Direct links are being made between teacher leadership, distributed leadership and the building of a 'professional learning community. ... here teachers participate in leadership activities and decision-making' (Muijs and Harris, 2003, p. 440 cited in Gunter, 2005, p. 60). A composite version of current views probably incorporates the following qualities for a learning community:

- the members continually expand their capacity;
- that they develop new and expansive patterns of thinking;

- that they have collective aspirations;
- that they learn together;
- that they invest in their own learning.

(Bottery, 2004, p. 180)

However, this does not exhaust the possibilities. One might also wish, when specifically considering educational institutions as learning communities, to add other qualities. These might include:

- that they prioritize the personal and social above the purely functional;
- they are not exclusive for reasons of finance, race or religion;
- that they act as a bulwark for thinking determined neither by state nor by market;
- that they are not only reflective and reflexive about learning but about the cultural and political conditions surrounding that learning;
- that such reflexivity of learning lead to a criticality of existing frames of reference, of organisational structures, and of economic and political contexts.

(Bottery, 2004, p. 180)

In summary, it can be said that organisational learning and performance is closely related and that individual learning to improve job processes, impacts team goals and organisational goals. Employee's willingness to apply their acquired knowledge and experience to increase results through collective effort is how learning results in performance. The key purpose is to enable organisations to respond swiftly to external changes (DeGeus, 1988). Having considered how the concept of learning organisation has impacted the world of business and having set the context for the topic, the following literature considers how the idea of learning organisations has been implemented or trialled in educational fields.

The concept of learning organisation in educational settings

Organisations are desperately looking for new directions in an increasingly unstable environment. This has resulted in an upsurge of literature on organisational learning in education. According to Schein (1992), an organisation has to learn even more rapidly in a world of turbulent change. This creates a culture which acts as a continuous learning system. A learning organisation, or a learning community in an educational context, is characterised by transparent openness to learning of all its members (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000). The learning capacity of an educational institution helps it cope with challenges. It is a place where everyone is a learner and caters to the present and the future (Retna & Ng, 2006; Retna, 2008). Like any other organisation, schools

too are urged to make significant transformations to adapt and survive because they are now encountering greater uncertainty and new challenges (Levine, 2001).

According to Ng (2005), learning is the lifeline of a ‘learning school’ and its existence is centred on learning. The first and foremost priority of the school is learning and not results, school ranking or awards. This does not mean that results and awards are not important but by focusing on learning it allows the results and awards to follow as a consequence. Ng (2005) defines a ‘learning school’ as:

... a place where everyone is a learner. The students, teachers, leaders and administrators are all learners. The ethos of the school is an aspiration for everyone to be efficient and effective at learning and learning how to learn together. Members of the school really want to learn and find joy and satisfaction in learning (p. 1).

In order to understand a learning school, it is important to have an idea of the five disciplines of a learning organisation namely personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning and system thinking (Senge, 1990). Personal mastery is recurrent clarification and deepening of our personal vision while pragmatically assessing our current realities. This creates an innate tension so that we may harness our potentials to attain the results we really want (Senge, 1990). Mental models are preconceived ideas, assumptions and generalisations that are deep rooted in our minds. They influence the way we think and act (Senge, 1990). A shared vision is the ability to develop and embrace a shared picture of the future that we want to create (Senge, 1990). A team learns better when collective intelligence exceeds the sum of the intelligence of its individual members (Senge, 1990).

Ng (2005) says that we are more productive together due to the synergy of our expertise which can create exceptional results that are far better than the outcomes achieved by individuals. Education is a complex issue with many factors in play. Systems thinking enable us to see the interdependency between different factors and help to scrutinise the root causes of a problem, not merely the symptoms. In this way, we are able to identify the focal point of the problem and take the necessary action that would ensure optimum results. The basic principle in systems thinking is that the system is a whole made up of interrelated and interacting parts. Therefore even if we improve each part and if those parts are not functioning well together then the efficiency of the whole system may even be reduced (Ng, 2005).

Lam (2004) stated that the first stage of a school's evolutionary transition is the germination stage when the staff members of a school are engaged with the latest information and the acquisition of new knowledge. At the transformation stage, more members of the school are thinking at the system level. Leadership plays a key role at this stage in ensuring the sharing of information and group decision-making. As a result, everyone has access to the vital information which is no longer the possession of a few. School leadership must pave a way for a wider participation in the governance of the school by making information available to all the staff members (Lam, 2004). In the perpetuation stage, which is the final stage of development, shared vision and team learning are institutionalized by the schools as a formal organisation. There is an expectation to develop and maintain official records of the collaborative interpretation of information as a guideline for the future (Lam, 2004).

The findings from Hayes, Christie, Mills and Lingard's (2004) study conducted in Australia, indicated that the schools had enough technological, curricular and library resources, as well as plenty of professional development (PD) opportunities. These schools considered investing in professional development as a direct investment in educational agents, namely teachers and administrators, which in turn was viewed as a valuable investment in the future. In short, leaders of these schools were hope-driven facilitators and stewards of learning (Hayes, et al., 2004). Staff perceived an unsuccessful initiative as a learning opportunity and the principal supported and encouraged their learning. In these schools, the problems encountered today are transformed into opportunities of better approaches for the future. Students and staff experienced what is referred to as a learning flow as they were getting better at learning (Hayes, et al., 2004). In this way, Dimmock (2000) suggests that:

Professional development ... should ... be an integral part of the teacher's everyday classroom life. In this latter regard, the teacher becomes a true reflective, inquiring practitioner, and professional development is more an attitude of mind, pedagogical approach, and an evaluation and problem solving process than it is a formally organised event (p. 220).

There appears to be four important factors that influence a teachers' decision to share their learning. These are a tradition of professional isolation, norms of professional autonomy, teachers' views of knowledge, and issues involving time (Collinson & Cook, 2004). Stoll (1999) identified life and career experience, individual beliefs, knowledge, skills, motivation, confidence and a sense of interdependence as influencing teachers as

learners. Teacher's perceptions and actions about changing and developing their teaching strategies are also influenced by their beliefs and knowledge (Stoll, 1999).

Stoll (1999) states that by acknowledging the importance of teachers' emotional well being, the organisations value them and their contribution which helps build their trust and enhances their self esteem. On the other hand, neglecting the interpersonal and psychological processes leads teachers to behave defensively, protecting themselves from innovations that might expose their inadequacies. Stoll also noted that teachers are influenced by their ability to experiment with their own practices. They learn by working through a learning cycle of activity, reflection and evaluation; extracting meanings from this review and planning how to use the learning in the future.

Motivation is the starting point for learning (Stoll, 1999). There has to be a good reason for the change like some sort of catalyst or urgency to motivate a busy and often overworked teacher to devote time and effort towards change and new learning. While many teachers may express individuality and may at times choose to work and learn alone, some see the potential within groups, and know that they and their work benefit from collaboration (Stoll, 1999).

The final section provides insights into the concept of workplace culture as this impacts the members within the organisation and their performance.

Workplace culture

School culture in the UK (and throughout the world) does not form a homogeneous body of literature and hence plotting is a tenuous exercise. In addition, it is not befitting to give a single definition, interpretation, application, or even assume that the term itself 'school culture' is appropriate (Prosser, 1999). "Organisational culture is about: how organisations work when no one is looking" (Morgan, 1997, p.145, cited in Prosser, 1999, p.1). Hargreaves (1994) suggests that culture describes how things are, and acts as screen or lens through which the world is viewed. In essence, it defines reality for those within a social organisation (Hargreaves, 1994). Each school has a different reality or mindset of school life, often captured in the simple phrase 'the way we do things here' (Deal & Kennedy, 1993, cited in Prosser, 1999, p. 3). Each school has its own mindset in relation to what occurs in its external environment.

Organisational culture is: 'the interweaving of the individual into a community and the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes members of one known group from another. It is the values, norms, beliefs

and customs that an individual holds in common with members of the social unit or group'.

(Ogbonna, 1993, p. 42 cited in Prosser, 1999, p. 1)

In Barth's (1990) view, successful school improvement is based on an ownership mentality, where schools define their own direction, irrespective of external demands. Essentially, real school improvement can only come from within (Barth, 1990 cited in Stoll, 1999, p. 33).

A caring workplace is the striking feature of a learning culture. Members are more willing to share information and less apprehensive about being unjustly judged by others when participating in a caring environment which generates trust and facilitates an enthusiastic exploration of new ideas and knowledge (Prewitt, 2003). Deal and Peterson's (1999) study explored how three principals, working with other leaders, formed a strong school culture. They mention that the teachers at Hawthorne Elementary school worked together easily. They learned to appreciate different gifts that each of them brought to the table and the principal encouraged staff to visit other teachers' classrooms (Deal & Peterson, 1999).

Yeo (2002) noted that learning is influenced by team work which leads to the exchange of ideas and a sense of belonging. The working environment is another factor that is important to organisational learning as employees are motivated to learn if their peers are all performing well. Team learning is encouraged in a healthy working environment, where members influence one another through their learning. Yeo (2002) observed that the psychological and physical elements of a working environment can be supportive or detrimental and as a result, foster or hinder learning. For example, a difficult job can be made easier by a supportive team environment and on the other hand a destructive team environment can make it more difficult.

The most critical aspect in developing a collaborative culture is creating the supportive conditions for dialogue. A culture where an exchange of ideas flourish is a place where everyone can make a difference thereby nurturing the capacity needed to build mature and sustainable learning communities. Knowing our beliefs and assumptions and inviting others to question our thoughts will bring about a change in self and finally organisational change (Stoll & Louis, 2007).

Holistic leaders are associated with the growth of self awareness and the awareness of others. They create learning environments that promote equality, compassion, emancipation and creativity for all community members. A learning community which provides scope and tolerance for individual expression and the individual's processes of meaning-making reflects through its practice an interconnectedness of the mind, body and emotions (Beattie, 2002). Leadership for learning creates and sustains conditions that favour learning which are an environment that nurtures the learning of all the staff members; everyone having a chance to reflect on the nature, skills and processes of learning; creating a physical and social space that stimulates and celebrates learning; a safe and secure environment that allows pupils and teachers to take risks, cope with failure and respond positively to challenges and providing tools and strategies which improve thinking about learning and the practices of teaching (MacBeath, 2007).

A school that has a capacity for managing change has features such as staff development or a focus on professional inquiry and reflection. Underlying such features are three capabilities that lie at the organisational core. These are:

- A monitoring capability- This capability provides the school with the skill of linking internal self-evaluation to external potentialities.
- A proactivity capability- This capability generates optimism and confidence.
- A resource deployment- This capability breeds goal achievement.

(Hargreaves, 1999, p. 65)

If these deep capabilities which reflect, respectively, the spatial, temporal and resource dimensions of organisational life are visible through the school's culture, then the school is probably well placed to enjoy continuing effectiveness in an unstable and changing environment (Hargreaves, 1999, p. 65).

Senge (1993) provides 'wisdom of teams' justification for workplace teaming. Although empowerment is implicit in Senge's (1993) argument, his primary concern was with collective intelligence. Team learning is one of five characteristics of a model of the learning organisation.

There are always some limitations for organisations trying to transform the way they think or perform. Teacher professional communities and learning organisations are useful concepts for looking at schools as places of learning but it is also important to identify that it is possible for such concepts to operate as technologies of control (Hayes, Christie, Mills, & Lingard, 2004). Professional communities may be easily

adopted as an approach for promoting management goals, without building on teacher's interests; a form of 'contrived collegiality' (see Hargreaves, 1994).

Professional learning communities may be used to obtain consent in ways which are innately undemocratic and do not identify genuine differences in teacher's views (Hayes et al., 2004). The same caution is necessary in using the term learning organisation. Ironically, schools are not necessarily learning organisations in the broad sense of the term as developed by Argyris and Schön (1978) and Senge (1992) even though they are places of learning for young people. Schools may have a low capacity for problem solving, for learning from their experiences and their environments, and in changing themselves accordingly. Applying the term learning organisation to schools without being critical may result in an unintentional overlooking of the work that schools need to do if they are places of organisational and individual learning (Hayes et al., 2004).

Voulalas and Sharpe (2005) have identified that finding the time to bring about transformation as one of the main administrative barriers. Time is required to create, communicate and implement an alternative school vision. Time needs to be spent on professional development, resource gathering, and collaborative team building. Lack of clear communication networks, insufficient resources, lack of commitment from stakeholders, power struggles among stakeholders, and the size of the school are other administrative barriers. It appears to be more difficult to implement transformational processes in larger schools. Staff in well established schools can oppose change because it adversely affects their traditional power and prestige. This power struggle reduces the extent of power sharing; an important feature of schools as learning communities (Voulalas & Sharpe, 2005).

Another factor for the weak linkage between organisational learning and performance could be due to a 'myopia of learning' (Yeo, 2003). This is when organisations ignore the distant future, disregard the larger picture and overlook failures. These problems hinder learning and limit performance outcomes. The proper management of knowledge and intellectual capital is also very important in sustaining an organisations competitive advantage and performance (Marquardt, 2000). Sometimes the difficulty is the misalignment of goals between individuals, teams and the organisation. The various goals are not unified by a shared vision, resulting in independently unrelated goals. Such a situation often disintegrates collective performance reducing the organisations' competitive advantage (Coad & Berry, 1998).

The rate and complexity of change is rapidly increasing and becoming a fundamental characteristic of organisational effectiveness rather than a sporadic requirement. However, the ability of organisations to execute change effectively appears to be limited. There appears to be a rising need to identify leadership behaviours which will effectively implement change and build sustained change capability (Higgs, 2003).

The following chapter is the second part of the literature review which highlights the role of leadership in a learning organisation. Having analysed various characteristics of a LO, I turn now to consider the intricate role of leadership as an integral part of a LO. I will start with a general introduction of the type of leadership that prevails in a LO followed by the notion of transformational leadership. Transformational leadership appears to be the preferred form of leadership in foreseeing change. Finally, I review how different types of educational leadership facilitate learning.

Chapter III: Literature Review: Leadership in Learning Organisations

Leaders are the stewards of organizational energy ... They inspire or demoralize others first by how effectively they manage their own energy and next by how well they mobilize, focus, invest and renew the collective energy of those they lead.

(Loeher & Schwartz, 2003, p.5, cited in Fullan, 2005, p. 35)

Introduction

This chapter analyses the literature on leadership in learning organisations and the transformative type of leadership that exists within these organisations. The literature on learning organisations refers to the importance of leadership in the process of implementing or facilitating the learning organisation concept in any organisation. There is an increased expectation placed on leaders with regard to implementing change, and indeed elsewhere in the educational change literature commentators highlight principalship as the crucial ingredient in school improvement (Fink & Brayman, 2004). In this way ‘change’ is seen as the catalyst for a learning organisation.

The literature often refers to the type of leadership that helps create or sustain a learning organisation and hence I have provided a section on leadership and then focused in particular on transformational leadership. Transformational leadership seems to be central as far as transforming current practices or introducing new concepts within an organisation. School leadership is then considered alongside the type of leadership that exists in professional learning communities.

The purpose of this literature review is to provide an overview of learning organisations and its strong links with leadership. The literature review identifies the gaps that exist in the present literature thereby showing that there is a need to investigate the relationships between learning organisations and leadership as interwoven entities.

Leadership in learning organisations

Capacity-building principals align their actions to the belief that everyone has the right, responsibility and capacity to work as a leader.

(Lambert, 2003, p. 43)

The learning organisation (LO) requires a fundamental rethinking of leadership. Leaders become designers, teachers, and stewards of the collective vision (Senge, 1990). Leadership in a LO involves the ability to coach and teach. It is not exclusive, authoritative, or assumed, but learned and earned (Kerka, 1995). In this way, “effective leadership may emerge anywhere true learning is taking place” (Gratton, 1993, p.100).

Senge (1996) defined leaders in LOs as people who are genuinely committed to deep change in themselves and their organisations. They value learning and become experts at learning in the context of the organisation. A leader has to learn how to learn and must assume the role of a teacher in LOs. The ability to create a collective vision of the future with other members of the organisation appears to be a critical action for leaders in learning organisations. Communicating the common vision to the organisation seems to be of collateral importance. Senge (1990) referred to informational flow as the “purpose story” or the “overarching explanation of why they do what they do (p. 353).” He described the difference between the current and the desired state as building creative tension or the force that can direct followers toward the vision by allowing them to share it as they understand their current reality (Senge, 1990).

According to Deal and Peterson (1999) the “paradox of leading leadership must come from the principal, but he or she cannot be the only source of leadership to sustain strong, positive cultures, leadership must come from everyone” (p. 81). The school improvement literature contains similar messages about the types of leadership that accompany positive change in schools. It has consistently underlined the importance of teacher involvement in decision-making processes, and the contribution of strong collegial relationships to positive school improvement and change (Townsend, 2007, cited in Harris, 2008). Within the growing number of school-to-school networks, it has been argued that distributed leadership may provide greater opportunities for members to learn from one another (Harris, 2008). This form of leadership is the preferred option as far as the literature on networked learning communities and professional learning communities are concerned and also an important component in securing improved learning (Harris, 2008).

This principle of shared leadership reflects the value of the centrality of leadership to any successful learning community (Frost, MacBeath & Moller, 2009, p. 161). Similarly, Printy and Marks (2006, cited in Collinson, 2008) states that new understandings of leadership are emerging, moving away from an emphasis on individual leaders toward a notion of leadership as:

- “distributed and interdependent..., a set of practices or tasks that can and should be carried out by people at all levels of the organisation”;
- “embedded in social action...,[a] collective activity that takes place in and through relationships and webs of influence among individuals who have common interests and goals”; and

- “a process of learning-undertaken by individuals and by groups-that results in greater shared understanding and ultimately, positive action”

(Printy & Marks, 2006, p. 126, cited in Collinson, 2008, p. 448)

Viewing leadership as dispersed helps organisations to more effectively utilise all the talents within them, and in so doing not only facilitates the achievement of goals, but also the empowerment of individuals (Bottery, 2004). Transformational leadership is a type of leadership that emulates some of the desired characteristics of leadership that facilitates transformation or change as made explicit in Printy and Marks (2006) quote.

Transformational leadership

In the face of complex challenges, a leader, no matter how skilled and otherwise effective, cannot simply step into the breach, articulate a new vision, make some clarifying decisions, and proclaim success. Because a complex challenge requires a whole system and all the people in it to change it lies beyond the scope of the individual person to confront.

(Yukl & Lepsinger, 2007, p. 11)

Transformational leadership is seen as a promising form of leadership for advancing educational institutions because it can cause essential change, resolve major concerns, and create new paradigms (Banerji & Krishnan, 2000). Such a leader supports open communication which creates team motivation. S/he also helps build the confidence of her/his team members by providing necessary training and encouraging team building. Dimmock and Walker (2000) too affirm the link between team motivation and goal-setting and visioning. Teamwork then, calls for participatory leadership and proactive support for change (Walker & Dimmock, 2000). To this end, a transformational leader possesses the necessary drive to initiate and maintain transformational processes within the organisation. S/he must be capable of articulating a convincing and realistic vision and focus others towards a new critical path. If required, the organisation may need to be redesigned to support the transformation (Banerji & Krishnan, 2000).

Charbonneau (2004) noted that the popularity and attractiveness of this leadership style stems at least in part, from its consistent association with superior performance in a range of organisations. Transformational leaders facilitate the thinking of old problems in new ways. They are often capable of communicating a vision and mobilising the energy necessary for change. Their behaviours and traits include empathy, the need for power, good rhetorical skill, intelligence, and the consideration for others. The effect of

this leadership style is that it inspires or motivates followers, gains commitment from followers, changes attitudes and supports the goals of the individual and organisation.

Burns (1978) sees the transformational leader as reflecting the traits and behaviours that are necessary for initiating change. These leaders identify themselves as change agents and take responsibility for change. They are courageous and take risks, believe in and trust people, have clear values and are value driven. They are lifelong learners and visionaries who can deal with complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty and share their vision with others (Burns, 1978).

According to Schein (1992), the most intriguing leadership role in culture management is one in which the leader tries to develop a learning organisation that will be able to make its own continuous diagnosis and self-manage whatever transformations are needed as the environment changes. The learning leader must exhibit the self-confidence that active problem solving leads to learning and thereby set a suitable example for other members of the organisation. The process of learning must eventually be made part of the culture and not seen as any given solution to any given problem (Schien, 1992).

Despite its limitations, there are certain elements of transformational leadership which do lend themselves to educational and ethical consideration. It appears to be very important for leaders and educators to have a clear vision of what they want to achieve and how they want to achieve it. Moreover, when its heroic implications are reduced or eliminated, transformational leadership can advocate for processes that involve the contributions of all parties, rather than being a matter of one person “doing leadership” to others (Bottery, 2004, p. 19).

A trade mark competency of future leaders will be their ability to instil a learning mindset into their organisation. The upcoming generation of leaders will have to be a generation of learning evangelists by highlighting the importance of learning and establishing a context where employees want to and are able to learn. Corporate leaders will have to be more capable of strengthening their organisations for future challenges and increasing competitive and innovative abilities (Brown & Posner, 2001). On the other hand it would be interesting to see the changing role of educational leaders and the extent to which their practices help to promote learning.

Leadership for learning / Educational leadership

Organisations need people at every level with the courage and skill to step up to leadership opportunities, whether they're formally designated leaders or not.

(Bergmann, Hutson & Russ-Eft, 1999, p. x)

Leadership in the field of education terrain is very busy. Gunter (2001) uses the metaphor of a field to identify leadership as a place of struggle over and within theory and method where activity is structured, entry and boundaries are controlled. She says that leadership knowledge workers who engage with what we know and generate new knowledge about what we need to know are located in a range of employment and organisational settings, from teachers in classrooms through to professors in higher education institutions. It is a territory where answers to particular leadership problems are sought, and it is also an interesting site for the exploration of enduring questions about human beings (Gunter, 2001). In addition, educational professionals are being objectified and stratified into leaders and followers according to neo-liberal versions of the performing school. Leadership is being defined as particular tasks and behaviours that enable those who are responsible and accountable for learning outcomes and measures of school improvement. However, this objective definition of leadership does not float free of organisational and personal histories that also shape and enable agency, and how real people with real lives struggle within and through the contradictions that challenge their values (Gunter, 2001).

Fullan (2005) argues that new directions call for sophisticated leadership at the school level. The principal of the future must lead a complex learning organisation by helping to establish new cultures in schools that have deep capacities in continuous problem solving and improvement. What lever is going to be powerful enough to usher in the new era? That lever involves a radical revisit to the moral purpose of public schools.

Walker and Kwong (2006, cited in MacBeath, 2007) argue that learning is more likely to result if school leaders are members of learning and support networks. They point out that most school principals belong to many different kinds of network but these may not necessarily further either the cause of their own professional learning or that of their staff or that of students. It is important, therefore, write Walker and Kwong, that their key networks are shaped or expanded to incorporate a stronger emphasis on learning and the conditions which make learning more likely to happen. As they suggest, networks can develop at different levels, from neighbourhood to international, from

educative to industrial, from principal colleagues to other leaders and educators. These must, however, have organic roots rather than being tightly structured or imposed.

A willingness to learn together does not come about without structural as well as cultural change. Successful school leaders understand that the profound changes in professional identity bring losses as well as opportunities, but they find creative ways of helping educators to acknowledge, articulate, and deal with the loss (Bridges, 1997 cited in MacBeath, 2007). These views on leadership can be explained in relation to my study and backed by the school Education Review Office (ERO) report and the data collected from the participants.

Leithwood's (1994) model of transformational leadership (especially in relation to education) is conceptualised along seven dimensions. These dimensions are building school vision, establishing schools goals, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individualised support, modelling best practice and important organisational values, demonstrating high performance expectations, creating a productive school culture, and developing a structure to foster participation in school decisions. Moreover the four 'I's used to define leadership within transformative education are idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration (Jantzi, Leithwood, & Steinbach, 1999). A description of the four 'I's of transformational leadership approach clearly indicates that they correspond with a particular learning orientation.

Table 1 presents a summary of how learning orientations are supported by the four 'I's of transformational leadership.

Table 1: A summary of how the four 'I's support a learning orientation

Learning orientation	Supported by transformational leadership
Intrinsic interest in work	Intellectual stimulation and idealised influence
A view of oneself as being curious	Intellectual stimulation
Prefer challenging tasks	Inspirational motivation and idealised influence
Regard mistakes as part of the learning process	Individual consideration and idealised influence
Effort and success are positively correlated	Inspirational motivation and idealised influence
Believe that personal qualities and abilities maybe developed	Individual consideration and intellectual stimulation

(Source: Coad & Berry, 1998, p. 167).

Harris (2002) suggests that what is required in education is a leadership approach that transforms the feelings, attitudes, and beliefs of others. Effective leaders are constantly and consistently managing a number of competing tensions and dilemmas. This form of leadership is not based on power and control but on the ability to work with others and to enable others to work independently (Day, 2002). Schein (1992) described such a leader as supporting a learning culture, identifying dysfunctionality, and encouraging change; the organisation focuses on the process of learning.

Transformational practices show a shift from a type of leadership based on power and control to one centered on the capability to work with others and to facilitate others to act. The reshaping of a school's structure depends significantly on the principal's role and specifically on the shaping of a school as a LO (Leithwood, 1994; Silins & Mulford, 2002; Silins, Mulford, Zarins & Bishop, 2000; Silins, Zarins & Mulford, 2002). Schools that make sincere efforts to widen the base of leadership so as to include teachers and administrators, define a shared vision based on student learning, and provide a culture of continual support are a lot more likely to make great strides in becoming learning organisations and addressing important student needs (Stoll & Louis, 2007). Transformational leadership empowers individuals in an organisation to create a collaborative culture that encourages teacher development and problem solving (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006).

Transformational leadership also encourages open dialogue, clear lines of communication and collaborative decision-making. It invests heavily in continued professional development that is congruent with organisational needs. Transformational leadership promotes learning that challenges and keeps under constant review those organisational norms and values that are apt to be taken for granted, especially in times of rapid change (Dimmock & Walker, 2005).

Michael Knapp and his associates explain that leadership for learning means “creating powerful, equitable learning opportunities for students, professionals and the system” in which leaders “persistently and publicly focus their own attention and that of others on learning and teaching” (cited in Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 27). Principals of professional learning communities lead through a shared vision and values rather than through rules. They involve staff members in the school decision-making processes and empower individuals to act by providing staff with the information, training and parameters they need to make good decisions (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

According to Beattie (2002), the focus for school leaders is to co-create a learning environment which enables authentic self-expression, development of relationships and the development of individual's personality as a whole within the organisation. The process of leading and learning simultaneously facilitates the growth of others, the search for new insights and the adaptation and re-construction of prior knowledge in the light of new knowledge.

MacBeath (2007) argues that learning is after all, what schools are for and ultimately what school leadership is about. In this way, leadership for learning involves a focus on learning in which it is assumed that everyone within the school and the system itself are learners. Learning is enhanced then when people have leadership opportunities.

Begley and Stefkovich (2004) say that educational leadership is now more multi-faceted, much less predictable, less structured, and more conflict-laden. There is a need for school administrators to acquire new skills in how to lead and manage outside the immediate and traditional professional context of the school. Leaders of future schools must become both reflective practitioners and life-long learners who understand the importance of the intellectual aspects of leadership and are authentic in their leadership practices. The traditional parameters of managerial and efficiency focused responses to administrative situations must now be improved by introducing more creative, sophisticated and morally defensible approaches to leadership (Begley & Stefkovich, 2004). In addition, leaders face the responsibility of making organisational learning a high priority, creating an environment that is both psychologically and culturally conducive for collective learning, and designing structures that facilitate the transfer of learning from the individual through the organisational level (Amy, 2008). A complex environment calls for a form of leadership that stimulates transformation in contrast to a command and control type of leadership. Such leaders motivate others by empowering and developing them by acting as their coaches and mentors (Amy, 2008).

Lambert (2000) argues that leadership has to be embedded in the school community as a whole because leadership is about the collective and collaborative construction of knowledge and meaning by learning together (cited in Hayes, et al., 2004). Educational leaders of the future have to be a catalyst of cultural change who have the bigger picture in mind and are capable of conceptualising complex thoughts (Fullan, 2001). Leading the learning community is about taking the lead to build the confidence of all the members who make up the learning community and it is not merely about formal school

leadership. In this way, adaptive leaders involve the whole learning community in an exchange of transformative knowledge and authentic learning which they are able to do with a confidence that is quite contagious (Walker, 2006).

Dinham's (2005) study explored the role of principals in producing outstanding educational outcomes in New South Wales' government schools. They were found to be informed risk takers who were prepared to experiment and to offer support to those taking the initiatives. They possess and utilise high-level interpersonal skills and their motives and actions are trusted by others. Students, staff and community members speak positively of principals who are open, honest, fair, friendly and approachable. The principals greatly value teacher learning and therefore fund staff development inside and outside the school. They release staff to engage in professional development activities and bring others into the school to provide assistance. Staff development days and meetings are often utilised to provide teachers with new skills and knowledge and the confidence to try different teaching approaches (Dinham, 2005).

Rationale of the present study

Learning organisations and professional learning communities are ways of framing relationships in schools in which ongoing teacher learning is complementary to student learning (Hayes et al., 2004). How else can children learn if there are no models of inquiry, reflection, risk taking, empathy and moral courage to be emulated? From the literature, knowledge acquisition is very much associated with organisational learning. The literature on the leader's role in the learning organisation is good at making recommendations but slower to provide a solid research foundation upon which to base them. Current theories of the LO have several gaps that will need filling concerning the implementation of learning processes and structures and the underlying psychodynamic nature of organisations (Starkey, 1998).

According to Levine (2001), we have scant understanding of the work and learning of others. It is clear that our understanding of organisations, learning and work is still unclear, changing, and likely to keep changing. We have yet to envision the future of organisations as adaptive, virtual networks of activities. If we accept this challenge and the shift that it represents, we will begin to achieve solutions that reflect this vision and foster communication, coordination and collaboration. As our experience base grows, so will our ability to create spaces where active and interactive learning actively occur (Levine, 2001).

All these gaps in the existing literature show clearly the need for more comprehensive research in this field. The reason for drawing specific information from relevant literature is to substantiate my views and concerns about the topic. It is also to create a broad literature base for analysing the findings of my research. Amy (2008) talks about the change brought about by the information age which is applicable to the present study which also relates to the ideas expressed by Levine (2001) who states that technology adoption efforts lead to learning. I agree with Fauske (2005) who mentions that the lack of opportunities for educators to interact and develop shared understandings is a big obstacle to organisational learning in schools. Even though this is not a major issue at the moment as far as the present study goes, it is a concern that is being voiced by some of the participants who see the need to maintain the communication and collegiality that exists within this school community.

As pointed out by Prewitt (2003), a caring work place facilitates the sharing of information which to some extent defines the school in this study. The characteristics of this school appears to match that of a LO. Therefore I was interested in doing a case study which considered the school in terms of the LO concept. The research findings may help staff in their future endeavour to continue the positive learning that has been happening within the organisation.

Unlike the literature critiquing managerialism by Codd (2005) and Lee, O'Neill, and McKenzie (2004), there is far more freedom and flexibility in the way things are carried out in this particular organisation, the research site for this case study. Since this particular school exhibited most of the desired characteristics of a LO, it was chosen as the research site to further explore the concept of a LO.

The concept of a learning organisation is being acknowledged in educational institutions around the world. In New Zealand, it is relatively new to schools and educational institutions. The potential for future research and the growing relevance to the field of education are some of the other reasons why I have chosen this topic.

This research explores an innovative and transformative school that exhibits the characteristics of a learning organisation and does so within the present political and educational constraints. The study examined the operations and intentions of staff within this particular school who continue to proactively plan for innovation in today's educational climate as outlined in the literature above. Therefore the purpose of the present study was to find out if this school is a transformative learning organisation in

the making? More specifically, the research question was, how does the school show the qualities of a learning organisation? This study seeks to add to the few studies which have focused on learning organisations and which have emphasised the importance of incorporating the five disciplines of a learning organisation.

Summary

The major factors outlined in this literature review in relation to the present study include a range of literature that relate to learning organisations and leadership. Chapter two was an extensive but not exhaustive literature analysis of the concept of learning organisations in business settings and educational institutions. As an introduction to this section on learning organisations, some literature on the political context of New Zealand education has been discussed to establish the contextual background for this study. This chapter also included literature on professional learning communities and the limitations encountered by learning organisations which highlighted the dearth of literature around certain areas like how to create and sustain learning organisations and ways and means of making learning part of a school culture.

In chapter three, I have analysed the literature related to different types of leadership that facilitate the principles of a learning organisations. I have included a general introduction of leadership in learning organisations which is substantiated by the section on transformational leadership. Building on this section, I have analysed the literature base of different types of leadership in schools/educational organisations that emulate the characteristics of a learning organisation. In the next chapter, I discuss the methodological considerations and the theoretical framework that relate to my study. Furthermore, this chapter represents the methodology and methods of data collection and data analysis which were used in my research project.

Chapter IV: Methodology

Many a researcher would like to tell the whole story but of course cannot, the whole story exceeds anyone's knowing and anyone's telling.

(Stake, 1996, p. 240)

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the concept of a learning organisation in a particular school context. This focus includes a need to understand the nature of the leadership in a learning organisation. In this chapter, I outline the theoretical framework and methodology that was used to answer the main research question: "Is Whangaparaoa College a transformative learning organisation in the making?" The research context is described in detail to provide the reader with background information about the research context. This is followed by the methods used to ensure the trustworthiness of the data collected and the measures taken to address the ethical issues related to this study. The chapter concludes with an insight into insider research.

Theoretical framework

The overarching research approach for this research draws on a qualitative framework. In this research, the socio-rationalist paradigm treats reality, and indeed organizational reality, as a social construction and a product of human imagination (Morrison, 2007). It assumes that the social order is created through the interaction of people, ideas and actions. Positive change and development in organisations are the result of new ideas and theories (Bushe, 1995). The qualitative researcher then tries to see things from the participant's point of view.

The qualitative nature of case study methodology best suits the specific research question of this inquiry. Qualitative methodology is beneficial when researching how things work in a particular context, when looking at processes, how participants make sense of daily social interactions, and when the research context is constantly changing (Mason, 2002). In this way, educational researchers are part of this continual process of meaning construction in order to understand it (Scott & Morrison, 2006).

Qualitative researchers endeavour to understand a given context as a whole. Therefore a description and interpretation of a person's social environment, or an organisation's external context, is important by and large for understanding what has been said in an interview. This holistic approach assumes that the whole is seen as a complex system

that is larger than the sum of its parts. The researcher then looks for the complete or unifying nature of specific settings (Patton, 2002).

Guba and Lincoln (1994) note that researchers need to make explicit both their ontological and epistemological assumptions. The interpretive researcher's ontological assumption is that social reality is locally and specifically constructed by humans through their action and interaction (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). An interpretive approach provides an in depth view of the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who experienced it. Interpretive research assumes that the researcher becomes the vehicle by which this reality is revealed. Neuman (1997) affirms that "social reality is based on people's definition of it" (p. 69). These statements show that interpretive researchers do not recognise the existence of an objective world instead they see the world strongly bounded by a particular time and specific context. The interpretive researcher's epistemological assumption is that "findings are literally created as the investigation proceeds" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111).

In qualitative and interpretive case studies, the researcher is personally involved in the process of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 1998; Morgan & Smircich, 1980; Morse, 1994). However, in interpretive case studies, the researcher becomes a "passionate participant" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 115) because of the close interaction with the participants of the study. Even though this aspect might be regarded as a pitfall, it is one of this approach's advantages for it provides a deep insight into the topic under study because "an interpretive explanation documents the participants' point of view and translates it into a form that is intelligible to readers" (Neuman, 1997, p. 72). In fact, interpretive research enables the researcher to present their own constructions as well as those of all the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Neuman, 1997).

This particular research is an interpretive case study of a school in Auckland, New Zealand which incorporated innovative and transformative approaches as part of its process of development. The focus of the research is to capture the experiences of the participants who were part of the process and to interpret their views in terms of the concept of a learning organisation.

The research approach

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Case study comprises an all-encompassing method

covering the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis (Yin, 1993). In this sense, the case study is not either a data collection tactic or merely a design feature alone but a comprehensive research strategy (Yin, 2003).

An educational case study is an empirical enquiry which is carried out in a particular educational context. The purpose of such a case study is to describe, interpret or explain what is happening in the particular context without making value statements or trying to bring about any change.

An alternative definition of case study is proposed by Wilson (1979, cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 29) who argues that it is a process that tries to describe and analyse some entity in complex and comprehensive terms as it unfolds over a period of time. This method, which stresses development over time, is used to explore Whangaparaoa (WGP) College's transition into a secondary school since 2005.

In a case study, sufficient data are collected for the researcher to be able:

- to explore *significant* features of the case
- to create *plausible* interpretations of what is found
- to test for the *trustworthiness* of these interpretations
- to construct a *worthwhile* argument or story
- to relate the argument or story to any *relevant* research in the literature
- to convey *convincingly* to an audience this argument or story
- to provide an audit trail by which other researchers may *validate* or *challenge* the findings or construct alternative arguments

(Bassey, 2007, p. 143)

One inherent limitation in case study research, however, concerns the issue of generalized ability (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003). Obviously, the findings of this research represent the views of the participants in this study within a particular context at a specific time. This study thus attempted to increase generalisability by relying on multiple cases within the research site (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Specifically, staff members representing varying backgrounds and levels of responsibility were selected. Finally, the critical incident technique helped to reduce recall error by focusing participants on actual situations (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Some academics criticise case study designs for insufficient rigour and lack of objectivity (Yin, 2003). This study tried to ascertain credibility by posing specific research questions, positioning the research in the scholarly literature, and making explicit the research design and methods (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Moreover the study maintained similarity by using a standard interview protocol. A pilot study and a

self interview were also conducted to validate the interview process. Limitations are inherent to a qualitative approach therefore precautions were taken to enhance the rigour of the study.

Advocating or declaring a position is common in qualitative research, whereby the researchers describe themselves theoretically in relation to the research being conducted, thus ‘declaring one’s position’ (Mutch, 2005). While this is insider research, it must be noted that, as the researcher, I was not present at the research site when it became a secondary school in 2005 nor was I part of the planning process that was in place to help WGP College become a lead school in learning. The researcher joined the school in 2006 and, at the time of the study, had been at the school for a year. As such, I was still in the process of understanding the systems in place and the school’s history. This explains the researcher’s position in terms of the topic being researched.

Research context: Whangaparaoa College

The particular research context for this case study is Whangaparaoa College in New Zealand¹. This college has been chosen as the research site because it values the high importance of learning which is the key characteristic of a LO as well as educational leadership. Being a new school provides opportunities to be innovative and to work differently with its learners and its community. The secondary school was in its third year when the research commenced in 2007.

Background information about the school

Whangaparaoa College will be a lead school in learning, and in achieving excellence in all fields of learner endeavour.

(School’s mission statement, <http://www.wgpcollege.school.nz/>)

This section provides a context in which to understand the development of Whangaparaoa College (hereafter, WGP College) as a learning organisation. The information contained here is sourced from the school’s website

¹ In educational research in New Zealand, ethics and ethical considerations are taken very seriously and it is customary not to explicitly name the research site or institution, however, in this research I was given explicit permission by the principal and the school’s Board of Trustees to name the school in this research. By contrast, following standard research ethical protocols the teacher leaders (participants) are not named and pseudonyms are used instead so as to preserve both anonymity and also confidentiality.

<http://www.wgpcollege.school.nz/> and also from the most recent Education Review Office² (ERO) evaluation report on the school.

Whangaparaoa College is a secondary school located in the Rodney district in New Zealand. It opened in 2005 with Year 7, 8 and 9 students. A new year level was added to the college each year, with plans to reach Year 13 by 2009. According to the ERO report released in July 2007 WGP College has been ranked as a decile³ 8 school. At the time of the ERO's visit, the school had 1136 students on the roll and this number has grown to 1439 students in 2009. The college has faced ongoing development since 2005 in areas like infrastructure, number of staff, resources and new learning programmes. The first group of NCEA⁴ level one learners graduated in 2007, followed by level two in 2008. The college supports an integrated approach to the learning and development of literacy and thinking skills. The College offers integrated studies⁵ one (IS1), which is English and Social Science, and integrated studies two (IS2), which is Mathematics and Science up to year 9. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is an integral part of the teaching and learning process at all year levels.

The college is in the final year of a six-year development period.

As stated in the school's website:

Whangaparaoa College incorporates the best educational practice from New Zealand and around the world. The school delivers an innovative curriculum with intensive use of modern technologies within an environmentally aware site.

² The Education Review Office (ERO) reviews schools and early childhood education services in New Zealand every three years on average and publishes national reports on current education practice.

³ A decile is a group into which similar schools in New Zealand are placed. Schools are grouped in a way that reflects the average family or whanau situations and socio-economic backgrounds of the students at that school. Schools in decile one have the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic backgrounds and schools in decile ten have the highest proportion of students from high socio-economic backgrounds.

⁴ NCEA stands for the National Certificate of Educational Achievement which is the official secondary school qualification in New Zealand.

⁵ Integrated studies refer to interdisciplinary curriculum where two or more subjects are combined together. In this case IS1 combines English and Social Science and IS2 combines Mathematics and Science. Jacobs (1989) defines interdisciplinary as "a knowledge view and curricular approach that consciously applies methodology and language from more than one discipline to examine a central theme, issue, problem, topic, or experience" (p. 8).

The school has exceptionally modern facilities designed specifically for an improved learning environment. The Science and Technology building which opened in February 2007 is a magnificent building incorporating the latest in building design and development. There are also innovative and exciting technological developments in this building. The Performing Arts Centre is a creative, modern building. The drama and music rooms fan off the theatre which is an effective and innovative approach. The structure commands a presence from those who enter it and has had positive feedback from the public who are impressed by its architectural design. In addition, the J block which opened in 2008 incorporates the latest design concepts for modern learning, which include interactive whiteboards and a wireless network link for use with lap tops. Most of the above information about the school which is gathered from the school website is substantiated by the ERO review.

Education Review Office (ERO) report

The first report for Whangaparaoa College was released on the 2nd July 2007. The ERO report stated that all the facilities in the new buildings consist of distinctive architecture with flexible, light-filled learning spaces. The building design reflects the schools aspiration for learning to occur in open, visible spaces (<http://www.ero.govt.nz/>). The report describes the teaching practice at the school as continually improving through ‘sound’ professional development. As reported in the review, the best teaching is well planned, caters for individual differences, includes a range of learning activities within the lesson, is well paced and uses thinking skills and ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) naturally as part of learning (<http://www.ero.govt.nz/>).

The review acknowledged the ‘sound professional leadership’ provided by the principal that is in keeping with the school charter and school’s wider plans for ongoing development. The leadership encourages learning as the ‘core business of the College.’ The ERO report also mentioned the complementary skills of the Principal and the Senior Learning Team who work collaboratively in the best interest of the learners. According to the review, the new trustees⁶ are focused on developing achievement and teacher professional development. They are in a position to build on the work of the foundation trustees through the range of different skills they bring to the board.

⁶ Trustees refer to the school’s board of trustees who are elected members from the community who are in charge of overseeing the school.

In addition to the above information about the school sourced from the school website and the ERO report, comments from two international learners are posted on the school's website and state:

I came to New Zealand to learn English. I am happy at this college because the buildings and the computers and learning facilities are great. The gym and the challenge course and the fields are very good. There are many opportunities for learning.

(Sae Mi Jang. Year 9 Korean learner)

I came to New Zealand from France as an exchange student. I like Whangaparaoa College because the buildings are easy to get around and everyone can use the computers. In France there are no computers at college for the students to use.

(Jean Granger Year 11 French learner)

Having established the newness and novelty of the school's background, I will explain the methods of data collection used in this research inquiry.

Methods of data collection

Case studies rely on multiple sources of information to conduct a qualitative from of inquiry (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Two techniques of data collection methods under the case study umbrella were used in this research namely interviews and document analysis. Anderson and Arsenault (1998) have argued that the interview is the prime source of case study data.

Interviews

A qualitative approach underpins the facilitation of interviews. An ongoing interpretive role of the researcher is prominent in a qualitative case study. Qualitative inquiry is distinguished by its emphasis on a holistic treatment of the context which focuses away from cause and effect explanation toward personal interpretation (Stake, 1995). The researcher was keen to find out what staff members thought about their experiences of being part of a developing school. The focus of this study is to draw information from participants with a view to exploring more fully the matter of a transformative learning organisation in action.

The purpose of in-depth interviewing is not to get answers to questions, nor to test hypotheses. The primary reason for in-depth interviews has to understand the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. The real meaning of ideas and values is related to the practices in which they are embedded. In

this understanding, experience and culture become almost interchangeable terms. Looking for the meaning of experience becomes a study of culture (Crotty, 1998).

According to Ribbins (2007), the purpose of interviewing is to find out the participant's thoughts. Interviewing people is a way to explore their views and to report the findings in their own words, the reason why, in reporting qualitative research, the generous use of quotations informs the reader of the participant's views. The researcher broadly controls the agenda and process of the interview, whilst leaving participants free, within limits, to respond as they best see fit. A semi-structured interview outline influences the sequence of the interview experience (Ribbins, 2007).

The main method used in this research was face to face semi-structured interviews to capture participants' experiences of their involvement within the school's development. The place and time of the interview was decided in consultation with the participants. The duration of the interviews was around 45–60 minutes. The interviews were audio taped and then transcribed. A digital recorder was used to facilitate the interview and the transcription (Stockdale, 2003, cited in Ribbins, 2007).

Before interviewing the participants, a self-interview was conducted to familiarise myself with the interview process and to gather my own views and experiences about the research topic and context. This gave me an understanding of how my participants might respond to some of the questions. Self-interviews help to identify researcher's pre-understandings that might impact the interpretation of data (Gadamer, 1995). The self interview also made me thoughtful and mindful of 'how' I conducted the interviews. As a result of the self interview and the way I felt about some questions, I decided to give a copy of the interview questions to my participants prior to the interview (see Appendix A). This gave them an idea of the areas that would be covered and made them comfortable with the interview process.

A pilot study was also conducted with one of my supervisors to orient myself to the interview process and the techniques of using a digital recorder for the first time. This enabled me not only to get accustomed to the gadget used for recording but the whole experience of conducting a face to face interview. There were some valuable advice as to how to build on the responses given by the participants, questioning techniques and how to use the electronic device properly so as to record clearly. This experience alerted me to the pitfalls that I may encounter during the interviews with the participants and made me aware of the importance of being relaxed as this might affect the way my

participants responded. This whole experience helped me to be well prepared for the interviews with the participants.

Two digital recorders were used, one being a backup if the other failed to record for some reason or was not clear enough for transcribing. I transcribed the first interview straight away and looked at the data to see if there were interview questions I had to clarify or reframe and areas of the research I might want to further explore. I gave a pseudonym for the participant in the transcript that was sent to my supervisors for their feedback. I also met with my supervisors to discuss the data and get some feedback on my questioning techniques, to help me with the other interviews. Thereafter I transcribed the interviews as I carried on with other interviews. A copy of the transcripts was given to the participants to verify and edit. After the transcripts were approved by the participants, the data was analysed.

Documentation

The school's website, newsletters, and ERO report were part of the school's official documentation that were used to gather ideas and themes about the focus of this research. The documents were chosen on the basis of their authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning (Scott, 1990). The credibility of the ERO report, one of the documents used in this research, could be established through the criteria set for their own review practices in which they claim that:

In the Education Review Office the characteristics we have applied in applying internal performance measures to our own work are fourfold:

- (i) reliability (i.e. that the measure produces the same results under comparable circumstances over time); ...
- (ii) validity (i.e. that the measure measures what it purports to measure); ...
- (iii) fairness (i.e. is perceived as fair or equitable by those whose performance is being measured); and ...
- (iv) utility (i.e. that it contributes demonstrably to the intended results)

(Aitken, 1997c, p. 5 cited in Smith, 2002).

The researcher has to systematically interrogate and evaluate the evidence in a documentary analysis. This process seeks to read between the lines and uncover the sub-text or secrets contained in the document, which may not be clear to the reader. A critical view point is necessary in analysis of the documentation (Fitzgerald, 2007).

Participants

Purposive sampling was used to capture the experiences of staff that had been part of the change from an intermediate to a secondary school (Patton, 1990). The participants were staff members who have been in the school since it became a secondary school and had been part of the transition process. The participants were fourteen staff members with responsibility for different aspects of teaching and leadership in the school. The chosen number of participants provided a manageable set of data, keeping in mind the feasibility of the project and the given time frame. The chosen number of participants also allowed an in depth interaction and avoided the need to rush through the process. This may not have been possible when trying to interview more participants within the same time limit.

A general briefing of the research was provided to all the staff at the school. Anyone who fulfilled the criteria could take part in this research. Potential participants were individually approached. They were given the participant information sheet (Appendix B) outlining the research along with the consent form (Appendix C). Staff members were given an opportunity to discuss the research and clarify any questions they had about their participation. The participants had to sign a consent form once they had read the information sheet and were comfortable with the research process. The participation was on voluntary basis. Participants could withdraw from the research process at any time before the data collection was completed.

Participants' backgrounds

The participants were staff members who have been at the school since the inception stage of the secondary school. Eight out of the fourteen participants have been at this school since it was an intermediate school. They were from different year levels and across the curriculum spanning from support staff to senior management. The school has a culture whereby the ‘teachers’ are called Lead Learners (LL); the ‘Heads of Department’ are called Heads of Learning (HOL) and the members of the ‘Management’ are called the Senior Learning Team (SLT). The participants are referred to as P1, P2, P3 etc instead of their real names. The same approach is used in the Findings and Discussion chapters. Their background information is provided under the following headings namely Senior Learning Team (SLT), Heads of Learning (HOL), Lead Learners (LL), and the Support Staff (SS).

Senior learning team (SLT): P7, P4, and P3

The teaching and management experience of the SLT ranges from nine to thirty one years in education. They are all New Zealand trained teachers and have the experience of working in more than one school. They have been at Whangaparaoa College (WGP) since the inception stage of the secondary school in 2005. I have the express permission from each of these three participants to name the roles they are currently holding in the school.

Participant 7 (P7) was primary trained and has taught year 7 and year 8, specialising in the Maths curriculum. P7 has been a team leader and a deputy principal (DP). She was a year 9 lead learner with a dean's⁷ role when it became a college in 2005 and the year after she became a deputy principal.

P4 has taught on and off for nearly 15 years in the region. P4 joined Whangaparaoa College as the Head of Technology. P4 then became head of information and communication technology (ICT) and in 2007 became a deputy principal. She had been involved in writing the original curriculum and ensuring that technology and ICT were both integrated throughout the curriculum.

P2 has been teaching for 31 years. His teaching experience is in science, mathematics, physics, and in management positions as deputy principal (DP). P2 joined this college as principal in 2004. He has been responsible for staff appointments, development around the property and all the development around visioning.

Lead learners (LL): P5, P12, P10, P14 and P3

The teaching experience of the LLs ranges from five to thirty years in primary, intermediate and secondary education. Four are New Zealand trained teachers and one is overseas trained secondary teacher. They have all taught different year levels in more than one school in New Zealand and have specialisation in different subject areas.

P5 is a science graduate and has a strong interest in Biology. In 2007 P5 had had six and a half years teaching experience in New Zealand. In the first year of becoming a college, P5 worked with the curriculum leaders putting the curriculum together for year seven and eight learners.

⁷ In academic administration, a dean is a person with significant authority over a specific year level, or over a specific area of concern, or both.

P12 had 20 years teaching experience before joining Whangaparaoa College in 2004. P12 was part of the discussions that took place in 2004 when some of the current staff met with management on different occasions to talk about their vision, goals and what they wanted as staff in their subject areas.

P10 has been a curriculum leader for the last couple of years developing the curriculum for year 7. P10 has been involved in the improved learning programme from the beginning which focused on improving teaching practice in the classroom. P10 is interested in curriculum, and information and communication technology (ICT).

P14 is primary trained and had 15 years teaching experience before joining Whangaparaoa College. P14 taught for three years in New Zealand before going overseas for 5 years. P14 teaches year 7 learners.

P3 has taught at WGP College with intermittent breaks to do other things. P3 teaches year 8 learners.

Heads of learning (HOL): P9, P11, P6 and P8

The teaching experience of HOLs ranges from twelve to thirty seven years in intermediate and secondary schools. They have taught at different year levels and have specialisation in subject areas such as performing arts, languages and humanities.

P9 has taught in bilingual units. She is completing her master's degree.

P11 teaches Social Studies and Geography. P11 has worked as a Head of Faculty before joining Whangaparaoa College as Head of Social Science. As one of the original faculty leaders, he had to work cooperatively with the other heads of learning to put in place the integration curriculum and the detail of the curriculum programme for year 7, 8, 9 and 10.

P6 had seven years teaching experience before joining Whangaparaoa College in 2005 as the Head of PE and Health.

P8 trained as a primary school teacher with a focus on the arts, especially drama and performance. P8 had more than 15 years teaching experience and some of it was overseas experience. P8 joined Whangaparaoa College as a Drama teacher in 2005.

Support staff: P13and P1

P13 and P1's experience includes roles as an IT technician and librarian. Along with the Heads of Learning (HOL), the support staff are responsible for planning and maintaining the IT and library resources which is extensively used by learners and Lead Learners to assist and extend learning activities.

P13 is an ICT teacher. P13 has been involved in setting up the computer labs and installing and upgrading programmes on the computers.

P1 has a master's degree from a library school. She is a librarian at WGP College. P1 has been here since the inception of the secondary school and has had an input in building the library resources and in establishing the new library space in the Science and Technology block.

Methods of data analysis

Qualitative findings are the outcome of data collection which is in-depth, open ended interviews and written documents. Interviews provide direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge. Document analysis includes studying excerpts, quotations, or entire passages from organizational records; official publications and reports. Extensive field notes are collected through interviews and document reviews (Patton, 2002).

Data analysis relates to any qualitative data reduction and an effort to make sense of a considerable amount of qualitative material to identify consistencies. The huge quantity of raw data from the field notes was organized into readable descriptions with major categories and illustrative examples (Patton, 2002). The themes, patterns, understandings, and insights that emerge from fieldwork and subsequent analysis are the fruit of qualitative inquiry. The consistent meanings that emerge from the data are called themes. The process of locating and relating the data involves the use of constant comparison and contrast (Wellington, 2000).

The meaning of data is its interpretation, which involves the literal or surface reading of the text. Once the document has been read for its literal meaning, the next level of interpretation involves thematic consideration (Scott, 1990). The things to look for in a document are key messages, words used, and the important themes that emerge (Mutch, 2005). "Collecting, collating and analysing data in documentary research is an iterative

process that requires checking, re-checking and redefining key themes, concepts or ideas” (Fitzgerald, 2007, p. 292).

The trustworthiness of the findings could be ensured by a research approach which is ‘creative’, ‘critical’ and ‘systematic activity’ and develops through different stages that shape the enquiry process (Fitzgerald, 2007). Member checking was used to verify the content of the transcripts by returning the data to the participants for confirmation (Mutch, 2005). This was followed by a triangulation of sources and data to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. Triangulation is fundamentally a means of cross checking data to establish its validity. This means comparing sources of evidence in order to establish the accuracy of information (Bush, 2007). The other approach used was peer review which involved a critical friend, in this case my supervisors with whom the interpretations and findings were discussed and challenged (Bassey, 2007). Presenting at conferences (see Krishnamoorthy, 2007, 2008) and obtaining the feedback from other researchers and academics helped to test the authenticity or trustworthiness of the data collection and data analysis (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

It is more difficult to ensure the reliability of semi-structured interviews because each participant is treated as a unique respondent and each interviewee contributes to shaping the conversation (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Hence it is essential for the researcher to evaluate the reliability of what they are told by a single interview and, better still, across repeat interviews. Verifying data requires triangulation, which means at the data-collecting stage, looking for evidence which may include talking to a range of participants relevant to the study and examining documents (Bush, 2007). Using document analysis as another source of data collection helps to ensure the reliability of semi structured interviews through triangulation. Robson (2002)) regards reliability as one of the advantages of data analysis using documents because of the permanent nature of the data.

Keeves (1997) described triangulation as confirmation that is commonly sought through multiple methods of investigation so that the different perspectives provide support for the findings and observed relationships. McMillan and Wergin (1998) noted that this technique reduces researcher bias and enhances credibility. In this thesis, consistent attention was paid to triangulation to enable the researcher to remain confident that findings reported were consistently valid and reliable. Finally being reflexive involves self-questioning and self-understanding. Reflexive triangulation helps qualitative researcher to be thoughtful and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and

ideological origins of one's perceptions and voices of those one interviews and those to whom one reports (Patton, 2002).

Ethical issues

Ethics relate to the subject matter of the research as well as its methods and procedures (Burns, 1998). Since the study was insider research, written permission was obtained from the Principal and Board of Trustees to carry out a case study of the research site. Mutch (2005) states that there are a few things to consider when researching in your own workplace. Some of the possible disadvantages are role conflict, time commitments, trying to maintain confidentiality, and lack of objectivity because of being the insider. One suggestion is to have a critical friend or mentor outside the setting to debrief with.

According to Bassey (1995), there are three major ethical values namely respect for persons, respect for truth, and respect for democratic values. Gathering and using data should be done in a way that acknowledges the participants' initial ownership of the information and their entitlement to privacy and dignity as fellow human beings. The research might involve Māori⁸ participants as this study was conducted in New Zealand and, as such, it is necessary to acknowledge the Treaty of Waitangi⁹. The terms 'Protection', 'Partnership', and 'Participation' of the treaty are relevant to the context of the research (Buick, 1976). It is essential to establish partnerships that facilitate participation. Finally it is important to protect the interest of the participants by respecting their identity. This would create an environment of good will which is vital for carrying out qualitative research.

The research took into consideration the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and the Auckland University of Technology ethical principles listed below:

- Informed and Voluntary consent;
- Respect for rights of privacy and confidentiality;
- Minimisation of risk;
- Truthfulness, including limitation of deception;

⁸ The Māori are an indigenous tribe of people native to New Zealand.

⁹A treaty first signed on February 6, 1840, by representatives of the British Crown, and various Māori chiefs from the northern North Island of New Zealand. It is New Zealand's founding document which establishes the relationship between the Crown and Māori as Tangata Whenua (people of the land).

- Social and cultural sensitivity, including commitment to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti O Waitangi;
- Research adequacy;
- Avoidance of conflict of interest.

(<http://www.aut.ac.nz/about/ethics/default.htm>)

According to Busher and James (2007), a key principle of ethical research is that of voluntarism which is manifested by the participants giving their informed and explicit consent to take part in a study. Informed consent means that participants were informed about the nature of the research and they had the right to withdraw at any time before the completion of data collection. Signed consent was obtained before using the data collected so that the participants were fully aware of the content to be used in the data analysis. The second standard ethical issue refers to confidentiality. I obtained permission from the principal to use the school's name in the study. The participant's identity was protected by the use of pseudonym (except in the case of P1, 2, 3 etc). Thus the three ethical issues of consent, confidentiality and trust are closely linked.

The Participant Information sheet and consent form outlined the ethical procedures pertaining to the research. The information sheet also specified the research topic, purpose of the study and methodology. Participants were given a chance to discuss the research process before making an informed decision to participate in the research (see appendices A, B & C).

Insider research

This research is underpinned by a commitment to 'practitioner' research, whereby educational research is conducted by one or more practitioner/professionals into either their own practice or into the practices of their organisation (Wellington, 2000). The advantages of conducting this type of research include the prior knowledge and experience that the researchers have of the setting and its context. They bring 'insider' knowledge to bear; they initiate easier access; provide improved insights into the situation and critical perspectives about the people involved; they contribute familiarity with situations and informants because of their history of personal relationships with contributing participants, e.g. with teaching/other colleagues (Wellington, 2000). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) provides the following enlightening argument on this topic:

Insider research has to be ethical and respectful, as reflexive and critical, as outsider research. It also needs to be humble. It needs to be humble because

the researcher belongs to the community as a member with a different set of roles and relationships, status and position (p. 139).

In my second year of teaching at this school, I started the research. The participants had been in the school context longer and some of them were in leadership positions. The participants were also in an authoritative position in terms of their knowledge about the organisation compared to myself as the researcher and hence it was a situation of ‘researching up’.

Being a lead learner¹⁰ at the school gave me the inside knowledge of how the organisation is currently functioning. However the likely risk of being insider research is role conflict i.e. when are you a researcher and when are you a colleague or a teacher? This was resolved by raising my awareness of the likelihood of role conflict and discussing such eventualities with my supervisors in the first instance. I have had to maintain a clear distinction in the way I performed my roles of responsibility. Another issue here is the need to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. Mutch (2005) suggests using a critical friend or mentor outside the setting to debrief with and this advice was followed by the researcher who had regular meetings with the supervisors who acted as the mentors and critical friends in this study.

Summary

This chapter has outlined the theoretical framework that underpins this research. It has provided the rationale for the case study and the qualitative methodology used in this study. The data collection and data analysis have been described. The self-interview as a process of orienting oneself with the research inquiry and the pilot study conducted before interviewing the participants have been presented. Trustworthiness of the data collected and the ethical issues concerning this study have been dealt with in this chapter. The next chapter will present the categories that emerge from the data collected and then individual and common themes across all the interviews will be identified.

¹⁰ Teaching staff at Whangaparaoa College are referred to as Lead Learners.

Chapter V: Findings

Identifying salient themes, recurring ideas of language, and patterns of belief that link people and settings together is the most intellectually challenging phase of data analysis and one that can integrate the entire endeavour.

(Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 154)

The findings from the interviews with the participants are presented in this chapter. The interviews were analysed for themes that emerged within and across the participants' responses. These themes are presented with extracts from the transcripts to support an understanding of the theme. The participants' background information has been previously provided in the methodology chapter. This chapter presents the findings from the research, while the following chapter will discuss these findings in relation to the literature.

Emerging themes

The six main themes from this research are presented under particular headings. The themes capture essential understandings from the data that relate to the focus of the research, that is, they identify characteristics of a particular learning organisation. The themes fall into two sets namely 'what members of the organisation are part of' which refers to the processes, strategies, and planning, while the second set of themes relates to the 'people' within the organisation which refers to how the members respond to change. The themes of 'future', 'pioneering' and 'constant change' relate to the former set while the themes 'staff persona', 'collegiality' and 'teachers' learning' refer to the latter.

The first set of themes relate to 'what members of the organisation are part of'. This refers to the participants' involvement in the school's development process. The term 'future' is used to emphasise particular motivational factors for transformative change. Indeed, the staff members within an organisation are inspired by their vision for the future. The notion of 'pioneering' relates to the initiative taken by the staff, board members, parents and children to be innovative in the way they explore different ideas as part of a new organisation. The willingness to take risks in order to move forward is a salient feature of an organisation that is pioneering and transformative. The expression, 'constant change', is used to describe the theme of continual progress and development integral to a growing organisation. Innovative approaches which seek to cope with the changing environment result in constant change.

The second set of themes relate to the ‘people’ within the organisation. The term ‘staff persona’ is used to describe characteristics that staff exhibit or are required to have to enable them to take part in the school’s transformative processes. ‘Collegiality’ relates to the team spirit that is developed through working together towards common goals. This theme highlights the importance and potential of mutual support in a work environment that seeks to enhance trust and relationships. The theme ‘teachers’ learning’ reflects the idea that up skilling and updating ones knowledge, while in the job, is essential for ongoing progress individually and collectively.

It should be noted that while these themes are presented as separate entities, they closely interact with one another and impact on the development of the organisation as a whole.

A description of each of these six (6) themes is provided in more detail in the following paragraphs. The main theme is introduced followed by an explanation of the sub themes which elucidates the salient features of that particular theme. These themes are then substantiated by quotes from the participants who are referred to as P1, P2, P3 etc. Finally a paragraph commenting on the sub themes and the participants’ views is presented to sum up each theme.

Theme one: Future

The first theme is captured by the term ‘future’. I use this term to capture the participants’ ideas that relate to the visioning of the future and the priority and practices associated with the school’s strategic plans. The term also includes the notion of being proactive and forward thinking with regards to the leadership, management and organisation of the school.

Vision.

One particular feature of this first theme is the aspect of ‘vision’. The school’s vision is seen as ‘purposeful’ to the participants in the school and is regularly expressed as critical to the future. To this end, the school’s vision has one main focus; ‘learning.’ The vision is reflected in the planning and development of the school’s infrastructure. Interestingly, the use of expressions such as a ‘lead school in learning’, ‘buildings designed to support learning’ and ‘learner centred’ occurred across the range of participants from those in leadership roles to administrative staff. The ‘future vision’ is seen to have implications for the curriculum, the organisation of staff and students, as

well as the synergy that might exist between the intentions of the school and the physical construction and layout of the school.

The theme of the ‘future’ and the aspect of the ‘vision’ are exemplified in the following quotations:

The vision is that Whangaparaoa College (WGP College) will be a lead school in learning and achieve excellence in all fields of learner endeavour. So learning is the most important part (P1).

The vision is to be a lead school in learning ... the vision is based on the idea that we would have a school where learning is in the fore front (P2).

There is a definite connection and link to the new type of building, the new type of education environment and how we support that by our vision of powerful learners and powerful thinkers (P3).

The buildings have been designed specifically with learning in mind. The learning commons area in the middle of the building are also specifically designed so that classes will come out and meet together and work together. They are designed to create a more learner centred environment (P4).

It is looking to be a ground breaking school and cutting edge in technology and practice and is very much research and evidence based (P5).

While some participants seem to highlight the importance of prioritising learning as the overall focus of the vision, others appear to identify the design of the physical and human infrastructure as a matter that relates to the facilitation of the overall vision.

Possibilities that make a difference.

Another aspect that emerges within the ‘future’ theme centres round the creation of ‘possibilities’ which might ‘make a difference’. This aspect relates to the way teaching creates learning opportunities for all those who are part of the process. The participants appear enthusiastic over the possibility of ‘making a difference’. They are willing to make an effort to be part of the development; a sense of looking forward to what awaits them is highlighted in their dialogue.

The theme of the ‘future’ and the particular aspect of ‘possibilities’ that ‘make a difference’ are exemplified in the following quotes:

I think class room teaching is something where there is an infinite number of possibilities so that you can always do something better. You learn something new every day. You are constantly developing and changing (P5).

I enjoy the possibility to make a difference in learners' life. I am glad to be able to influence them in a positive way by introducing them to good literature and to enhance their reading ability and research skills as well (P1).

The school's vision quite meshed well with my philosophy and model of what teaching was about. So I thought this will be quite cool. I also thought that there was a chance for me to make a bit more of a difference being in this school having leadership or limited leadership of what was going on (P6).

One of the participants explains how classroom situations might provide professional development opportunities that influence teaching in the future. Others seem to acknowledge the impact a teacher can have on learners as far as 'making a difference' in their learning is concerned.

Proactive, forward thinking.

Another aspect of the 'future' is described as 'proactive' and 'forward thinking' ways of being. This notion relates to every aspect of the organisation and includes the way teachers' think about learning and set long term goals. The primary focus in planning for the future is the way it is approached, and the participants' attitude in the task. These are indicators of how the staff members collectively move forward with expectations of what the future might hold. This theme of the 'future' and the aspect of 'proactive' and 'forward thinking' are exemplified in the following quotes:

Thinking about ways of learning that are for the future and what our learners need for the future (P7).

I am involved in setting goals and objectives for the coming years and making sure that we actually put some objectives in place to make those things happen (P4).

I would hope schools will become more forward looking and more productive of the future and even possibly driving the future (P2).

The first quote seems to link the way children are learning and the future needs of learners. The second quote seems to dwell on the ways of achieving set goals while the third appears to be contemplating the future of education. What is important in all these quotes are the strategic plans, the buildings and the focus on learning.

Theme two: Pioneering

The second theme presented from the data is captured by the term 'pioneering'. This refers to the initiatives taken to implement new ideas and develop programmes to

support the school's vision. As a new school, there are opportunities to explore, test and try different approaches and ideas for the first time. Staff are not bound or restricted by the past, rather decisions are future focused. This independence gives members of the school the chance to 'build' and 'develop' an organisation that aspires to be different.

Brand new.

One particular aspect of 'pioneering' is being part of something 'brand new', something that makes the experience 'exciting'. There is room for 'flexibility' and an encouragement to explore 'creative' ideas. The newness of the situation inspires people to take the initiative to experiment with new ways of doing things. The whole experience is challenging and exciting, making it worth the effort. The idea of being involved with something that is being created from the start gives participants a sense of ownership.

This aspect of being 'brand new' is exemplified in the following quotes:

I liked the sound of, the thought of being part of something new and the developing of it with its challenges (P10).

The opportunity not to be bounded by people's history and school's history and to be able to develop and create a school which wasn't held back by history and by structures that may be negative to a modern 21st century environment (P2).

I knew that it would be pretty exciting to be part of a brand new high school and that I would be part of the new curriculum and planning of new buildings etc (P4).

It is great in the sense that we are building, moulding, guiding, and developing what this school is going to be about (P8).

Coming to a school that would be brand new was an attraction and being able to build the department up from scratch was an attraction. I think overall staff like to share the vision the school has or it is pioneering approach to education. They like to think they are part of the decision making and a culture of change so it is stimulating to work here (P11).

The participants seem to affirm the fact that the opportunity and experience are appealing factors that a new organisation has to offer. These factors enable the participants to take various initiatives and be part of the process. The challenges posed by a developing organisation do not deter those who consider it to be a stimulating environment.

Settling.

Another aspect that goes with ‘pioneering’ is the notion of ‘settling’. It takes ‘time’ and ‘hard work’ to consolidate new developments. The benefits of implementing innovative ideas is realised when the ideas become part of the school’s culture and systems. The ‘settling’ process is achieved over a period of time with effort and leadership that identifies when and how it is to be achieved. Such moments signal the need to pause and reflect on the changes that have taken place before moving ahead and introducing new ideas.

This aspect of ‘settling’ is exemplified in the following quotes:

There is a big focus if you like on technology in our school and I do believe that they are working hard to become a lead school in technology so we are all encouraged as lead learners to include or integrate as much technology as we can into our practice (P14).

I think it is great for teachers to be in a new school. It is hard work and you have to be part of the process I think that is exciting but along with that comes some uncertainty but I feel that most of us are on board with striving for excellence (P8).

I think we have had a lot of these things running concurrently. And now may be a breathing space so that we can work on our new knowledge, a year to bring them all together and reflect on them. We have been bombarded with a lot of changes and information. It is all very wonderful but it may need time to imbed. Also lots of subtle changes in our teaching but it would be a matter of letting these things settle in. (P5).

I would like to see that we consolidate things in our school where learning is innovative (P7).

These quotes unpack areas that need to be taken into account when overwhelmed by changes. The success and effectiveness of change is impacted by the way change is implemented.

Theme three: Constant change

The third theme presented from the data is captured by the expression ‘constant change’. This expression relates to the ‘culture of change’ which is a dominant feature in a developing organisation. The environment within the organisation is marked by the changes which affects and influences every aspect of its existence. The factors that affect change are the ‘pace of change’ and the ‘challenges’ that change poses. The tension that is created as a result of rapid and constant change is felt by individuals and the organisation. Some of the challenges that this poses are seen in the structural and

technological growth. Coping with change and being able to assimilate it is another challenge faced by the staff. Change is seen as a ‘process’ that involves different ‘phases of change’.

Culture of change.

One aspect that relates to the theme of ‘constant change’ is the ‘culture of change’. This expression seeks to describe an environment that is influenced by ‘continual’ change and represented in different phases of change. The ongoing change creates an organisational culture that is evolving and developing. The stages of change involve planning, implementation and assimilation. Acknowledging the different stages is essential to realising that change is continual.

This ‘culture of change’ is exemplified in the following quotes:

There is a culture of change. The fact that the changing environment which exists at this school means learning is occurring for the school to operate effectively all the time. I think one of the key things for the school now is to move from a developmental phase to a continuous phase (P2).

I think we have had a lot of these things running concurrently. I think if there were big follow up courses and so on, the whole point of it would be lost just more frantic activity (P5).

The quotes above appear to highlight the way change can affect the pace of development and the impact this has on the organisation. The participants seem to refer to the different stages of change and the steps required at each phase of development.

Challenge.

Another aspect of the ‘constant change’ is the ‘challenge’ integral to change. The challenge refers to the problems and obstacles that have to be overcome as part of the change process. The physical challenge is one of the prominent issues to deal with in a growing organisation followed by the managing of resources associated with rapid change. Reflecting on the decisions made and challenging the ideas is yet another area that has to be considered.

This ‘constant change’ and ‘challenge’ are exemplified in the following quotes:

The challenge that it has been facing is the physical challenge of buildings since the day it was founded. I would imagine timetabling would have been a problem in those situations as well. They have to continually review and update staffing to keep pace with the growing school (P5).

In terms of property, the major decision was to challenge ourselves about every development to see if this is the right way or can we change. A continual change in this school which I think is good but does create a bit to that tension. There is always continual change which is a real big issue (P2).

The organisation has grown in size as far as population and building. I think the management of work is really hard. I think all the staff have worked really hard to get where they are now (P14).

These quotes describe the challenges that arise as a result of organisational development. Coping with the many challenges involves reflecting on how to overcome the difficulties while keeping pace with the change. Challenges can fuel the pace of change.

Theme four: Staff persona

The fourth theme presented from the data is captured by the term ‘staff persona’. This term is used to describe characteristics of the staff in the organisation. These are crucial factors that influence the way staff participate in the development of this organisation. Staff members exhibit certain distinct qualities which are essential to a choice to be part of the ongoing change.

Innovative.

The ‘staff persona’ is seen as ‘innovative’ in terms of being ‘creative’ and ‘original’. This is a key trait among members of an organisation that is future oriented. The innovation is directed to the organisation’s vision. Being able to adapt, modify and create ideas to suit specific goals requires staff members to be open to change and capable of embracing new approaches for the future. The staff members appear to be ‘determined’ to try new ideas and willing to take risks. They are seen as having what it takes to be part of this ‘exciting’ and ‘purposeful’ journey.

This ‘innovative’ aspect of the staff persona is exemplified in the following quotes:

I think it is great not just coming in and copy and imitate what other schools are doing but we are trying some different things. I think that is really exciting (P8).

It is a secondary school with just not openness to ideas but also determined to be quite innovative. And at the same time it is not taking on board every crazy idea. It has been filtered. So it is a school that is open to new ideas and constantly developing and not frightened to try new ideas (P5).

It is a learning organisation. It is on the move, it is not stagnant. It is innovative, purposeful and it is exciting (P9).

The staff here are not ostriches, they are prepared to stick their heads out and try something new. Everybody is prepared to give it a go and learn new things (P4).

I think there is a lot of learning going on at various levels in this school. The way that people are given new opportunities to take risks, the way people are given support around taking risks, the way sometimes people are driven into taking risks. I think all of those are opportunities to allow learning to occur (P2).

These quotes express the idea that personal characteristics are integral to an environment that is innovative. The willingness to take risks as part of the learning process is reflected in these quotes. Staff members seem to seize opportunities that come their way. The positive attitude and supportive environment encourage staff members to go ahead and experiment with new ideas.

Theme five: Collegiality

The fifth theme presented from the data is captured by the term ‘collegiality’. This relates to how staff members interact with one another and how a conducive working environment is created. Such an environment enables staff to ‘work together’ as a team. These ‘shared’ experiences help to build the rapport. Leadership and open communication assist in maintaining collegiality.

Team.

One particular aspect of ‘collegiality’ is the sense of ‘team’ which arises from a shared vision. Exchanging resources and joint effort are important to being able to achieve together as a team. Explicit and transparent ways of communicating have a far reaching impact on the members of an organisation. The shared language which expresses and supports the vision of the organisation encourages its members to work as a team because of the common interest that binds them together.

This aspect of ‘team’ is exemplified in the following quotes:

I think all the changes and the need for things have been made explicit and that we had a very open style of leadership at the top. So right from the beginning we were shown the plans and how the timetable would run and we were told about how there would be hiccups and frustrations of doing things. We felt part of the battle rather than being some kind of passive recipient we were all in it together (P5).

I think there is good communication between the principal and the rest of the staff and I think that the staff appreciate that and because of the open

communication, they have been prepared to buy into it and take on a lot more than perhaps staff at some other school have been prepared to do (P4).

The participants seem to share the view that open communication is crucial to gaining the support of the team. Change of any kind could be possible when it is presented positively. This may help to gain the confidence of staff buying into the organisation's initiatives for change.

Maintaining unity.

Another aspect of 'collegiality' is 'maintaining the unity'. It is vital that the unity of the collegial environment is retained through conscious effort. This aspect is important for the ongoing development which requires the support and effort of staff to work as a team. A feeling of belonging and oneness is created through 'collegiality' which provides opportunities for staff to come together and share ideas and resources. Some participants have expressed the concern and the need to protect and build collegiality as the organisation develops still further.

The aspect of 'maintaining the unity' is exemplified in the following quotes:

I think a lot of fantastic people work here. I do feel with the buildings being separate blocks and each building has staff room area. I don't think that is conducive to a whole staff socialising and catching up. I know it is hard in a big school (P8).

Big schools where everyone has their own staffroom, it is difficult to maintain collegiality. I think that collegiality is really important (P10).

Certainly with the activities spread right across the school, it is very hard to keep the unified sense or a sense of unity amongst staff (P3).

These quotes highlight the importance of maintaining the unity of collegiality. It expresses the concerns that may arise as a result of the growth of the organisation and includes the subtle details that help build collegiality. Collegiality is key to maintaining a team spirit.

Theme six: Teachers' learning

The sixth theme presented from the data is captured by the term 'teachers' learning' facilitated through 'professional development'. One of the ways of providing professional development within an organisation is 'in house training' which empowers the staff to pass on their knowledge to others as this supports learning by sharing. This type of team learning is supported by a collegiality that is based on 'trust' and 'respect'.

A conducive learning environment encourages staff to collectively learn by sharing their knowledge and experiences.

Sharing.

One aspect of ‘teachers’ learning’ is the ‘sharing’ which enables staff members to pass on information as they exchange ideas. This encourages open discussions on different topics and enables staff to present their views without any inhibitions. This is possible when team members value one another’s opinion. This process empowers the individual to share their knowledge and also benefit from the discussions they have with the others in the team. These team meetings become a point of contact for the staff to exchange resources and teaching strategies.

The sharing at WGC is exemplified in the following quotes:

Yes part of our weekly meeting is we have some PD. We usually start with some learning stuff. Someone will share what happened that week maybe it is good, maybe it wasn’t so good and perhaps we can learn from that (P6).

Yes the PD is offered to staff every week and it is taught by staff, which is a very positive thing. It benefits both the learner and the teacher and we move forward. Staff take part in PD to share new ideas, talk about them, debate them and trial them. This allows them to adapt, change, or delete ideas if they don’t have any long lasting effect or have no future with our learners (P12).

I suppose we have regular team meetings. If we need to have PD for something we would organise it amongst ourselves and we just do it and we email all the time (P10).

We don’t call our teachers, teachers we call them lead learners and that means that teachers have to learn and pass on the knowledge. Our senior learning team, HOL, support staff and teachers often go on conferences and they share their knowledge with the others in the school (P1).

There is regular ICT PD that takes place every Wednesday after school for teachers to attend if they wish and those are advertised through the daily notices. However if teachers want help with specific ICT functionality they can consult one of the ICT technicians (P13).

There is no pressure to attend things. It is more voluntary for your own PD. It is not compulsory that is the good side of it. You have the opportunity to learn all the technology you want under the sun. I think everybody is very keen to get as many staff into PD learning this and learning that (P14).

These quotes appear to show the benefits that result from staff interactions during professional development. It seems to be a way of enhancing the learning of all the staff

in the organisation. Sharing helps build collegiality and helps promote learning through an exchange of ideas within the organisation.

Community.

Another aspect of ‘teachers’ learning’ is the sense of ‘community’. This feeling of belonging to a learning community helps the staff to work together as a team. The community encourages an exchange of ideas. These ideas can be used by others in their classrooms with the support from the members in the team as they help try these new ideas. A learning community is about passing on what one has learned to other members in the team who may be interested in similar ideas. This type of learning is about collective and collaborative use of knowledge and of benefit to all those within an organisation.

This sense of ‘community’ is exemplified in the following quotes:

The whole idea is to work collegially and to develop each other. Someone gets a little bit of skill and they join another person in guiding them. As part of the improved learning team, there is the quality learning circle, there is observation and feed backs (P7).

Collaborative I would say. I guess learning community is not about one person or one source giving information. It is about combining all these people and all the sources to get the best information. The person who wants the information then uses their own judgement to make a statement whether it is appropriate or not that probably is the key thing for me (P6).

The participants seem to consider the learning community as an effective way of passing ideas and information. Being able to bounce ideas off one another helps to clarify and consolidate ideas as a group. This is an alternative way of utilising the available resources to impart knowledge and action within an organisation.

Summary

The findings chapter has outlined the themes ‘future’, ‘pioneering’, ‘constant change’ ‘staff persona’ ‘collegiality’ and ‘teachers’ learning’ that have emerged from the participants’ responses. The main themes along with aspects of these themes have been described and supported by participants’ quotes. In the next chapter the themes will be critically analysed and discussed in relation to the literature on learning organisation (LO) and leadership in a LO.

Chapter VI: Discussion

The interpretation of data must relate to the original intentions, resonate with the literature, summarise key findings, and be supported by the data.

(Mutch, 2005, p. 186)

This chapter is a discussion of the themes presented in the findings chapter. The structure for this discussion centres around four macro themes that are described as follows, ‘innovation’, ‘a living organisation’, ‘individual and organisational tension’ and the ‘relational context’. These macro themes will be critically analysed and discussed in relation to the literature on learning organisation (LO) and leadership in a LO.

Macro theme one: Innovation

One of the prominent and recurring themes that emerged from the findings is ‘innovation’. The concept of innovation flows through the themes presented in the findings chapter. Innovation relates to the concept of learning organisations which is the focus of this research. A learning organisation (LO) as defined by Garvin (1993) is one that is capable of generating, receiving, and passing on knowledge while adapting its behaviour to exhibit new knowledge and insights. The way ‘innovation’ impacts this organisation and its members is exemplified by aspects of ‘change’, ‘opportunity’, ‘vision’, ‘professional development’ and ‘empowerment’. These aspects are discussed in detail in relation to the data gathered and the literature on learning organisation and leadership. An analysis of these aspects will help with an understanding of the role of innovation in a LO.

Change

Innovation impacts all forms of growth and development that characterise a culture of constant change. Change can also mark the onset of innovation. The change could be just a new concept or it could mean a revamping of the resources to be able to deliver the new idea. Moreover, one change could lead to another. Therefore change creates the opportunity for ongoing learning. The way an organisation copes with continual change is innovative in itself. The expressions “developmental phase”, “continuous phase”, “things running concurrently”, “learning is occurring” and the “changing environment” used by participants refers to the continual change at WGP College. Change appears to become the norm for people in organisations that are trying to be innovative. Ng (2004b) suggests that learning organisations (LO) are innovative

organisations. WGP college appears to be a LO with its constantly evolving processes that are brought about by constant change within the system. The participants' expressions indicate that the research site is a place that faces ongoing change and, as a result, there is learning happening to keep pace with the innovations occurring within the organisation. Schon (1973) linked the experience of living in a situation of increasing change with the need for learning. The participants in this study find themselves in a 'changing environment' which becomes the basis of learning opportunities.

Innovation is about the planning and the implementation of strategies for the future. Change could result from ever growing demands of the future or the result of internal goals or pressures. Coming up with new and different ways of dealing with the future is the focus of transformative organisations which aims to make a difference through their practice. Senge (1999, p. 35) argues that such organisations "continually expand their ability to shape their future". This particular organisation is trying to be innovative in its approach to teaching. One such example is the infrastructure which, not only shows the organisation is trying to be different but, meets the demands of the future in the field of education. Some of these ideas are reflected by P5 who considers the school to be "ground breaking" and "cutting edge in technology". P3 and P4 refer to the "new building design" as being in keeping with the vision of the school. Keeping pace with the future seems to be one of the prime reasons for updating resources and up skilling the staff through the introduction of innovative ideas. Challenges posed by the future can be inspirational. As Levine (2001) notes, people learn when they are asked to change due to improvement or technology. According to the literature and the data used in this paragraph, change is seen as the motivational factor for learning which is a salient feature of a LO.

Opportunity

The newness of the organisation can be an inspiration which provides opportunities for proactive and forward thinking. The brand new factor enhances the possibilities for trying new ideas. "I liked the sound of, the thought of", "brand new was an attraction", "it would be pretty exciting", "it is great", "it is stimulating" are examples of the language used by the participants. These examples indicate the keenness of staff to be part of an organisation that is 'being' established. The view that innovation can be easily introduced in an organisation that is new is expressed by P2 who likes the idea of being "able to develop and create a school which wasn't held back by history."

Since a new school can feel like it is in unchartered territories, the scope for trying different and challenging ideas is promising. In such an environment, there is an openness that allows the individuals to be proactive and farsighted about what the future holds for the organisation. Though the literature does not make a direct reference to the newness of an organisation as a factor for the learning opportunities that are created, there are references to ‘change’ and ‘new ideas’ (Schein, 1992; Rowley, 1998) as the motivating factors for developing and creating new approaches. It can be noted from P8’s statement that “building, moulding, guiding, and developing what this school is going to be about” is what makes the experience of being part of a new organisation interesting. The thought of having an input in developing the organisation into what it aspires to be is a learning opportunity that is motivational in itself.

Stoll (1999) considers motivation as a starting point for learning. There has to be some sort of catalyst or urgency to devote time towards change and new learning. Therefore an adventurous spirit to explore and confront the challenges brought about by change is a prerequisite for a new school wanting to scale new horizons. “Being able to build” and “developing it with its challenges” are some of the phrases that capture the enthusiasm of the participants who are looking forward to what the organisation has to offer them. Bottery (2005) too refers to the enthusiasm developed for organisations that “created continuous learning opportunities for all their members and created climates within which people felt encouraged to share ideas and collaborate on developing new ones” (p. 175). The newness of the school provides opportunities to try new ideas; a distinct feature of a LO.

Vision

The ‘vision’ is the lifeline of a transformative organisation. A vision can make a difference to the implementation of innovative ideas. What the vision stands for and what it aims to achieve is conveyed through a shared language which is an integral part of the organisation. The literature on learning organisations refers to the shared vision as one the five disciplines of a learning organisation. Senge (1990) refers to this as the ability of the organisation to develop and embrace a shared picture of the future that the members in an organisation want to create. The participants in this study voiced similar ideas. Their shared vision is to be a “lead school in learning where learning is in the forefront.” This view is the key point that features in the statements made by P2, P3 and P4 regarding the school’s vision. Learning is a key word that is reiterated by the use of terms like ‘lead learner’, instead of teachers, and ‘learners’ instead of students. These

are just some examples of the type of language that is used to convey the school's vision.

Charbonneau (2004) noted that leaders inspire others by "presenting them with an attractive vision, an approach known as inspirational motivation" (p. 565). This research shows that the vision inspires and motivates the strategic planning process and how some of the participants relate to the vision. The goals set to realise the vision are purposeful and learner focused. Everything around the organisation is built on the notion which puts learning in the forefront. P4 mentions that the "buildings are designed specifically with learning in mind and to create a more learner centred environment." Stoll and Louis (2007) suggest that a shared vision based on student learning and which provides a culture of continual support is more likely to make great strides in becoming a learning organisation and addressing important student needs. This research shows that the vision of WPG is learner focused and for their future. This statement can be substantiated by P3 who notices "a connection and link to the new type of building and the new type of education environment" which emphasises the purposefulness of the school's vision. Furthermore 'learning' and the 'future' appear to be the focus in the remarks made by P7 which is "thinking about ways of learning and what our learners need for the future." These statements made by the participants outline the school's vision and how the organisation tries to achieve the vision. According to MacBeath (2007), leadership for learning involves a focus on learning in which it is assumed that everyone within the school and the system itself are learners. Based on the data gathered in this study, it can be said that this particular school is trying to be a LO guided by a vision.

Professional development

Professional development programmes (PD) are in place to embrace and sustain innovative ideas. PD helps the members of an organisation to move forward with new concepts. The characteristics of learning organisations are said to include ongoing chances for learning, as learning is seen as the key to achieve organisational goals (Calvert, Mobley & Marshall, 1994; Watkins & Marsick, 1993). As seen in this study, PD programmes give individuals a chance to get accustomed to new ideas.

There are different ways of providing PD within the organisation. Team learning and in house training are some ways of imparting understandings of new concepts that might be introduced within the organisation. Some of the participants from this study like P6,

P10 and P12 mention “regular team meetings to share ideas” as part of their in house professional development opportunities. So too, the literature on learning communities supports the idea of team learning. Team learning appears to be a preferred way of learning new teaching approaches and the use of the new technology. Staff development days and meetings are often utilised to provide teachers with new skills, knowledge and confidence to try different teaching approaches (Dinham, 2005). These learning environments provide opportunities for interactions and discussions which enable the individuals to reflect on the new ideas.

The participants in this study have the opportunity for sharing and learning from the experiences of one another just like a learning organisation which enables all its members to learn thereby transforming itself. Such an organisation has to create a conducive environment for experiential learning and manage it effectively throughout the workplace (Rowley, 1998). The remarks like “PD is taught by staff (P12)”, “we organise PD amongst ourselves (P10)”, and “teachers learn and pass on the knowledge (P1)” support the idea of in house training as envisaged by Rowley (1998). Does this mean that learning from peers is effective because they can relate better with the person sharing the knowledge? Is this one of the reasons why organisations are more supportive of in house training as a way of passing on knowledge to achieve specific results? From this study, it can be summarised that the data supports one of the five disciplines of a LO which is ‘team learning’ (Senge, 1990); another form of PD opportunity within the organisation.

Empowerment

The experience of being part of a transformative organisation empowers staff to ‘take risks’ and ‘try new ideas’. Being part of change creates a sense of pride that motivates the individuals to be involved in the transformation that is taking place within the organisation. Taking responsibility for the implementation of innovative approaches provides the courage to try these ideas and to face the challenges. Innovation is possible when an organisation inspires and empowers its staff by providing them with the necessary support and encouragement. Therefore the key purpose of organisational learning approaches is to promote creative individualism within the organisations so as to empower people. Employees are then challenged to find better ways of meeting organisational goals and values (Schien, 1999). Some expressions from the participants’ data that show their eagerness to be creative as part of the transformation process are “trying some different things”, “not frightened to try new ideas”, “give it a go and learn

new things” and “new opportunities to take risks”. These statements indicate that the participants felt inspired and challenged to take the initiative to try new ideas. A positive working environment that encourages staff to take the initiative in being part of a transformation process is achieved through leadership and not managerialism. Principals of learning communities lead through shared vision rather than through rules. These leaders empower individuals to act by providing staff with the information, training and parameters they need to make good decisions (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

The type of leadership is crucial in promoting innovation of any kind. The organisation is more likely to have staff support if they feel included in the process of transformation. Change is about taking responsibility which is better achieved when entrusted and not enforced. Leadership could have an advantage over managerialism when introducing transformative ideas. Viewing leadership as dispersed helps organisations to more effectively utilise the talents within them, and in so doing not only facilitates achievement of goals but also the empowerment of individuals (Bottery, 2004). This view of leadership seems to relate to this study for the participants find it exciting to be part of an organisation that is ‘innovative’, ‘open to new ideas’ and ‘purposeful’. Therefore the idea of seizing the opportunity to take the lead, along with the experience in store, makes the participants feel empowered and motivated enough to be part of the transformation process. Thus it can be said that the research site is a learning organisation which empowers individuals and increases their dedication to the organisation thereby reducing the need for managerial control (Senge, 1996).

This section has provided an analysis of the theme, ‘innovation’ by looking at aspects that relate to ‘change’, ‘opportunity’, ‘vision’, ‘professional development’ and ‘empowerment’ supported by relevant literature and data. An understanding of the impact of ‘innovation’ within an organisation will help comprehend how the organisation moves forward with their new ideas. This culture of change brought about by innovation supports the notion that this is ‘a living organisation’ is the result of continual change.

Macro theme two: A living organisation

The second macro theme that emerged from the findings is ‘a living organisation’; a concept that is consistently reflected in the way the participants and the organisation responded to change within the system. In the words of Senge (1990), a LO is “where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where

new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to learn together” (p. 4). The idea that an ‘organisation is living’ is captured by aspects such as ‘never being static’, ‘becoming’, ‘reflecting’, ‘resourcing’, ‘learning community’ and ‘system thinking’ which are stated in the data. These aspects are discussed in detail in the following paragraphs based on the data gathered and the literature on learning organisations and leadership. An analysis of these aspects will help to understand how the theme, ‘a living organisation’ reflects the characteristics of a learning organisation.

Never being static

The phrase, ‘never being static’, points to the progressive nature of an organisation which is constantly ‘on the move’. There can be numerous factors for an organisation to be constantly evolving. Innovation and change are some of the reasons an organisation undergoes transformation. This study shows that this particular organisation is innovative in exploring new and different ideas and is always on the move. Phrases like “openness to ideas”, “determined to be quite innovative”, “not just copy and imitate”, “not stagnant” and a “lot of learning goes on” provide specific examples to validate innovation as a driving force within this organisation. The literature on learning organisations too refers to change as an integral part of learning or vice versa. According to Schein (1992), an organisation has to learn even more rapidly in a world of turbulent change. This creates a culture which acts as a continuous learning system. Irrespective of the order in which change and innovation may occur, the impact it has on the organisation is what is pivotal. There is no room for complacency because of the ever growing pressure to perform. Like any other organisation, schools too are urged to make significant transformations to adapt and survive because they are now encountering greater uncertainty and new challenges (Levine, 2001). The need to keep pace with the ongoing change or innovation is what breathes life into an organisation. This study is an example of such an organisation which exhibits the features of a LO where members take advantage of learning opportunities (Rowley, 1998; Ng, 2005).

Becoming

The expression, ‘becoming’, emphasises the importance of the process of change as much as its end result. The dynamic nature of an educational organisation is marked by a culture of constant change which results in challenges. However the learning capacity of an educational institution helps it to cope with challenges. A LO is a place where

everyone is a learner and a place that caters to the present and the future (Retna & Ng, 2006; Retna, 2008). Some of the participants' views highlight the dynamic nature of this particular organisation which considers change as a process. Terms like "continual change", "changing environment", "developmental phase to a continuous phase" and "culture of change" explicitly outlines the nature of change. These examples consider change as a 'process of becoming' rather than just a 'happening'. A similar view about change is expressed by Higgs (2003) who acknowledges that the rate and complexity of change is rapidly increasing and becoming a fundamental characteristic of organisational effectiveness, rather than sporadic requirement which means change is a process and not a one off event.

The literature predominantly looks at change as something that happens while the data from this study seems to look at change as more of a process. No matter how change is viewed, the journey towards embracing change can be a demanding process. This has been voiced by the participants in this study who have expressed that "continual change is a real big issue (P2)" and that "staff have worked really hard (P14)." These expressions emphasise the demanding nature of ongoing change and the willingness of staff to put in the effort required to achieve the organisation's goals. Thus based on this study, it can be noted that a learning organisation foresees productive work stress as energising and reinvigorating and every experience is seen as a learning opportunity (Calvert, Mobley & Marshall, 1994; Kerka, 1995).

Reflecting

The idea of 'reflecting' seeks to address the need to develop strategies that support teaching and organisational practices in the future. This sub-theme centres on the learning culture within the organisation. The literature on transformational leadership and learning organisation (LO) refer to 'reflecting' as a significant part of the ongoing learning in an organisation. The view that the leaders of future schools must become both reflective practitioners and life-long learners who understand the importance of the intellectual aspects of leadership only reinstates the notion that learning and being reflective are key features of a transformative LO (Begley & Stefkovich, 2004). It is through reflection and discussion of the intended plans that a better understanding of what works and what needs to be amended is brought to light. According to P12, the in-house PD "enables staff members to share new ideas, change, or delete ideas if they don't have any long lasting effect or have no future." This method ensures an openness to ideas which enables progress rather than hitting a stalemate in relation to accepting a

new concept. This example from the data suggests that providing opportunities for reflecting not only helps the members to actively engage in the transition process but also to move forward with what is best for the organisation.

The participants are also concerned about the time required for sustainable change as well as the effort needed to assimilate the new concepts. The statements that signal these concerns are; “now may be a breathing space so that we can work on our new knowledge (P5)” and “it is hard work and you have to be part of the process (P8).” The data also shows that the participants are thinking about the long term effects and the purposefulness of the changes introduced within the organisation. Thus being able to reflect on the development process helps to maintain the momentum of progress at a pace that is manageable. Knowing our beliefs and assumptions and inviting others to question our thoughts will bring about a change in self and finally organisational change (Stoll & Louis, 2007). This concept of questioning ones beliefs is voiced by P2 who mentions that “the major decision was to challenge ourselves about every development to see if this is the right way or can we change.” The key message from this quote is that by reflecting and questioning, one can streamline the course of change to make it meaningful and purposeful.

The participants’ reflection on the organisational culture of change supports the notion that the ‘organisation is living’ and that the organisation has to be nurtured if it is to survive the adversities of change. Words like ‘frantic’, ‘rapid’, ‘more’ and ‘bombarded’ that feature in the data and are presented in the findings chapter reflect the participants’ perception of change. A school that has a capacity for managing change has features such as staff development or a focus on professional inquiry and reflection (Hargreaves, 1999). The ability to reflect and to be able to question the relevance of the ideas introduced are some of the characteristics which differentiates a learning organisation from the rest. The data from this study, backed by the literature, expresses the view that leadership for learning creates and sustains conditions that favour learning, an environment that nurtures the learning of all staff. Everyone has a chance to reflect on the nature, skills and processes of learning (MacBeath, 2007).

Resourcing

‘Resourcing’ refers to people, building and technology which are the key resources of an organisation. The optimum use of these resources to meet the growing demands of an ever changing future is what characterises a learning organisation. Availability of

resources is essential for the development of an organisation and for obtaining the desired results. The findings from Hayes, Christie, Mills and Lingard's (2004) study conducted in Australia, indicated that the schools had enough technological, curricular and library resources, as well as plenty of professional development opportunities. These schools considered investing in PD as a direct investment in teachers and administrators, which in turn was viewed as a valuable investment in the future. This reference shows the significance of resourcing for the smooth functioning of an organisation. The participants in this particular study mention how the building and technology reflect the vision and goal of the organisation. Some of the participants in this study spoke about the building and the school's vision; "buildings have been designed specifically with learning in mind (P4)", and "looking to be a ground breaking school and cutting edge in technology (P5)". These quotes from this study highlight the focus on resourcing which is in keeping with the school's vision for the future.

Upgrading of resources creates an environment that encourages learning and challenges people to learn new ways of doing things. This is reflected in the quote, "I think everybody is very keen to get as many staff into PD, learning this and learning that (P14)." 'Resourcing' could mean up skilling, updating, adapting and utilising the infrastructure and human resources which are features of an organisation that is moving forward or constantly evolving. Sackney and Mitchell (2008) too have found that school principals work at finding materials, resources, opportunities, and time that can enable teacher leaders to access relevant PD. In this way, PD is seen as an important aspect of resourcing, helping to enhance the effective use of other resources thereby making PD a valuable resource investment. It can be summarised from this study that the continual development depends on resource management and the primary factor that facilitates this is learning through PD to cope with the continual change brought about by development. Such development reflects the main characteristics of a LO which is ongoing learning (Senge, 1990; Ng, 2004a).

Learning community

The 'learning community' is about learning from one another and working as a team to achieve organisational goals. A learning organisation or a learning community in an educational context is characterised by transparent openness to learning (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000). Open communication encourages a learning community to be proactive and nurtures forward thinking. Learning communities bring together like minded people to discuss topics of interest that relate to their work and to exchange views about a

topic. The literature on learning communities highlights the benefits of a learning environment which allows interaction and the discussion of ideas that help unpack and learn new concepts. Yeo (2002) noted that learning is influenced by team work which leads to the exchange of ideas and a sense of belonging. Team learning is encouraged in a healthy working environment, where members influence one another through their learning. According to P6, the “learning community is not about one person or one source giving information. It is about combining all these people and all the sources to get the best information.” P6’s views are in line with the view that knowledge is something that is produced collaboratively by teams of people. It is more like a process; it is constantly changing, evolving, ‘flowing’ and regenerating itself into new forms (Castells, 2000). Learning communities focus on the importance of knowledge. Up to date knowledge is a key characteristic of an organisation that tries to cope with change.

The learning community is student focused and every member of the community is a learner. The aim of a professional learning community is to improve student performance by teachers engaging in research and problem solving which enables them to reflect on their practices (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003). Learning circles is an example from the data that describes how some participants come together to discuss effective teaching and learning techniques that could be used in the classroom (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003). The purpose of learning circles is to facilitate and support the members in the group to learn by sharing their experiences. This is voiced by P7 who mentions that “the whole idea is to work collegially and to develop each other.” This quote reveals the most critical aspect in developing a collaborative culture which is creating the supportive conditions for dialogue. A culture where exchanges of ideas flourish is a place where everyone can make a difference thereby nurturing the capacity needed to build mature and sustainable learning communities (Stoll & Louis, 2007). Based on the data gathered in this study, it can be concluded that this particular organisation is a learning community that provides opportunities for team building and facilitates staff development (Walker, 2005).

System thinking

‘System thinking’ relates to the vision, planning and goals that take into consideration the organisation as a whole. One of the five disciplines of a learning organisation is system thinking. This emphasises the importance of the whole and how the parts complement the whole. Education is a complex issue with many factors in play and ‘system thinking’ is a body of knowledge and tools that enable us to make sense of this

complexity (Senge, 1990). The participants' reference to the vision, and the infrastructure that supports it, shows how the organisation's vision is supported by the systems in place. These are inter-connected and interact with one another. Some expressions from the data which show the connection between the infrastructure and the vision are; "new type of building supports the new type of education environment (P3)" and "The buildings have been designed specifically with learning in mind (P4)." These examples highlight the system thinking which looks at the organisation as a whole and how the different systems within an organisation might work together to realise the common vision.

The vision is what the organisation aims to achieve through planning and goal setting and keeps in mind the big picture which acts as the inspirational force of development. This concept can be supported by the participants' comments such as: "objectives [are] in place to make those things happen (P4)", "lead school in technology (P14)", "integrate as much technology as we can into our practice (P14)" and "everybody is prepared to give the new ideas a go (P4)." These are some examples from the data which explains the importance of integrating current activity to achieve the bigger picture as outlined in the school's vision.

The basic principle in system thinking is that the system is a whole made up of interrelated and interacting parts (Ng, 2005). Individuals and systems are the parts of the complex structure of an organisation. The coordination of the parts is essential for the smooth functioning of the organisation as a whole. Organisational goals help to guide the individuals' efforts and to harness their potential to cope with change as this has an impact on the organisation as a whole. System thinking can enable individuals to develop an understanding of the process of change and how they affect the organisation. In essence, system thinking provides the integrating force throughout the organisation (Jashapara, 1993).

This section has provided an analysis of the theme that an 'organisation is living' by looking at aspects that relate to 'never being static', 'becoming', 'reflecting', 'resourcing', 'learning community' and 'system thinking' and supported by relevant literature and data. The idea that the 'organisation is living' could relate to the concept that of the 'individual and organisational tension' that exists as a result of the tension created between the two, which keeps the process of change alive.

Macro theme three: Individual and organisational tension

The third theme that emerged from the findings is described as the ‘individual and organisational tension’. This tension is based on the nature of change as it is encountered by the participants within the organisation. Education is a complex issue with many factors in play. System thinking enables us to understand the complexity of the whole through a wealth of knowledge and tools (Senge, 1990). The factors responsible for the tension created due to the ‘individual / organisation tension’ are captured by aspects such as the ‘rate of change’, ‘challenges’, ‘phases of change’ and ‘motivation’, which emerge from the data. These sub themes are discussed in detail in the following paragraphs based on the data gathered and the literature on learning organisation and leadership. An analysis of these aspects helps understand how the theme ‘individual and organisational tension’ reflects the characteristics of a learning organisation.

Rate of change

The ‘rate of change’ is the first aspect that relates to the process of change. The rate of change exerts a certain amount of tension on the individual and the organisation. Change is seen as a process that one has to go through to be able to understand and absorb new and different ideas introduced as part of the process. One of the reasons that can cause tension is a miss match between the organisation’s expectation and the individual’s ability to achieve the organisational goals. As stated in the literature, sometimes the difficulty is the misalignment of goals between individuals, teams, and organisation. Such a situation often disintegrates collective performance, reducing the organisation’s competitive advantage (Coad & Berry, 1998).

As far as this study is concerned, the participants’ refer to the pressure which is part of the process of ongoing change. The pressure and the expectations that result is voiced by P5 and P14 in their statements; “I think if there were big follow up courses and so on, the whole point of it would be lost, just more frantic activity (P5)” and “I think the management of work is really hard (P14).” These examples from the data show that the participants are aware of the impact of change and are being realistic in terms of what to expect. By being reflective, they move forward instead of feeling weighed down by the changes. In others words, there can be a gap between the organisation and the individual’s expectations but acknowledging constraints in implementing change is one way of overcoming the challenges.

On the other hand, organisations need to change strategies, structures and processes in order to respond to the ever increasing challenges (Higgs, 2003). This means that tension is an inevitable part of growth and development but how it is addressed will make all the difference to the organisation and its people. This tension could be eased to some extent by providing support for individuals to cope with the rapid changes. The staff members have to be supported through this process so that they know what is expected of them and how they might cope with the changes without succumbing to the tension. One way of providing support is by communicating and networking with the staff members as P5 says, they were kept informed “right from the beginning” and were told “how there would be hiccups and frustrations of doing things.” This made them feel that “they were all in it together (P5).” The importance of keeping the communication channels open is reiterated by Fauske (2005) who noted that the lack of opportunity for educators to interact and develop shared understandings is a big obstacle to organisational learning in schools. However this is not the case with this particular study. P4 mentions that the “staff appreciate the good communication between the principal and the rest of the staff” and therefore “they have been prepared to buy into new ideas and take on a lot more.” It appears from the participants’ comments that the open communication approach not only eases the path of transition but also facilitates the learning of new concepts which is a characteristic of a LO (Fauske & Raybould, 2005).

Challenges

‘Challenges’ are a second aspect which relates to the shortcomings and difficulties faced with the rapid growth within an organisation. The pace of change and the time available for the people to cope with the change can create tension between the individual and the organisation. The individuals within an organisation that is developing rapidly may feel overwhelmed by the time constraints they face while trying to assimilate all that is happening around them. This concern of not having enough time to be able to take in all that was being presented to them as part of the transformation process is expressed in comments made by P5 who mentions that “we have been bombarded with a lot of changes and information. It is all very wonderful but it may need time to imbed.” The complexity of change is something that has to be considered and taken into account because of its effects on the individual and the organisation. Higgs (2003) noted that the rate and complexity of change is rapidly increasing and becoming a fundamental characteristic of organisational effectiveness, rather than a sporadic requirement. As a

result, there appears to be a need to identify leadership, which will effectively implement change and build sustained change capability. The literature not only refers to the complexity of change as expressed by the participant but also to leadership that will help sustain change within the organisation.

Being aware of the push and pull factors that exists between the organisation and the individual is essential so that the pace of change can be moderated. One of the other concerns that emerged from the data is the need to maintain the unity among the staff as the organisation grows. P10 and P8 think that in a big school with separate staffrooms, “it is difficult to maintain collegiality” and “I don’t think that is conducive to a whole staff socialising and catching up.” In addition P3 mentions that with the “activities spread right across the school; it is very hard to keep the unified sense amongst staff.” These expressions from the participants in this study seem to imply that the size of the school may prove to be a challenge in maintaining collegiality which is likely to affect the process of transformation within the organisation. Voulalas and Sharpe (2005) have remarked that it is more difficult to implement transformational process in larger schools. Does this mean that the transformational process is difficult because a big organisation finds it challenging to maintain the sense of oneness due to some practical constraints as identified by the participants in this study? Some of the reasons which make the process of introducing new concepts more demanding can be time, resourcing and coordination (Voulalas & Sharpe, 2005). The concerns expressed by the participants in this study reflect some of the areas that may go unnoticed or is likely to be overlooked when the focus and energy is channelized towards the transformation process.

Phases of change

‘Phases of change’ is the third aspect which relates to ‘pioneering’ and ‘settling’, the two distinct phases of change. ‘Pioneering’ is the implementation of new concepts and ‘settling’ is seen as the time taken to imbibe the new knowledge until it becomes part of organisational practice. The pace of transition from one phase to another can exert tension between the individual and the organisation. Providing adequate time and support to be able to transcend from one phase to another is essential for the change to be effective. In P5’s view there are “lots of subtle changes in our teaching but it would be a matter of letting these things settle in.” Voulalas and Sharpe (2005) have identified that finding time to bring about transformation is one of the main administrative barriers. The key message from the data is that it is essential to find the time to take in

the new developments. The literature states that finding the time is the biggest hurdle faced by an organisation. It is interesting to note that the literature does not provide any suggestion as to how to deal with this situation. Therefore there is a gap in the literature; an area that needs to be researched further.

If change is seen as a process and not a single event, then the organisation should monitor the pace and notice when it is time for transitioning in order to achieve longer term results. There is data to support the participants' views on the 'phases of change' which shows the need for a break between the phases in order for the change to be productive. P2 feels that "the key thing for the school now is to move from a developmental phase to a continuous phase." This quote shows that the organisation is aware of when and what is the next phase of development which indicates that there is an understanding of what is best for the organisation. Lack of understanding or scant disregard of how the dynamics work between the individual and the organisation could jeopardise the entire purpose of change. The literature generally refers to change as a happening which is perceived as a one off event rather than moving from one phase to another phase (Rowley, 1998; Schon, 1993 & Lundvall, 2001). The data presented in this section not only shows that this particular organisation views change as a continuous process comprising of different phases of development, but also considers this process of change as a learning opportunity in deciding what is best for the organisation. Thus it can be summarised that change involves learning and factors that enable learning should be an integral part of any effort that results in change (Fullan & Miles, 1992).

Motivation

The term 'motivation' relates to the factors that influence individuals wanting to be part of an organisation. An organisation's vision or philosophy can appeal to those whose philosophy is similar. P6 stated that "the school's vision meshed quite well with my philosophy of teaching." This can mean that the alignment of an individual's philosophy with the organisation's philosophy is a motivational factor in itself and part of the process that takes place within the organisation (Stoll, 1999). Another example of motivation from this study is the desire to make a difference. The participants' determination and eagerness to be able to do something different supports the organisation's vision to make a difference in learning through its innovative ideas. Some statements to support this position are; "I enjoy the possibility to make a difference (P1)", "you can always do something better (P5)" and "there was a chance

for me to make a bit more of a difference (P6)." In addition to these opportunities to make a difference, expressions like "developing something new with its challenges (P10)" and "build the department up from scratch was an attraction (P11)" show that the chance to develop something, along with its challenges, has been a motivational factor in the learning opportunities provided by the organisation (Senge, 1990).

This section has provided an analysis of the theme namely, 'individual and organisational tension', by looking at aspects that relate to the 'rate of change', 'challenges', 'phases of change' and 'motivation'. An understanding of the importance of the 'relational context' within an organisation will help comprehend how the organisation is able to move forward in spite of the paradox between the individual and the organisation.

Macro theme four: Relational context

The fourth macro theme that emerged from the findings is the 'relational context'. This macro theme is the life line of an organisation and acts as a backdrop for the other themes previously discussed in this chapter. This theme is like the last piece in the jigsaw puzzle that is required to make sense of the whole concept of an LO. The working environment is important to organisational learning, for in a healthy working environment, members influence one another through their learning (Yeo, 2002). Likewise a caring workplace generates trust and facilitates the exploration of new ideas and knowledge (Prewitt, 2003). The question is what are the factors that help create such a conducive learning environment? The unpacking of this macro theme will help answer this question. The significance of the macro theme, 'relational context', is captured by aspects such as 'relationships', 'staff persona' and the 'type' of leadership which has emerged from the data. These aspects are discussed in detail in the following paragraphs based on the data gathered and the literature on learning organisation and leadership. An analysis of these aspects would help explain the importance of the 'relational context' within an organisation.

Relationship

Collegiality relates to the nature of the 'relationship' that helps sustain the life within an organisation. Collegiality encourages a collaborative working environment which enhances the relationship between colleagues. The support provided by the staff for one another during formal and informal meetings help boost the morale and confidence of the staff members. Team learning not only helps build trust and respect but also

empowers individuals to share ideas with others. A caring workplace is the striking feature of a learning culture. Members are more willing to share information when participating in a caring environment which generates trust and facilitates an enthusiastic exploration of new ideas and knowledge (Prewitt, 2003; Gillespie & Mann, 2000). Some of the expressions like ‘share what happened’, ‘PD is taught by staff, ‘we would organise PD’ and ‘share their knowledge’ from the data reflect the views expressed in the literature. Professional development programmes within the organisation are opportunities for strengthening ‘relationships’ through interactions which enables staff to share their experiences. Team learning is encouraged in a healthy working environment, where members influence one another through their learning (Yeo, 2002).

The participants in this study refer to team learning and professional development offered by staff members. Teacher professional learning communities are ways of framing relationships in schools where ongoing teacher learning is complimentary to student learning (Hayes et al., 2004). An organisation can cope better with the tensions that ensue in the face of change because of the open communication that helps build relationships between individuals and the organisation. The characteristics of learning communities are strong cultures of trusted colleagues who value each other personally and professionally (Stoll & Louis, 2007). Learning communities are opportunities for the staff to collaboratively learn the new concepts introduced as part of the transformation. This collaborative effort helps pool resources and knowledge. Learning communities promote a culture that values collaboration and collegiality and binds people together where staff members work as a team, support each other and share ideas (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003).

Staff persona

Staff persona relates to the characteristics and personalities of the staff members in an organisation. The expectations of a transformative organisation are likely to be achieved by staff members who are ‘innovative’, ‘original’, ‘determined’ and ‘reflective’. These characteristics encourage staff to try new ideas and experiment with different teaching and learning approaches; “A secondary school determined to be quite innovative” (P5). “The staff here are not ostriches they are prepared to try something new (P4).” The staff members are “given new opportunities to take risks” and “people are driven into taking risks” (P2). These are some examples from the data that highlight the organisation’s expectation and the qualities exhibited by the staff. The staff’s determination and ability

to reflect on their practice helps them to be open minded and more accepting of change. The data from this study shows that staff members exhibit certain qualities that help support the organisation's vision to be innovative. Does this mean that staff persona affects the way individuals within an organisation respond to change?

Type of leadership

Leadership is essential in inspiring staff to be involved in the process of organisational development. The willingness to take risks as part of the transformation process depends on the guidance and support provided. This view can be supported by P2's statement which states that "people are given support around taking risks". The type of leadership that encourages its staff members through the transition process is transformational leadership. A transformational leader possesses the necessary drive to initiate and maintain transformational processes within an organisation (Banerji & Krishnan, 2000). Transformational leaders use intellectual stimulation to encourage staff to think in innovative ways (Charbonneau, 2004). Under such leadership, individuals feel motivated to participate on their own in the process of change.

Staff feel empowered when they are entrusted with responsibilities by the leader. Within the growing number of school to school networks, it has been argued that distributed leadership may provide greater opportunities for members to learn from one another (Harris, 2008). The participants in this study mention that they had an opportunity to be involved in the transformation process. In P11's view, "they like to think they are part of the decision making and a culture of change." The literature on the type of leadership in a learning organisation describes how leaders motivate and inspire individuals in an organisation to be part of the transformation process. The process of leading and learning simultaneously facilitates the growth of others, the search for new insights and the adaptation and re-construction of prior knowledge in the light of new knowledge (Beattie, 2002).

Open communication and a collaborative approach helps build a 'give it a go' attitude among staff. Open communication assists in comprehending the phases of change and the challenges that are part of the process. Senge (1990) has stated that communicating the common vision in the organisation is of collateral importance. The open communication helps people in the organisation to share the vision and to understand their current reality. Open communication helps prepare the members in an organisation to anticipate what would be expected of them as part of the transformational process.

The staff members are willing to take risks because they are informed, feel supported and are willing to rise to the challenge. Some of these ideas are reflected in the participant's statements when P5 talks about the "open style of leadership", and P4 refers to the "good and open communication" which impacted the way staff members responded to changes introduced within the organisation. Dimmock & Walker (2005) have identified transformational leadership as the type of leadership that encourages open dialogue, clear lines of communication and collaborative decision making.

A complex environment calls for a form of leadership that stimulates transformation in contrast to a command and control type of leadership. Such leaders motivate others by empowering and developing them, acting as their coaches and mentors (Amy, 2008). When the staff members feel they are part of the process, they muster the courage to confront what the change has to offer them. The shortcomings along the way could be dealt with by keeping people on board through an open communication so that they are aware of what to expect as part of the development phase. This view could be supported by expressions like "things have been made explicit", "felt part of the battle", "open communication" and "prepared to buy into it" from the data. The data shows how the participants in this study were willing to take risks because they felt supported. Transformational leadership empowers individuals to create a collaborative culture that encourages teacher development and problem solving (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Such leaders support open communication which creates team motivation (Banerji & Krishnan, 2000).

This section has provided an analysis of the macro theme, 'relational context', by looking at aspects that relate to 'collegiality', 'staff persona', and 'type' of leadership supported by relevant literature and data. An understanding of the importance of the 'relational context' within an organisation will help comprehend how the organisation is able to move forward in spite of the challenges faced due to continual change if 'relationships' and 'type of leadership' form an integral part of a transformative learning organisation.

Summary

This discussion chapter has presented the four macro themes namely 'innovation', 'a living organisation', 'individual and organisational tension' and the 'relational context' that have emerged from the data. These macro themes have been analysed in relation to the literature and the data gathered from the participants. The extent to which these

Chapter VI: Discussion

macro themes relate to the characteristics of a learning organisation will be discussed in the next chapter which would help answer the research question. '*Is Whangaparaoa College a transformative learning organisation in the making?*' The implications of the research will be presented in the conclusion chapter followed by suggestions for further research.

Chapter VII: Conclusion

A strategically focused school is one that is educationally effective in the short term but has a clear framework and processes to translate core moral purpose and vision into excellent educational provision that is challenging and sustainable in the medium- to long-term.

(Davies, 2006, p. 3)

This chapter answers the research question and addresses the significance of the research findings. In addition, this chapter discusses the strengths and limitations of this study, identifies implications of the findings, and makes suggestions for future research that build on the notion of educational institutions as learning organisations.

This research sought to address the research question, *Is Whangaparaoa College a transformative learning organisation in the making?* The findings presented in this thesis highlight characteristics of a learning organisation that are exhibited by this particular school. These characteristics underpin my position that Whangaparaoa College is a learning organisation in the making. While some characteristics relate directly to the five disciplines of a learning organisation (Senge, 1990), this research identifies other characteristics that provide unique ways of exploring schools as learning organisations.

The primary characteristic of a learning organisation that is shown in this school was ‘innovation’. The school’s vision provides the focus and direction for innovative and transformative practice. The professional development programmes provide learning opportunities for staff to learn together, share ideas and support each other in creating an innovative learning community. In a similar way, the infrastructure, technology and educational strategies all support and enable the school in achieving its vision. The staff persona and motivation influence the way they respond to change.

The findings also reveal additional characteristics that show this school as a learning organisation. More specifically, these characteristics include the ‘individual and organisational tension’, ‘the notion that the organisation appears to be a living entity’ and ‘the relational context’ that surround every endeavour. These characteristics and factors such as the rate and phase of change create learning opportunities that enable the school as a learning organisation to consider their present practice in the light of their future aspirations. What is important here is that these considerations are ongoing and never static. In this way, the school is constantly evolving and constructing an innovative and appropriate response to challenges in the light of their future aspirations.

Such an endeavour requires responsive and collegial relationships that work with leadership towards a shared response. These human endeavours sustain the development of the school as a transformative learning organisation.

Every educational organisation might be considered to be a learning organisation. The quality and the extent to which they represent a learning organisation in practice vary. As far as WGP College is concerned, the characteristics of a learning organisation are exhibited. WGP College is then, a transformative learning organisation in the making. The College is an organisation that is dynamically evolving with a breadth of leadership that enabled this development.

In summary, while the findings from the present study confirm a number of characteristics explored in previous studies, some additional factors which characterise a learning organisation can be seen in this study. Furthermore, the type of leadership as an integral part of a learning organisation is critical to the ongoing development for a school as a learning organisation.

The strengths and limitations

There are a range of strengths and limitations that can be identified in this research. The appropriateness of the methodology is a strength. This research has sought to explore the factors impacting and shaping the development of a school as a learning organisation. In this way, the research has a positive orientation rather than other research approaches which might prematurely construe these factors as problem based or necessitating an organisational evaluation. Moreover the intricacies of each participant's response reveal a complexity that is best shown by a case study methodology and enables a critical reflection of the status quo.

This research has identified positive features of a learning organisation as well as constructive suggestions for a thought provoking discussion and ongoing reflection to support the development of the school as a learning organisation. Most importantly, the research provides a significant contribution to the scant New Zealand literature on schools as learning organisations.

The research successfully engaged staff members from across the school and from different levels of management. In this way, the voices of teaching and support staff, along with those in leadership positions have been heard. There is a high level of consistency and similarity in the participants' responses; a strength of this study.

Unintentionally, the research process has had a significant impact on my personal and professional learning as a teacher ‘inside’ the context. This study has rekindled my passion to be a practitioner-researcher and to explore the theory-practice tensions of a learning organisation in different educational contexts.

While this study might be the first to capture the characteristics of a learning organisation at an individual level in a New Zealand secondary school, the findings need to be considered alongside some limitations. One such limitation of the study is the generalisability of the research findings. This case study research is contextually specific to one organisation. The present study was conducted in a school that was developing into a full-fledged secondary school. The generalisation of the findings in a broad sense would be inappropriate, as would any form of generalisation across a range of secondary schools from different deciles would be highly problematic too. However, it would make for interesting future comparative studies if research was conducted into other Aotearoa / New Zealand secondary schools of differing deciles to ascertain whether they too could be labelled transformative learning organisations.

The breadth of participation is another point that has to be considered in relation to the limitations of the research. The number of participants had to be limited because of time factors and the manageability of data (this is an essence feasibility issue). A small number of participants meant in-depth data such that the quantity had to be potentially compromised to ensure the quality of data. Care was taken to include participants from across the school and from various management levels.

The study has explored the concept of a learning organisation from the pioneer’s point of view and from staff members who had been at the school from the inception stage. In this way, the data and findings seeks to represent the views and experiences of the participants. Finally, I appreciate that over the duration of this research, some of the conversations may not be relevant in the long term. This also shows the evolving nature of this school as a learning organisation.

While some limitations exist, I am confident that this research has noted some salient feature about this transformative learning organisation as it transitions into a full-fledged secondary school. Reflections on the research findings will possibly bring changes to the way learning organisations are perceived in an educational context.

Implications

The concept of a learning organisation provides a framework that can capture the characteristics of a schools development. Importantly, the dynamic and responsive nature of a learning organisation can be seen in the complexity of this educational setting. Other schools too might be considered as learning organisations in the broad sense of the term (Argyris et al., 1978; Senge, 1992). This research can enable other schools to reflect on their practice as learning organisations. Applying the term learning organisation to schools without being critical may result in an unintentional overlooking of the work that schools need to do if they are places of organisational and individual learning (Hayes et al., 2004). Therefore, the learning organisation framework can be employed as a useful tool to identify the characteristics of a learning organisation and the dynamic leadership in an educational organisation.

Another implication of this study is the transformative influence of gathering experiential stories from staff as the questions and answers provoke fresh understandings of the future. The data provided an in depth understanding of the concept of a learning organisation as it is perceived and experienced by the participants. Leadership and teachers alike can dialogue more fully about the relevance and implications of the learning organisation concept in educational settings using the framework of a learning organisation. Likewise, the framework can be used to plan and structure professional development programmes within the school to ensure ongoing learning.

Future research

Others might choose to build upon this research by exploring the multiple perspectives of participants in a learning organisation as to how critical and transformative learning practices of staff impacts student learning. A longitudinal study might be conducted over a period of five years which considers the impact on student learning. Alternatively, another possibility is the replication of this case study comparing the perceptions and experiences between the settlers and the pioneers. This too could be longitudinal.

Other schools might be encouraged to apply the concept of a learning organisation as this might reveal essential understandings of the uniqueness of their particular learning environment. The study could be further deepened by using mixed-methods research approaches that includes the general use of survey to capture a wide range of

participants with focus groups providing another strategy for capturing broader perspectives on the nature of a learning organisation.

A range of possibilities exist for the researcher as a consequence of this research. One such possibility is the extension of my research into the learning culture that exists within Whangaparaoa College. Alternatively I could replicate the study in a secondary school in India as a comparative study. Still further, there are options for investigating the characteristics of a learning organisation in different levels of schooling starting from early childhood education to higher education. This research is not the end but the beginning of my journey as a researcher.

It is my hope that other researchers will draw upon and extend my findings into other areas of research on schools as learning organisations. Should a broad range of methodologies be applied to this area of study, it may well be that our understanding of the complexities and intricacy of factors influencing a learning organisation is deepened. My challenge to researchers and teachers is to advocate for rich, positive change which enables schools to develop as transformative learning organisations.

Summary

The concept of a learning organisation is new to educational institutions in New Zealand. Understanding educational institutions as learning organisations can enable institutions to meet the demands of an ever changing context. In this way, educational institutions can strategically develop as transformative learning organisations that are dynamic and contextually responsive.

This research has sought to explore the extent to which a particular school exhibits the characteristics of a learning organisation in its organisational development. The case study was situated in a New Zealand secondary school in relation to its transition from an intermediate school into a full-fledged secondary school. More specially, to what extent is Whangaparaoa College a transformative learning organisation in the making?

The findings presented in this thesis highlight the characteristics of a learning organisation as exhibited by this particular school. While some characteristics relate directly to the five disciplines of learning organisations (Senge, 1990), this research has identified other characteristics that enable a unique way of considering a school as a learning organisation.

Chapter VII: Conclusion

The most notable attribute of this case study is the breadth of innovative thinking and practice that was voiced by the participants. The innovative nature of the school is expressed in the positional titles; infrastructure and the ICT influenced pedagogy. Developmental challenges are also construed as learning opportunities. Critically important to this schools development as a learning organisation is the role of professional development for staff as this enhances the formation of a learning community. This research opens a range of possibilities for future research which might investigate the characteristics of a learning organisation in different educational contexts.

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Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet



Date Information Sheet Produced:

20th June 2007

Project Title

A case study of Whangaparaoa College: A transformative learning organisation in the making?

An Invitation

Dear Colleagues,

My research focuses on Learning Organisations and my particular interest is in looking at Whangaparaoa College as a transformative learning organisation. To do this I am conducting interviews to capture the experiences of staff who have been here since the inception stage of the secondary school or since it was an intermediate. I cordially invite interested participants to be part of this research journey.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to explore the concept of a learning organisation in an educational context. It will study the ongoing transformative developments that have taken place since becoming a secondary school. It seems to me that Whangaparaoa College has been very innovative at a time when the resources within education are generally very tight and at times contestable. The College appears to provide an exciting model of development.

How was I chosen for this invitation?

You have been selected because you have been in the school for more than three years, you are the Principal/ Deputy Principal/ Dean/ Curriculum Leader/ Leader of ICT cluster/ member of the Improved Learning Team and you have been part of the transformation process. If you are willing and able to participate, could you please contact me. My email id is krajalakshmi10@rediffmail.com

What will happen in this research?

The information for this research will be gathered through semi-structured interviews lasting around 45 to 60 minutes. The interviews will be audio taped. The time for the interview will be negotiated with you. Once the interview is transcribed, you will be given a copy of your transcript for your verification. A summary of the final findings will be presented to you in due course.

What are the discomforts and risks?

This research focuses on the achievements and plans of Whangaparaoa College. In essence, the research has a positive orientation. Care will be taken to eliminate any discomfort and risk that may arise in the research process.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

If you express discomfort of any sort, the interview will be stopped. The interview will be continued after a break or after addressing the cause of concern. If you are reluctant to answer a question, then you can move on to the next question.

What are the benefits?

This research will not only fulfil the criteria for my Masters qualification but will also help me to grow as a researcher. It will help me to evolve in my role as a teacher and influence my participation and practice with the school. By participating in the research, you will have a growing appreciation of your achievement and vision. You will have a deeper understanding of your role and the environment in which you work. The research will also unravel some of experiences of the underlying values and principles of our work place.

How will my privacy be protected?

Your identity will be protected through the use of pseudonyms. The information you share will be kept confidential and will only be used for research purpose.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

I am asking that you be available for a forty five (45) minute to one hour, one-off, interview. In some cases I will need an additional thirty minutes for the purpose of clarifying parts of the interview. You will also require 30 minutes to verify and confirm the transcripts before analysing the data.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

The interview will only commence when you are satisfied with the expectations as laid out in this participant information sheet, and you have discussed any concerns regarding the research with me. To show your willingness to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you decide to participate in this research, you are required to sign the consent form attached with this information sheet and email me a time when I can collect it from you. My email id is krajalakshmi10@rediffmail.com

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Yes. You will be given a written summary of the research findings. The findings will also be presented in the staff meeting. A copy of the thesis will be available in the school library.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr. Richard Smith

Email: richard.smith@aut.ac.nz,

Phone: 09 9219999 x 7935

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEC, Madeline Banda, madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext 8044.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher Contact Details:

Rajalakshmi Krishnamoorthy

krajalakshmi10@rediffmail.com

0210348731

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Appendix

Dr. Richard Smith
Senior Lecturer
School of Education
Auckland University of Technology
Private bag 92006
Phone: 09 9219999 x 7935
Email: richard.smith@aut.ac.nz

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *11th October, 2007*, AUTEC Reference number

07/125

Appendix B: Consent Form

Consent Form



Project title: A case study of Whangaparaoa College: A transformative learning organisation in the making?

Project Supervisor: Dr Richard Smith

Researcher: Rajalakshmi Krishnamoorthy

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 20th June 2007.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes No

Participant's signature:

.....

Participant's name:

.....

Appendix

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....
.....
.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 11th October, 2007

AUTEC Reference number 07 / 125