

Collaborative Research into the Effects of School Restructuring

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Introduction

The research project outlined in this paper was one of four projects commissioned by the National Schools Network (NSN) in 1995 and was completed in April 1996 (Peters, Dobbins, and Johnson, 1996). Its aim was to examine the relationship between restructuring and organisational culture in four schools which changed their work organisation as part of the National Schools Network's program of reform.

The study addressed the following questions:

- What are the effects of restructuring on school organisational culture, on decision making processes, and on teacher learning and professional development outcomes?
- What has been the impact of work organisation reform on the traditionally isolationist teaching culture?
- What is the role of cultural change in the restructuring process?
- What are the enabling conditions for cultural change?

Review of Literature Restructuring

Hargreaves (1994: 242) defines school restructuring as 'a fundamental redefinition of rules, roles, responsibilities and relationships for the students, teachers and leaders in our schools'. The National Schools Project, and later the NSN, defined restructuring as the 'reform of work organisation' and provided a list of factors to be considered by schools when attempting work reform. These factors included:

- the definition and allocation of roles
- staff relationships
- the appointment and mix of staff
- the use of time
- the grouping of students

- applications of technology
 - the use of feedback and appraisal to improve work.
- (Ladwig, Currie & Chadbourne, 1994).

Advocates of school restructuring argue that many of the structures in traditionally organised schools impede effective teaching and learning.

In schools which are reorganised, teachers and students work more collaboratively - teachers have more input into decisions which affect their work, and students of diverse talents and interests are grouped together for instruction. Lee and Smith claim that such schools have 'more meaning for their members' (1994: 2). Significantly, this frequently translates into improved learning outcomes.

Restructuring is also claimed to benefit teachers. Louis and Smith (1991) suggest that the working lives of many teachers are characterised by isolation, stress and uncertainty. They argue that schools need to develop alternative structures that increase teachers' participation in decision making, and provide greater opportunities for frequent and stimulating professional interaction. Improvements in the quality of teachers' working lives are claimed to increase their commitment to the goals of their school, and improve their relationships with students.

In summary, the literature on school restructuring presents a strong case for organisational reform. By focussing on ways to achieve greater teacher collegiality and student collaboration, the restructuring movement has gained considerable momentum both here and overseas.

Reculturing

Although there are many arguments in favour of restructuring, most researchers agree that restructuring, by itself, will not lead to changes in fundamental areas like student participation, teaching methods, and discipline practices. For structural change to be effective in stimulating and supporting other educational reforms there must also be a corresponding change in the 'cultural base' of the school.

Akin (1991: 3) defines the 'culture' of a school as 'the social organisation of the school staff which represents shared beliefs, customs, attitudes and expectations'. Hargreaves (1992: 219) provides a more complex definition of what he terms 'teacher culture', in which he distinguishes between 'content' and 'form'. He considers the 'content' of teacher culture to be the 'values, beliefs, habits and assumptions, and ways of doing things that are shared within a particular teacher group or wider teaching community' and the 'form' to be the 'characteristic patterns of relationships and forms of association between members of those cultures' (p.). He identifies four 'forms' of teacher culture:

- individualistic - where teachers work in isolation.
- balkanised - where teachers associate with colleagues only in particular groups.
- contrived - where joint teacher planning and collegiality is mandated, but characterised by a lack of authenticity and commitment.
- collaborative - where the whole staff willingly work together in the pursuit of better student learning.

Hargreaves maintains that the most prevalent of these forms of school culture is the individualistic culture. This is characterised by classroom isolation, presentism, conservatism, individualism, and an absence of long term plans, discussions about basic purposes and underlying assumptions, and teacher talk about educational theory.

Akin, Hargreaves and researchers such as Newmann and Wehlage (1995) and Common (1994) agree that the culture of a school is the single most important factor determining the extent to which educational change occurs. Akin maintains that for educational change to be sustained, the site culture must be positive. Hargreaves suggests that what is needed is a 'collaborative culture'. Conversely, where the site culture of a school is 'negative' (Akin) or 'individualistic', 'balkanistic' or based on 'contrived collegiality' (Hargreaves), change is often met with resistance and little real progress occurs.

In summary, the 'shared beliefs, customs, attitudes and expectations'

of teachers and students in a school - manifested as the collective 'culture' of the school - strongly influences the outcome of change initiatives. While restructuring organisational arrangements in schools may provide opportunities for change, cultural factors still seem to hold the key to the reform process.

Restructuring and Reculturing

It is clear from the research literature that restructuring has little effect on the learning environment unless it is accompanied by, or possibly preceded by, cultural change in the school community's values, beliefs, habits, assumptions, and ways of doing things. On the other hand, as Hargreaves (1994) points out, cultural change may be dependent on particular structural changes:

Cultures do not operate in a vacuum. They are formed within and framed by particular structures. These structures are not neutral. They can be helpful or harmful. They can bring teachers together or keep them apart. They can facilitate opportunities for interaction and learning, or present barriers to such possibilities.

In some cases, therefore, it is not possible to establish productive school cultures without some structural change that increase

opportunities for meaningful work relationships and collegial support. (Hargreaves, p. 256)

It would appear, then, that a reciprocal relationship is needed between restructuring and cultural change, and that schools looking to maximise reform need to focus on both restructuring and reculturing almost simultaneously.

This review of the literature provided the theoretical framework underpinning the research into the restructuring process in four National Schools Network schools.

Methodology

Introduction

The research consisted of a comparative case study of four purpose-selected schools using a written questionnaire and interviews to gather data about work restructuring at the schools. In accordance with the project guidelines provided by the NSN, the research methodology included features of a collaborative action research model; that is, the research proceeded through several cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. Each cycle was collaboratively planned with school participants.

The Schools

Four schools - two secondary and two primary - were invited to participate in the research project by the Research and Evaluation Committee of the NSN. The schools were selected because they had been involved in work reform through restructuring over a number of years and were seen to have made significant organisational changes in that time. The four schools were:

- Dovoren Park Primary School (SA)
- Ashfield Boys High School (NSW)
- Canadian Lead Primary School (Vic)
- The Grange Secondary College (Vic)

Development of the Written Questionnaire

Insights gained from visits to the four schools and a review of the literature were used to devise a written questionnaire intended to elicit information about the effects of restructuring on school

organisational culture. An initial draft of the questionnaire was prepared and sent to each school for comment and revision.

The questionnaire contained both closed and open-ended questions. The closed questions related to the following aspects of restructuring and organisational culture:

- the nature of work restructuring undertaken

- the role of school leaderships in the reform process
- decision making processes used during the reform initiative
- the nature, extent, and outcomes of collaborative work
- the conditions that promoted change
- the conditions that hindered change
- the impact of work restructuring on students.

Participants (n=126) were asked to respond to each question using a four point Likert-type scale.

Participants were also asked to complete open-ended questions about the positive and negative outcomes experienced at both a personal and school level as a result of restructuring. They were also asked to make recommendations about the restructuring process for schools about to embark on similar changes.

The Interviews

Twenty four people (six from each school) were interviewed during the research. These participants were purposefully selected - in consultation with each school - so that a variety of perspectives on the reform process could be accessed. Interviewees from each school were:

- the Principal
- someone who was instrumental in promoting restructuring (ie, was or had been a positive 'key player' in the reform process)
- someone who was not wholly in favour of the changes (ie, had concerns about some aspects of the reform process)
- someone who arrived at the school once the reform process was underway (ie, had not been part of the initial decision making and planning of the reform process)
- someone in a non teaching position (ie, a general staff member)
- one other person who was able to provide further insights into the reform process.

The interviews were intended to elicit participants' individual 'stories' about work restructuring, and to validate trends identified in the written questionnaire. The interviews were loosely structured to cover a similar range of issues to those covered in the questionnaire. Participants were informed, by letter, prior to the interview, of the questions to be covered in the interview. These were:

- What changes have you experienced in this school?
- How have these changes affected school culture? How have they affected you?
- How have these changes affected the decision making processes in the school? What has this meant for you?
- What has been the effect on teacher learning and professional development? What has it meant for you?

- What have been the particular challenges, struggles, difficulties in the restructuring process? What has this meant for you?
- How do you perceive the relationship between cultural change and structural change? Which do you think comes first?

Data Analysis

Data from the closed questions in the questionnaire were analysed both for individual schools and across schools using the frequency and cross tabulations operations of SPSS for the Macintosh. Schools were supplied with their own and aggregated data so that they could contribute to the analysis process.

Teachers' written comments and sections of interviews were transcribed and introduced to the innovative text analysis computer program, NUD•IST (Richards & Richards, 1993).

Results and Discussion

Overview of Staff Response to the Changes in Their School

Most of the questionnaire and interview questions asked participants to consider specific aspects of change in their school, such as effects on leadership or collaboration. The first section of the questionnaire, however, provided participants with the opportunity to provide an overview of their perceptions of structural and cultural change by reporting the extent to which they believed some key indicators of change were evident. The collated results for all respondents are shown in Table 1.

If the results across the final three columns are combined, it can be seen that a very high proportion of the participants reported that these indicators of change had occurred 'often', 'nearly all the time' or 'all of the time'. In particular, more than two thirds of respondents reported that they work cooperatively in teams (89.5%), that leaders share information (82.3%), that staff share common goals (81.5%), that teachers share information and expertise (77.6%), that leaders share leadership roles (71.8%) and that modifications have been made to the time-table (71.1%). Slightly less than two thirds of participants indicated that they are given time to plan and work collaboratively (65.3%) and that decisions are made by consensus (66.2%).

Table 1: Responses of All Teachers to Changes in their Schools (n = 124, missing = 2)

Responses to the open-ended questions in the questionnaire and interviews confirmed that for most staff there have been considerable changes in ways of working and the overall culture of the school. Many

comments, such as the following, focussed on the emergence of a more collaborative learning environment for staff and students:

I'm perceived differently by the students than I have been in other schools. We certainly don't have the 'us and them' mentality from either the teachers or the students ... more of a 'we're all here together' environment'. The student are very open to have a chat in the yard. (The Grange Secondary College)

A really positive atmosphere. I thought from previous friends who are teachers that in a staffroom there'd be a lot of whingeing about students but in fact here it's been really positive and uplifting ... and there's this real emphasis on learning and teaching which...I didn't think would occur in a school. (Ashfield Boys High School)

Often people lose their self-esteem because they can't see where their contribution fits. But now people are able to see the direction they're going. There's a sense of my part in it all - how my contribution adds

to everyone's contribution. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

Restructuring has allowed both students and staff to be better supported. By working in two teacher teams plus SSO plus Special Ed support greater flexibility has occurred. (Davoren Park Primary School)

Overall, these results provide convincing evidence that the majority of staff members in the research schools felt there had been significant changes in both structures, such as roles, decision making processes and management of time, and aspects of culture, such as shared goals and cooperative ways of working. Further evidence that respondents believed that extensive change had occurred was present in the rest of the questionnaire and interview data, and will be elaborated in the rest of this paper under the specific headings addressed in the questionnaire.

School Leadership/Executive

In Section B of the questionnaire, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they believed people in leadership or executive positions in their school had engaged in behaviours which promoted and supported the change process and devolved leadership. The collated results are shown in Table 2. As can be seen by looking at the combined results of the last two columns, the majority of participants (62.6% - 89.5%) indicated that school leaders had displayed these behaviours to 'some extent' or a 'great extent'.

Table 2: Responses of All Teachers to Leadership Issues (n = 124, missing = 2)

The results in this section of the questionnaire are particularly strong in regard to the leaders' roles as primary 'vision-makers' and powerful advocates for change. More than 50% of participants reported that school leaders to a 'great extent' had promoted the school's reforms in the wider community and within education circles (66.7%), promoted new ways of working (59.3%), shown strength and tenacity in pursuing reforms (59%) and articulated a clear vision or plan for the future of the school (54%).

Responses to the open-ended questions in the questionnaire, and in interviews, confirm the view across all schools of the importance of school leaders, particularly the principal, 'leading from the front'. This can be seen from the following responses, each from a different school:

The principal has been the change-maker and my attitude to that is that in many ways that is how it has to be. She's unusual in the sense of her vision and in terms of her intellectual understanding of things ... and I think that is a rare ingredient. (Ashfield Boys High School)

If you're going to make change you have to drive it. If (the principal) wasn't driving what she sees as the type of school she would like, it wouldn't take place. (The Grange Secondary College)

Administration play a particularly important part in this whole process and, therefore, needs to provide time, support, encouragement, observation and a personal review in the very early days and also at times throughout the year. (Davoren Park Primary School)

It is clear from the data that most participants valued strong leadership, in terms of vision, support and advocacy, while they were grappling with change. That is not to say that there was a uniformly positive view across all staff of the way leadership was being enacted in a particular school. The converse of the positive results in this section of the questionnaire is that in every school a certain proportion of staff expressed their belief that leaders were demonstrating positive behaviours only 'a little' or 'not at all'. Approximately a third of respondents felt this way in regard to their leaders sharing power by devolving some leadership roles to others (37.4%), bending the rules to implement changes at the school (37.3%) and consulting staff about the nature and timing of changes at the school (28.5%).

In particular, the issue of the extent to which leaders devolved leadership roles to others was a contentious one in schools. There were participants in all of the schools who were able to describe

greater opportunities for leadership roles:

I've not only been encouraged but recognised as a leader and given associated responsibilities such as co-ordinating the teams project and leading training and development activities. (Ashfield Boys High School)

I haven't been in a school where I've been part of a management team before. I meet once a week with the principal and assistant principal and we go around the table with different things relating to our decisions and that hasn't happened in any other school before. Non teaching staff really haven't had that much to say in what's happening. (The Grange Secondary College)

The changes involve more people, for example team leaders. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

There's been more opportunities to take on leadership roles. (Davoren Park Primary School)

In three of the schools, there was additional evidence that staff were taking the notion of shared leadership very seriously in that there was a move away from having team 'leaders' towards rotating these positions among team members and giving them a less hierarchical title such as team 'facilitator' or 'linker'.

However, there were participants in some schools who felt that leadership was not devolved equitably, but rather was autocratic or offered to a 'favoured few', as can be seen by the following comments:

... staff often feel uncomfortable about giving critical feedback due to the possibility of support and withdrawal. When power is 'shared' with staff, it is given inequitably and this has caused division and dissension. (Davoren Park Primary School)

Too much power in the hands of a chosen few. 'Favourites' are doing everything. The rest of us are neglected. I feel this is a serious management flaw. We all have talents. We all have experience - we are all worthwhile human beings. (Ashfield Boys High School)

Ongoing change and the processes which inform the way the school is run, the management styles of the people running the school, and the school culture are autocratic and insensitive. (The Grange Secondary College)

The view by some staff that leadership was not shared equitably is presumably also related to the perception by some staff that there was little or no consultation about the pace and rate of changes. This is an issue which is closely linked to perceptions of decision making and

will be discussed in relation to the data on decision making.

Principals in each of the four schools responded to the questionnaire and were interviewed. These principals clearly articulated the view that they had needed to play a pivotal role in identifying the directions for educational change and supporting and promoting the change process. However, there were differences in the way each one described this role. One principal (The Grange Secondary College) emphasised her role in 'educational leadership' which she saw as accepting responsibility for generating, or 'at least seeding', a lot of the educational ideas for the school. She felt that she could play an important part in 'providing the research and the background information so that decisions are made on an informed basis rather than a traditional, historical basis.'

Another principal indicated that recognising and catering for staff members' differences, especially their different ways of responding to change, was most important. She believed that her trust in people, her faith that 'most teachers are really altruistic people', was a critical factor:

I believe that most people will rise to the occasion when you disperse leadership...when you give them responsibility and give them acknowledgment. (Ashfield Boys High School)

She considered one of her most important roles to be that of engineering situations in which people could learn, and in particular learn from each other. One way that she encouraged her staff to question traditional practice was by encouraging them to examine the signs and symbols that are conveyed by particular practices:

I'm finding that a very powerful change agent within the school is to be able to change the symbols...If we're talking about learning communities we have to be able to highlight the fact that we're all learners. So there have to be ways we can create symbolic things in the school that acknowledge that we are doing what we say we're doing ... It's all about reflecting on symbols.

In the other two schools, one principal (Canadian Lead Primary School) felt that it was vital that he was prepared to make the hard decisions and invest a lot of time in people, while the other principal (Davoren Park Primary School) saw his most important role as a gradual handing down of more and more responsibility to staff until 'eventually people will take full responsibility for their own decision making and destinies'.

All the principals were very much aware of the challenges of trying to provide strong leadership in terms of promoting change while at the same time trying to devolve power to staff. Most acknowledged that they have had to grapple with changing the ways they had traditionally

operated and that in itself lead to feelings of uncertainty. Principals explained this uncertainty in the following ways:

Personally, from a leadership style in the previous school where I was up front 'doing it', I've had to change my leadership style to accommodate the structure of the school. I'm still finding my path through that. How much do I lead and how much do I not lead? (The Grange Secondary College)

From a personal point of view it's really interesting because I think when I came here I was probably a fairly natural authoritarian...I've always felt I should keep a really tight rein on things so control has always been a feature of it for me. To actually start dabbling in something quite different ... was quite something. (Ashfield Boys High School)

It's a constant challenge for me to give responsibility, to hand it down and step further and further back. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

I'm continually learning as well...to facilitate the process. (Davoren Park Primary School)

Principals were aware that aspects of their leadership were perceived negatively by some staff. One principal (Ashfield Boys High School) pointed to the fact that there was a perception among some staff that she was initiating change for 'other motives' and that even though she had been in the school for a number of years they still thought she was 'moving through to something bigger and better.' Another (The Grange Secondary College) spoke of having surveyed staff about a recent decision making process, and finding the opposing views of one staff member who felt she had manipulated the process, and another who felt she should have 'stepped in more and given greater direction to the teaching staff'.

A further challenge for at least one principal (The Grange Secondary College) was that of finding a support network for herself. The 'cutting edge' nature of the changes at her school meant there were few other principals attempting anything similar, to whom she could turn for support. She also felt that she got 'a lot of negative vibes' from her principal class because of her 'different philosophy'. Her main means of professional development came from professional reading and study. Professional reading was also important for two other principals as an avenue of support for their interest in change, together with their involvement in the National Schools Network :

It was certainly prompted by the input I've had from the Network and other stuff that I've read and been involved in. ...There's certainly been a lot of challenge to my thinking. (Ashfield Boys High School)

The National Schools Network has provided an enormous amount of my Professional Development, and others, particularly the vacation schools. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

The data revealed that it is not only principals who face challenges in leadership roles. The dispersion of leadership roles meant that other staff members had faced challenges in taking on these positions. For some staff, such as those in head teacher positions in a secondary school, it had meant adjusting to changes in their traditional roles as more power was dispersed through teams and committees. One of the principals described the need to support staff members in coming to terms with such changes:

It's been very important to take a group of people, like traditional head teachers, who've had the power under the more hierarchical system. I've had to make sure that I take a lot of care to take them out of the school and have sessions with them ... about change and how to handle change.. If we're going to move into different patterns then they have to have the maturity to deal with something that means they no longer rule just because they have the position. (Ashfield Boys High School)

An issue in one school, was the differing views held by the principal and a teacher in regard to how the teacher would adapt to the new leadership role. The principal's view was that people learn by doing: 'they're professionally developing as they go.' However, the teacher expressed some dissatisfaction with this approach. She considered that she had been 'thrown into' the role as team leader, with 'no idea of a team model'. She commented:

It was very confusing, there was no P. D. for the role. It was felt 'have a go first', 'learn by your mistakes' but that was hard. I had attended an NSN school at the end of the year but I actually wanted it twelve months earlier. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

For some of those taking on new leadership positions on committees or teams it had meant coping with new demands on time and energy which had resulted in a cost to other aspects of work or life. The following comments, by both a teacher and a non teaching staff member who had taken on new responsibilities, show the kinds of dilemmas new roles can cause:

When you are recognised as a leader you get taken out of the school. You get asked to things...to lead things, to run workshops,...to talk to people...I remember missing so much time from school and I hated it and I'm not the only one. There's a lot off us who hate it and I think if we're not careful ..there is a real danger in losing what we've started ... I think the more you stay away the more the kids feel they're missing you. (Ashfield Boys High School)

Not perhaps a negative gain so much as an unexpectedly difficult outcome has been my personal need to adjust to radical shifts in role dimensions as we have worked more and more in a horizontal rather than vertical/hierarchical model. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

It's been exciting and challenging. I've really enjoyed the new buildings and my position with that. If asked if I would do it again, no I wouldn't ... I work an average of sixty hours a week and even on my relaxation days I'm thinking of all the things that need to be done. I run from one thing to another. (The Grange Secondary College)

In summary, the data revealed that leadership was perceived to be one of the most important issues in schools engaged in changing structures and culture. On the one hand strength, vision and example were considered to be very important attributes of those in official leadership positions, and particularly the principal. On the other hand, staff wanted leadership to be devolved and to participate in democratic decision making about the change process. For those taking on leadership roles, these at times conflicting demands presented an on-going dilemma.

Decision Making

In Section C of the questionnaire participants were asked to respond to a series of statements about decision making processes in their school.

It is important to note that the first eight statements represent processes that would be considered desirable in moving towards democratic decision making, while the final two statements represent undesirable processes. The collated results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Responses of All Teachers about School Decision Making (n = 122, missing = 4)

The results in this section of the questionnaire show that a significant proportion of participants indicated that democratic decision making processes were occurring in the schools. By combining results of the final two columns in Table 3 it can be seen that over fifty percent of participants (53.3% - 75.4%) reported that seven of the eight positive processes were happening to 'some extent' or to a 'great extent'. Respondents agreed most strongly with the statements about being informed about proposed changes, (75.4%) perceiving a climate of openness and trust between school leaders/executive and other staff (64.5%) and collaboratively planning school goals (64.7%).

More than half of the respondents felt that different views were tolerated (62%) and that they had been able to air their concerns in meetings (53.5%) and with school leaders (55.8%), and question Departmental policies and change proposals (63.9%).

Data from the open ended questions in the questionnaire and interviews confirmed that many respondents felt that they had become more involved in decision making at the school level as a result of working in teams and developing democratic decision making policies. This can be seen in responses such as the following (from each of the four schools):

(the culture of collaboration)...has a huge impact on decision-making as everyone understands that it is important to ask questions and challenge and a lot of sharing occurs. (Davoren Park Primary School)

Shared decision making and a heavier responsibility on teams has led to more carefully thought out decisions being reached. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

Non teaching staff also felt they were involved in a democratic decision making process:

Certainly a real flat management where people's ideas are important. It's not just basically, 'This is the way we are going to do things'. People are taken for what they are and are evaluated for what they do, and their opinions, and I've found that very different. (The Grange Secondary College)

SSO's are more involved now in decision making, although some don't choose to be. We're valued more now. We wouldn't have had these opportunities before to be involved. (Davoren Park Primary School)

Another aspect of decision making that was mentioned frequently by teachers in the questionnaires and interviews was greater involvement in decision making about students as a result of collaborative work structures such as year level teams. This was particularly true in the two secondary schools where teachers worked in team situations where they had complete responsibility for decisions about a particular cohort of students. Respondents indicated that this had led to greater knowledge of and commitment to each student's learning and welfare as a whole. One teacher put it this way:

You have to be more involved here but not necessarily through having to be on committees, more involved with the kids...running things with the kids. I tend to take it home with me a little more. (The Grange Secondary College)

Respondents from the two primary schools also indicated that they felt they had more autonomy about classroom decisions. In one primary school this was attributed to working in teams with greater responsibility for decisions about curriculum and the use of resources for a particular group of students, and to the continuity of contact

provided by multi-age groupings. In the other primary school, working in teams was seen to mean more effective decisions about curriculum and management of students' behaviour.

It is interesting to note that although the responses in this section of the questionnaire give a reasonably positive view of decision-making in the schools, they are not as positive as the responses in the rest of the questionnaire. If one considers the combined results of the first two columns in Table 3, it can be seen that quite a significant proportion of staff (24.6%-51.6%) reported that these processes had occurred only 'a little' or 'not at all'. It would seem that there are large numbers of staff who rarely, if at all, use meetings to air concerns about changes (46.7%), air concerns privately with school leaders (44.2%), feel that different views are tolerated (38%) and question policies and change proposals initiated by the Education Department (36.4%).

Only 48.4% of respondents indicated that they had been able to negotiate the rate of change to 'some extent' or to a 'great extent'. This provides an interesting contrast to the responses to a statement in Section B of the questionnaire in which 72.5% of respondents indicated that school leaders had consulted them to 'some extent or to a 'great extent' about the nature and timing of changes at their school. (See Table 2) It would appear that consultation may have been more about the nature of changes rather than about the rate of change. Concerns about the 'rate of change' featured widely in all the data and are discussed more fully later.

The responses to the final two statements about undesirable decision making processes provided confirmation that a reasonable proportion of participants felt that decision making processes were not yet fully consensual. These results showed that over 30% of participants reported that to 'some extent' or to a 'great extent' they had been manipulated to support some changes (36.8%) and their involvement in decision making had been tokenistic (33.9%). Approximately another third of participants reported that these processes had occurred 'a little'.

A number of responses in the questionnaires and interviews illuminated the concerns that some teachers had about decision making processes. For example:

I see our powers to be as fairly autocratic who try to make things appear democratic ... I believe that we do have a number of pleasers in this Davoren Park Primary Schools far as the teachers go so if the principal states her position quite firmly she will get a lot of people on board purely on the basis of that's what she wants.. Sometimes we do intimidate those who are objecting to what a minority want to do, but a strong minority. (The Grange Secondary College)

Commitment by leadership to share power is essential.. It cannot be given lip service, it needs to happen in practice. More work on building collegiality and trust needs to occur at our school .
(Davoren Park Primary School)

A teacher in another school expressed concern that although opinions of all staff were frequently sought, those asking did not necessarily want to hear the answer if it did not fit with the plan.

Some of the teachers who felt excluded from decision making processes reported concerns about the directions of change in their schools. For one teacher it was the belief that some of the structures imposed in

regard to grouping students and staff were too inflexible and needed revision, for several others it was a concern about the erosion of specialised subjects and for another it was a fear that the school was 'throwing the baby out with the bath water' in changing traditional assessment practices. A number of teachers also expressed concern about a perceived loss of autonomy in their teaching. These concerns were compounded for them because they did not feel that they had any genuine avenue for constructive dissent.

Overall, it appears from the data that achieving truly participative decision making may in fact be the greatest challenge facing schools engaged in a process of restructuring. Initiating change involves an on-going series of decisions which ideally are arrived at by a consensus of all those affected. This is obviously a very tall order. The four schools in this study were all engaged in implementing structures to enable more participatory decision making and were achieving a satisfactory level of involvement in decision making from a majority of their staff. Yet, despite these efforts, they still had up to a third of their staff members who felt that they had been pressured into decisions to which they were not fully committed and that they did not have genuine avenues for disagreement with school leaders or the more vocal proponents of change. The whole area of how to achieve truly consensual decision making processes while engaging in school reform is one that needs further exploration.

Collaboration

Changing the way teachers work in schools has been a priority of the National Schools Network. Projects have been funded to investigate collaborative ways of working that break down the traditional isolationist culture of classroom teaching. To determine the extent to which this has been achieved in the four research schools, participants were asked to respond to a series of statements about the nature and extent of collaboration they experienced in Section D of the questionnaire. The collated results are shown in Table 4.

It can be seen from Table 4 that within the four schools, over 85% of

teachers reported working collaboratively in teams to 'some extent' or a 'great extent'. This finding demonstrates that the re-structuring of teachers' work had, in fact, occurred in the four schools and that teaming arrangements were in place for the vast majority of teachers. Such a high level of innovation implementation is unusual in schools; most reform initiatives founder under the weight of institutional conservatism and various forms of teacher resistance to, or appropriation of, the change process. The finding, therefore, provides some evidence which challenges the dominant analyses of schools as reform-resistant organisations. As a consequence, it gives credence to the view promoted by the National Schools Network, that structural school reform is, indeed, possible.

Table 4: Responses of All Teachers to Issues about Working Collaboratively (n = 115, missing = 11)

While collaborative work practices are frequently advocated to promote efficiency and productivity, the sociological and psychological dimensions of professional teaming often remain hidden, and subordinate to assessments of outcome. However, teachers in this study reported important emotional and psychological benefits associated with working closely with colleagues in teams. For example, nearly 90% of teachers

revealed that they gave and received 'moral support' in teams to 'some extent' or a 'great extent' when confronted by the 'highs and lows' of classroom teaching. Teachers' questionnaire and interview comments further illuminated the supportive role of teams. As one teacher wrote,

The team - small group approach has shown many positive outcomes especially in the area of support, staff morale and sharing of materials and ideas. (The Grange Secondary College)

Other teachers mentioned the positive impact greater collegial support had on teacher morale and absenteeism.

The positive approach has led to strong staff participation and morale.

Absenteeism and excessive negative stress levels are low. (Ashfield Boys High School)

Self esteem is higher and we have a greater sense of belonging and ownership. (Ashfield Boys High School)

There has been a huge drop in the staff absenteeism rate. (Davoren Park Primary School)

Feelings of collegiality, trust, and openness appear to have developed through a process of personal and professional 'sharing' or self-disclosure. One teacher described the importance of this 'teacher talk'.

It has been a critical and valuable part of our teaching to have time to sit together as a group and talk. And the nature of the talk has been really interesting. The talk has been about welfare issues, discipline, management ... mainly about student welfare.

It is a very supportive structure and a great deal of honesty has evolved - a willingness to shrug and joke at each other and to support each other. You can say, 'Gee, I stuffed up the other day with this class. I did this, or I said that ...'. So, in many ways it has helped to break down a lot of barriers, especially teacher isolationism. Now there is a greater sense of, 'We are all in this together' and we are all contributing to the growth of the kids in a holistic sense and not just the pieces of subjects. (Ashfield Boys High School)

In summary, teachers' feelings about their work, their students and themselves were positively affected by planning, discussing, and working in collaborative teams. Teachers claimed that these improved feelings contributed to lower absentee rates, less teacher stress, and greater teacher commitment and enthusiasm. Clearly, the social and emotional pay-offs from working collaboratively provide an important insight into how to improve efficiencies in education. Changing working relationships can reduce the alienating influence of being 'isolated in a dog-box classroom with only students' (teacher at Davoren Park Primary School) without contact with, or the support of other adults with similar needs and wants.

Not only did collaborative teaming help teachers feel better about themselves and their work, it also provided them with opportunities to learn from each other. An unexpectedly high proportion of teachers - over 80% - reported feeling to 'some extent' or a 'great extent' part of a 'learning community' which shared responsibility for ongoing teacher professional development. Furthermore, around the same proportion of teachers indicated that they learnt more from their

colleagues when teaming than previously. This seemed to be particularly so for younger or inexperienced teachers. For example:

Working together helped me fill some of the gaps in my teaching. For example, I had limited experience teaching science and my team teacher had great expertise in this area which helped me develop my skills - it was really free T & D [Training and Development]. (Davoren Park Primary School)

It has been a great experience working collaboratively with another teacher. I have learnt a lot from her with regard to collaborative teaching and learning. Also, the support of another staff member who has already worked in the school for several years has been immeasurable. (Davoren Park Primary School)

One principal was quite aware of the potential learning that could occur when teachers worked so closely together. She revealed that

If you can open up their minds a little to what their colleagues do, they seem to be able to learn so much from one another - it surprised me and them. (The Grange Secondary College)

Another welcome outcome of collaboration was the breaking down of traditional subject barriers which previously inhibited learning and sharing of expertise across subjects.

I have learnt so much not just since I've come to Ashfield Boys High School, but since I've become involved in teams. I've had a real insight into what happens in other people's subjects and they into mine. It's been gradual - over the past two years we've been in teams. (Ashfield Boys High School)

Another teacher at the same school expressed some misgivings about the diminution of the role of specialist subject teachers in secondary school teaching teams. She wrote that:

Some staff who have taken on areas outside of their 'formal' training are finding that they feel 'out of their depth' as they move into higher year levels with their students. (Ashfield Boys High School)

Yet despite her misgivings, she concluded that 'teaming up with someone with appropriate expertise' can partially address this problem through 'on the job' re-training.

While teaming provided many opportunities for teachers to learn about other curriculum areas, new ways of grouping students, and approaches to collaborative learning - what some would call the 'crafts' of teaching - many teachers reported quite fundamental developments in their abilities to reflect on their practice and to locate their teaching within a coherent educational philosophy. As one teacher said,

My learning is enhanced because it's put into context. I now make sense of what I do as an educator. (The Grange Secondary College)

Another teacher reported that thinking and discussing issues at a theoretical level helped rejuvenate her professionally by linking her 'instinctive' practice to broader ideas and philosophies.

I had always thought of myself as a really open teacher, but I realised that I had been teaching in a vacuum, in a philosophical and educational vacuum. For nine years I had acted on my own, on my own

instincts. When I came here and got involved - immersed in a way - with all those theories and philosophies, I just felt totally rejuvenated. I felt like my instincts about teaching and what I'd done in the classroom had been right, that my attitudes to kids had been on the right track. I felt really affirmed and I found that a very positive thing. (Ashfield Boys High School)

This teacher did not dwell on the team processes that enabled her to engage in reflection within her team - her focus during the interview was more on the positive outcomes for her, rather than on how she reflected on and made more sense of her teaching. Several other teachers, however, were quite explicit about what was required to engage in sometimes threatening questioning of their practices.

You need to adapt your thinking for critical collaboration because you need to continually question. But if there isn't honesty and trust, you can't do that. (Davoren Park Primary School)

Critical collaboration doesn't happen right across the school. There are pockets of critical collaboration where people feel comfortable with each other and are able to be quite challenging with each other without taking it personally. But in other relationships where there is less trust and honesty, not all people speak up. (Davoren Park Primary School)

Interestingly, both teachers identified the quality of interpersonal relationships within teams as a key factor in promoting or inhibiting critical collaboration within their teams. Again, the affective dimension of their working relationships emerged as a central consideration of teachers working in collaborative teams.

The affective dimension of teachers' learning needs also needs recognition in regard to the learning process itself. As portrayed by many teachers in this study, the learning process had its 'highs and its lows'. Teachers reported feeling frustrated, anxious, alienated, as well as excited and challenged, at various times throughout the previous years. For example,

I feel we are taking risks to be innovative and often cannot anticipate the 'downside'. But the positives have also been impossible to anticipate. (Ashfield Boys High School)

I'd feel OK about it all one day but not the next. (Davoren Park Primary School)

Another insight provided by this study then is that the learning process for teachers was non-linear. It was an up and down process, or forward - backward process. Many of the team processes encouraged reflection for the teachers, and hence brought to the surface teachers' feelings associated with their sense of vulnerability and uncertainty. This was revealed in comments such as:

Any change in ethos and approach is a journey into the uncertain.
(Ashfield Boys High School)

As a team leader I came on a bit strong last year...I need to develop more tact. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

Overall, teachers reported considerable benefits from working collaboratively in terms of their learning about the 'crafts' of teaching and their abilities to reflect on teaching and learning. The study also revealed the affective demands of the learning process, and

high-lighted the need for emotional support and encouragement for teachers engaging in change.

One of the arguments advanced in favour of collaborative teaming is that it leads to work sharing, thereby reducing the amount of duplication of work done by teachers. Around 60% of teachers reported that 'sharing jobs' with team members reduced their workload to 'some' or 'great extent'.

As units become more co-operative in their functioning, responsibilities are spread.(Canadian Lead Primary School)

In teams that function well, the teaching load is more manageable.
(Davoren Park Primary School)

Working in teams has allowed teacher-to-teacher support for behaviour management. ... Staff are freed-up to deal with problems whilst one continues teaching. (Davoren Park Primary School)

Working in a team provides more opportunities to share/spread the workload particularly in the area of student welfare and discipline.
(The Grange Secondary College)

There is an exceptional level of support from team colleagues when covering illness and extra classes. (The Grange Secondary College)

Despite these testimonies, a sizeable group of teachers seemed to be unconvinced about the positive impact of working collaboratively on their workloads. In many cases, the need to meet more frequently with colleagues to discuss and plan collaboratively placed an added work

burden on teachers. Commenting on an 'explosion of meeting commitments' one teacher at Ashfield Boys High School suggested that teachers needed 'tenacity, stamina, and drive to work more in the same school time'. These sentiments were echoed by teachers in the other schools.

Teams impose more responsibility on to team members. You have to do the work that would be the job of PWC and Year Level Administrators. (The Grange Secondary College)

It's been extremely hard work. (Davoren Park Primary School)

Meeting time and the actual number of meetings seems to have increased rather than decreased as was originally thought or expected. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

Devolution of power to team members where we are given extra responsibilities but no extra time or money to do the jobs leaves me working very long days and nights and weekends for little reward. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

These comments cannot be easily dismissed as they represent the views of the 40% of teachers who reported that teaming had had little or no impact in reducing their workloads. They represent the 'down-side' of working collaboratively and challenge the authenticity of glib statements about 'working smarter rather than harder' in restructured schools. The reality seems to be that many teachers find that changing their work practices leads, at least initially, to an intensification of their workloads.

However, it should be noted that these schools have been engaged in restructuring at a time when teacher numbers and educational funding

have been significantly reduced and this has also had an impact on teacher workload. In the case of The Grange Secondary College, the fact that it is a new school has also meant additional pressures on staff and funds. It is also possible that these comments were stimulated more by the demands associated
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implementing structural reform, generally, rather than with using collaborative teams per se. Once changes have been fully installed and 'institutionalised', the claimed workload efficiencies of collaborative

teaming may be more widely substantiated. In the mean time, however, the time and workload demands on teachers embarking on work restructuring through collaborative teaming should be acknowledged and anticipated.

As well as intensifying some teachers' work, working collaboratively had other negative consequences for around 25% of teachers. For example, 21% of teachers reported feeling constrained to some or great extent when working collaboratively. A slightly greater percentage of teachers felt pressured to conform within their team, while 23% of teachers believed that teaming was used as an administrative strategy to achieve this end. The loss of independence and autonomy by these teachers was seen as an inevitable consequence of having to conform with the implicit norms and explicit decisions of their working team.

Other teachers were aware of the dissatisfaction of some teachers but were highly critical of these 'dissenters', 'resistors', 'back stabbers', and 'blockers'. Several teachers wrote quite disparaging remarks about the behaviour of their colleagues and the effect it had on those who were attempting to work collaboratively:

Staff who resisted some change caused friction. Groups were clearly established with a lot of back stabbing occurring. This has since changed, however, but it caused a lot of stress at the time. (Davoren Park Primary School)

It is difficult to always be enthusiastic when there are blockers who feel insecure and feed negative information to others all the time. (Davoren Park Primary School)

While the majority of teachers support restructuring changes, some staff are more committed than others and so there are differing levels of participation and involvement. I suppose it comes down to a difference in 'attitude' and 'follow through'; a willingness to take things a few steps further. (Ashfield Boys High School)

Other teachers wrote of 'power struggles', the dominance of some staff over others, and the devaluing of the one teacher - one group approach to teaching. Clearly, the process of implementing collaborative working practices in the four schools produced disputes between some staff resulting in a residual of dissatisfaction that was still evident at the time of the study.

Finally, a surprising outcome of team collaboration in some schools was the divisive competition between teams that it seemed to foster. Several teachers wrote that

The staff are pulled in three directions (three teams) and often compete quite fiercely. At times we are a very divided staff with no common goals. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

One of the risks of teaming is creating competition between teams leading to a break down in communication between teams. (The Grange Secondary College)

There appears to be isolation between teams, a legacy of the fact that teachers work within a routine that involves specific team members. This then results in the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing, so to speak. In my opinion, this is a major area of concern and needs to be addressed as soon as possible. (The Grange Secondary College)

These reports reveal isolated pockets of 'balkinisation' where different groups within a school adopted different norms and set about defending them against the threat of other groups. In these cases, a school wide 'collaborative culture' (Hargreaves, 1992) was not embraced.

Teachers' responses to questions about the nature and extent of collaboration they experienced at school revealed that teaming arrangements were in place in the four schools studied. Collaborative ways of working helped teachers feel better about themselves and their work, and provided them with opportunities to learn from each other. However, a minority of teachers was negative about the new teaming arrangements claiming that the changes had led to an increase in their workload, a loss of professional autonomy, and the emergence of damaging competition between teams for resources, recognition and power.

Conditions that Promote Change

In section E of the questionnaire, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they regarded the nominated conditions as promoting change at their school. The collated results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Responses of All Teachers about Conditions that Promote School Change(n = 121, missing = 5)

The most important factor considered by the teachers to promote the process of change in their schools was 'active support from school leaders'. 83% regarded school leaders as having an effect to 'some extent' or a 'great extent' on the changes that took place in their school. The fact that school leaders are central to the process of change in schools is supported in the literature and in the other data obtained in this study. Further illuminating comments from the questionnaire and interview data about the role of school leaders

included:

The principal ... led people and I think that people and myself have allowed her to be a leader in that process. (Ashfield Boys High School)

The principal's deliberately tried to involved people more. (Davoren Park Primary School)

The principal came up with key questions to guide policy direction. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

It is interesting to note that for many of the interviewees, 'school leader' was synonymous with 'principal'.

The influence of school leaders on the process of change can be fully appreciated when one looks at the fact that more than half of the teachers reported that 'pressure from school leaders to change' was a factor in promoting change. Many staff, then, felt that they needed to

change because 'there was no option to opt out ' (Davoren Park Primary School) or to 'fit in with the direction of the school' (Canadian Lead Primary School).

Other factors (in order) which were regarded as particularly important in promoting change were:

- 'space' or 'freedom' to 'have a go' at working differently; (78.5%)
- encouragement and support from colleagues; (77.8%)
- agreement amongst staff about the need for changes; (76.9%)
- relevant and on-going professional development; (75.2%)
- financial support from the NSN; (70.7%)
- realistic and changeable plans; (69.2%)

Each of these factors were rated as impacting to some or great extent by over two-thirds of the teachers. Nearly all of these could be directly attributed to the school leaders' management style and their knowledge, understandings and skills in relation to school leadership and effective change process. For example, reaching agreement amongst staff about the need for change and the establishment of realistic and flexible plans are important parts of the change process and providing relevant and on-going professional development, 'space' to trial new approaches and establishing a climate where colleagues provide encouragement and support for each other are important components of an effective learning community. These conditions can only occur in schools where there is a commitment by school leaders to promoting and supporting them.

The importance of having agreement amongst staff about the need for changes was strongly portrayed in the open-ended section of the

questionnaire also by all schools. The following comments were made:

Changes have to be sold, the whole group has to be nurtured through the process not just the main players. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

Whole or nearly whole school support is needed as the change is a big step. I have seen/listened to network workshops on the 'teams' approach in other schools who have half entered with non-whole school support. There are obvious problems. Not the way to begin a new 'project'. (Ashfield Boys High School)

Staff need to share the common goal of change. (Davoren Park Primary School)

School needs to have a clear vision about the changes it's implementing. Changes need to be carefully organised and implemented. Staff need to agree and feel comfortable about the school's restructuring. (The Grange Secondary College)

Collegial support, as opposed to pressure from colleagues, was a clear factor in this study. 77.8% regarded encouragement and support from colleagues as a factor to 'some extent' or 'great extent' in the change process, while only 25.4% saw 'pressure from colleagues to change' as a factor in these same categories. The perceived benefits of collegial support have already been discussed. Respondents commented extensively in questionnaires and interviews on the positive outcomes of collaboration in terms of emotional and psychological support and learning. Further illuminating comments about the positive role of collegial support included:

We've learnt to support each other, we've learnt how important that is. (Davoren Park Primary School)

We focus a lot more on what we can still improve on, we support each other. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

The team is very much a means of support...I know the people in my team very well and they're certainly a means of support for me. (The Grange Secondary College)

One thing that has helped me is particular staff...the way that they teach. The teams approach has helped me ... to say 'yeah that's the way I want to be'. (Ashfield Boys High School)

Several teachers made mention of the positive effect of peer support on their self-esteem and how it contributed to a sense of belonging and a sense of direction. For example, one teacher wrote:

I've developed my skills and my confidence in myself, as result of working more closely with my colleagues. (Davoren Park Primary School)

Collegial support was an issue, not only at the school level, but at a wider level also. While more than two thirds of respondents identified the financial support provided by the NSN as an important factor, at least half reported that 'making links with other NSN schools' was also significant, and the 'sense of collegiality' it provided was stated quite strongly in both verbal and written comments. For example,

The school MUST belong to NSN as this gives collegiate and professional support thro' membership, journals, workshops, conferences, research, projects etc. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

The NSN schools provide great P. D. and a good chance to meet lots of other teachers. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

As well as providing opportunities for teachers to meet other teachers from around the nation, the NSN was regarded as a key provider of relevant and on-going professional development, as noted in the above quotes. Also, one teacher claimed that NSN enabled greater access to Professional Development, as well as 'more of it'. She wrote:

The opportunities to attend many and varied inservice sessions with NSN has been professionally refreshing and uplifting. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

While another said:

NSN gave me opportunities to learn different techniques and also the view that it's OK to learn on the job. (Davoren Park Primary School)

It would appear that at the time of the research internal support and expectations from leaders and colleagues were considered to be more significant factors in enabling change than support or expectations from the wider school community or external authorities. More than 50% of respondents considered that these factors had little or no effect on promoting change.

Comments from the interview and questionnaire data tended to suggest that all schools were keen to inform and involve the wider school community in regard to the change process, but that this process was occurring alongside the change process, rather than as a pre-requisite

condition for change:

Involve the wider community in the change and keep them informed.
(Canadian Lead Primary School)

All teachers are working hard to create better students and school....To achieve this goal the school needs more community and parent support. (Ashfield Boys High School)

A higher level of communication is possible with the parents and students when contact is continued over several years. (The Grange Secondary College)

There were only a few comments about 'expectations from external authorities that changes would be implemented' in the questionnaire and interview data, suggesting that this factor was not uppermost in people's minds. Where respondents did comment it was to express frustration that expectations from external authorities acted as an impediment to change:

Changes in Government see changes in education direction and hence the scrapping of a lot of hard work. (Ashfield Boys High School)

Difficulties caused by trying to mesh DSE policy with school goals.
(The Grange Secondary College)

Not due to restructuring but a real negative factor has been the Government's increase in class sizes. (Davoren Park Primary School)

I think a lot of decisions are beyond our control, ie. government policy. I think this school overall has been very supportive of staff and community in dealing with change. However, I think more support from government to implement this change effectively should be provided. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

The following comment from one principal suggests that school leaders may act as 'filters' when it comes to passing expectations from external authorities on to their staffs, thus mitigating the effects of such expectations:

I've spent a lot of time projecting the view that what we change at Ashfield Boys High School is part of our grand plan. We don't change it because anyone else from outside is telling us to. It has to be logical in terms of what we're doing ... If it comes down from outside in a mandatory sense and it fits we think that's a blessing. If it comes down and it's mandatory and it doesn't fit we give it a low priority. (Ashfield Boys High School)

There was inconsistency in the data sources in regard to the issues of 'time' and 'resources'. In the questionnaire, participants were

divided. Just over half (56.2%) regarded the provision of relevant resources as a condition that promoted change to 'some extent' or a 'great extent' and nearly half (48.7%) regarded release time as important in promoting change in these categories. However, in the interview data, as well as the written comments on the questionnaire, 'time' and/or 'lack of time' were mentioned repeatedly. Having time with colleagues, to talk, plan, reflect, and evaluate was seen as most valuable. For example:

... it's been seen as a critical and valuable part of our teaching to

have time to sit together as a group and talk and the nature of the talk's been really interesting... (Ashfield Boys High School)

... talking with others, gives me an insight into how others feel.
(Davoren Park Primary School)

there is a need for release time for planning and so on, for it to be effective. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

The verbal comments elaborated on the problem of time, which was an issue at every school:

One of the major problems is people's time (The Grange Secondary College)

If it's outside of school hours then I think because ... a lot of teachers are pushed to the limit as it is, that structure will fall apart if they have to do that. (Ashfield Boys High School)

There's too many meetings, I never get home. There was more time for P. D. before. I feel exhausted now and so I've pulled back. I don't want to do extra P. D. in my own time. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

Time is a real issue. We don't even have NIT time together and yet we're expected to work collaboratively. (Davoren Park Primary School)

The questionnaire data then, do not do justice to the issues of time and resources, as perceived by some of the participants. Although one might say that for half the participants, time and resources were not seen as conditions which promoted change, or only of little importance, the comments above demonstrate that for those for whom they were seen as important, they are very real issues. In regard to time particularly, the links made between school and home, and the sense of frustration conveyed in one of the quotes between expectations and reality, would lead one to the view that both time and resources play an important role in the change process in schools.

It was clear from the data that there are particular conditions that

promote educational change. For these schools those conditions centred on effective school leadership, collegial support both within the school and from outside sources, such as that facilitated by involvement with the NSN, and the provision of adequate resources and 'in school' time to cope with the additional demands of implementing effective change.

Conditions that Hinder Change

In Section F of the questionnaire participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they regarded the nominated conditions as hindering change at their school. The collated results are shown in Table 6. The results reflected in this section might at first glance appear to be surprising, in that only one of the listed factors received over 50% agreement that it hindered change to 'some extent' or to a 'great extent'. This was 'innovation overload - taking on too much'. However, it must be remembered that the four schools involved in this study had changed and are changing, and the responses were therefore made in that light. The 'innovation overload' factor will be discussed next and then it is interesting in this table to look at those factors which were seen as only hindering a little or not at all, given the high numbers in these categories.

Table 6: Responses of All Teachers about Conditions that Hinder School Change (n = 121, missing = 5)

Rate of change was considered to be a critical factor in the process of change. In the questionnaire, the factor of 'innovation

overload-taking on too much' was regarded by nearly two-thirds of the teachers (62.2%) as hindering the change process in their school. The effects of this 'overload' on some were clearly explicated in the interviews:

I just don't want to go any more, I don't want to know any more, I just want to do what I'm doing. I sort of feel I've arrived at this new phase of understanding and awareness and I'd like to really explore it because I think the more you fill up people's heads with the possibility of more change, more change... Ashfield Boys High School

I like being challenged but with all the extra meetings and everything, it affects the home front. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

At times there's been so much, but we haven't followed through on many things, there's just been too much and it's been too much. (Davoren Park Primary School)

This point of view was reiterated in the additional comments provided

in the questionnaires about the change process. For example:

For many it took place too rapidly. We all thought it was a good idea but few of us had really thought about the day to day practicalities. (Davoren Park Primary School),

Too much change and too many challenges over a short period of time has been a negative outcome. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

The rapid pace of change is very tiring. (Ashfield Boys High School)

A challenge was presented by a couple of people in one school when they said, 'Hasten slowly!' and 'Rush slowly!' (Ashfield Boys High School)

The factors which were regarded by over two-thirds of the teachers as having 'little' or 'no effect' on the change process were:

- outside political pressure not to change;
- union opposition to organisational reforms which challenged existing career structures and roles;
- transfer of key staff;
- large size of the school;
- low morale and apathy of staff;
- restrictions on local decision making imposed by central bureaucracy.

Here again, however, an inconsistency could be perceived in the data sources. In the questionnaire, 'low morale' and 'apathy' were not perceived by staff as being large problems in their schools in hindering the change process. However, similar problems were alluded to in the written and verbal comments and certainly, 'staff attitudes' were mentioned again and again, in both the interviews and the open-ended part of the questionnaire.

This finding is consistent with the notion of 'staff support and encouragement' being seen by many as an important factor for promoting change. Thus, where staff were viewed as not supporting and encouraging, or, as explained in one school, as 'having different commitment levels', this had a negative effect on the process. This point is conveyed in the following:

The only negative aspect, which is difficult to impossible to change is some of the negative attitudes from the staff. These are people who cannot deal with change, and at times ruin the excitement and challenging aspects of the school.'(The Grange Secondary College)

Some staff feel isolated and left out, this affects others. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

As already reported, the difficulties associated with communication between staff members at times was also conveyed in both the written and verbal comments. This was seen as particularly problematic between teams. For example:

I do feel that there's friction between the teams in many cases. There's not the sharing of ideas and that sort of thing that we would like to pretend goes on. (The Grange Secondary College)

The problem also existed, although to a much lesser degree, within teams. One teacher wrote, 'Certain teachers have had difficulty working together, as well as being shuffled around to suit the needs (wants) of others' (Davoren Park Primary School) while another commented, 'The various personalities in teams can sometimes clash badly...' (Ashfield Boys High School).

Staff attitudes then, and their ability/willingness to work together in a changing culture and with different structures presents an ongoing challenge for all participants in the process.

Other factors which engendered a 'split' response, in that there was an almost 50-50 mixed reaction (although in the first case, it was a little higher), were:

- staff feeling threatened by changes in roles;
- practical problems sharing resources across teaching teams;
- conflicting ideologies, values and interests amongst staff.

The practical problems of sharing resources should come as no surprise given the earlier points made about the importance of adequate resources. Teachers' responses varied according to their own particular context, but it should be mentioned that for one school, the resource situation was particularly challenging given that the school was operating across two separated campuses.

The other two factors, staff feeling threatened and conflicting ideologies and values amongst staff, can be considered together as they relate to the notion of 'coping with difference'. As already discussed, some teachers obviously did not feel that their viewpoint was valued or that they could voice their opinion. Further illustrations of this concern were provided in comments such as:

Any change is difficult and is more difficult when you feel isolated/second rate and unsupported. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

I have felt like I can't ask too much because all the teachers on the team are really experienced and I've felt a bit like they don't have any difficult problems. (Ashfield Boys High School)

Last year I didn't speak up, I was afraid in case I said the wrong

thing. (Ashfield Boys High School)

A number of comments made by other teachers indicated that they were aware that this may have been a problem for some staff. For example:

There is...a big difference here and it doesn't suit everyone that's for sure. A lot of people don't like it at all...for different reasons. I'm not sure if some people don't like it but won't speak out. (The Grange Secondary College)

It 's always the same ones who stay quiet because they don't feel safe. (Davoren Park Primary School)

Another aspect of this problem was the notion of lack of tolerance to different views and/or different approaches. As already reported, in every school there were people who felt that 'difference' would not be tolerated. Further comments to this effect included:

Many people are scared of change and if they perceive you as strong or trying new things, there are problems. (Davoren Park Primary School)

It's difficult to speak up, the agenda's set, they'll hear you but they're not listening. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

Some staff feel threatened if any of their ideas are criticised (constructively) or alternate viewpoints proffered. (Ashfield Boys High School)

This finding is consistent with the earlier one reported in regard to decision-making, where only 38% felt that different views were tolerated.

Rate of change and the varying responses to change by individual staff members were identified as the most significant conditions hindering educational change. The 'human factor', whereby some people were less positive about, and supportive of, the change process than others, presented schools with their greatest challenge in terms of providing an inclusive environment for all staff. Schools also provided emphatic warnings about taking on too much change too quickly. It seemed clear that there is some connection between these two issues, in that staff members who are forced into change before they have had adequate time to explore the reasons for change and the options available, are more likely to remain unconvinced that the right course has been embarked on.

Restructuring and Organisational Culture

This research project aimed to investigate the relationship between restructuring and organisational culture. In the interviews each respondent was asked to comment on this relationship and some illuminating comments were also made in the questionnaires.

The data revealed that the terms 'restructuring' and 'organisational culture' were unfamiliar to some participants in the research. This was particularly evident during interviews when the majority of participants sought clarification when they were asked to comment on the relationship between restructuring and organisational culture in their school. Some participants, particularly those in leadership positions, were familiar with this terminology, but showed in their responses that they interpreted meanings in a variety of different ways. For example 'changing organisational culture' was variously described as:

Instead of having this wonderfully organised, coordinated bureaucracy we end up with this circular really dynamic organisation that moves and changes and people cross over and you don't need the principal's approval. (The Grange Secondary College)
and:

Being guided by principles of head, heart and hands. Need to be concerned with how we're doing things not just what we're doing. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

In responding to interviewees' requests for an explanation of these terms, the researchers defined 'restructuring' as the deliberate alteration of the rules, roles, responsibilities and relationships in schools, and 'organisational culture' as the shared values, beliefs, habits, assumptions and ways of doing things of members of a school community.

Teachers' responses suggest that in all of the schools the majority of staff considered that there had been profound changes in both structures and culture. Structural changes across the four schools were perceived to have included changes in leadership and teaching roles, use of time and spaces, groupings of staff and students and communication and decision making procedures. Cultural change was seen to be evident in more collaborative relationships and approaches to

work for teachers, non teaching staff and students, greater commitment to shared goals about teaching and learning, increased staff involvement in decision making processes and more 'personalised' learning environments. One teacher summarised the overall effects of changes in her school in the following way:

The atmosphere is more harmonious than five years ago ... it's a community. I really do feel that ... one of my favourite parts of the day is just walking in the morning and the boys going 'How are you

today Miss?'. It's just a community. (Ashfield Boys High School)

Although the research data indicated that nearly all participants considered that there had been substantial changes in both structures and culture, opinion was divided about whether the changes were positive or negative. There is no doubt that for the majority of teachers, changes were seen to have produced a collaborative environment that was far more conducive to teacher and student self esteem and learning than that which had existed previously. However, for some staff the changes seemed restrictive and disempowering. Reconciling this dichotomy of views presents an on-going challenge for the research schools.

The respondents in this research project varied in their views about whether structural change or cultural change was more important, and about which needed to occur first. For instance, principals across the four schools agreed unanimously that cultural change needed to precede, or at least accompany structural change, and that the most important part of cultural change was the development of a shared vision about teaching and learning. One principal described the relationship this way:

My first instinct says cultural change first absolutely. I mean you change the hearts and minds first and the structures become more meaningful and you can see your way through as to what structures are necessary and important and that's what we've done at ... (Ashfield Boys High School)

Another emphasised the 'feeling' in the school:

It's the people doing the things that creates the culture. It's much easier when people walk into an environment where people are having a go, they pick up on that. That's a feeling, rather than structure. The structures support it. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

This view was supported by a small number of staff who were asked about this issue during interviews.

People need to have an understanding of what the change is going to be before the structures are put in place. Then, the structural changes affect the cultural changes and so on. The two go hand in hand. (Davoren Park Primary School)

However, the majority of interviewees considered that in fact it was the changes to structures that had resulted in changes to the overall culture of the school, as can be seen in the following comments:

Structures should be put in place first and then people will become familiar with those structures and then hopefully the culture, their outlook or views will change. (Davoren Park Primary School)

Structural change is needed first, then, once people have become familiar with them, you can change views. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

There was also a number who, while claiming that structural change occurred first, acknowledged the role of a shared vision. For example:

While I think the structural changes come first, you wouldn't make the changes without a commitment to a vision or whatever. (Canadian Lead Primary School)

A further dimension to this debate was provided by the fact that one of the secondary schools had been opened only recently and so staff had had to contend with a whole range of non traditional structures right from the beginning, before there had been much opportunity for development of a shared culture. It should be noted, however, that at least some of the staff were 'hand picked' by the principal of the school because she knew that they held particular beliefs about teaching and learning, and that there was also intensive training and development for all staff both before the beginning of the first school year and throughout it. In addition, the first school year provided considerable opportunity for 'learning by doing' and developing common approaches.

It appears that in all schools there had been significant changes in structures and organisational culture. While many staff believed that the changes to structures had been primarily responsible for the changes to culture, it was evident from the data that the development of collaborative cultures had not resulted solely from structural change, but also from deliberate and concerted efforts to professionally develop staff in ways that enabled them to respond positively to the structural changes. The research did not show that cultural change or structural change is more important, but rather that educational change depends on on-going and reciprocal development of school structures and culture, so that they interact in ways that produce the best possible learning environment for students and teachers.

Conclusions

This research investigated issues related to the effects of restructuring on school organisational culture, decision making processes and teacher learning and professional development outcomes. It also explored the impact of work organisation reform on the traditionally isolationist teaching culture, the role of cultural change in the structural process and the enabling conditions for cultural change. In summary, the following conclusions can be drawn from the study:

1)The relationship between restructuring and changes to school organisational culture was reciprocal rather than linear. The research schools had paid equal attention to changing structures and school culture in ways that developed a collaborative learning environment for students and staff.

2)Changes to structures and organisational culture lead to more participatory decision making processes for the majority of staff. However, the power of this newly emerged collectivism overwhelmed individual thoughts, feelings, and concerns of some staff.

3)Collaborative approaches to work removed the sense of isolation for most teachers and provided greater opportunities for learning and increased feelings of security and success.

4)The interpersonal demands associated with working closely with others were challenging and resulted in some teachers feeling more isolated than they did before restructuring. The research highlighted the need for on-going support for those moving from individual to collaborative

ways of working.

5)The concept of collaboration as it was enacted in the research schools appeared to emphasise comfortable collegiality and conformity. An ongoing challenge for schools involved in reform is to develop learning communities which value difference and support critical reflection and encourage members to question, challenge and debate teaching and learning issues and dilemmas.

6) The affective dimension of teachers' learning played an important role in determining outcomes. Teachers' feelings about themselves, their teaching and their learning, affected their ability to reflect on their teaching and engage in critical discourse with others.

7)Sustained programs of structured professional development prior to, and concurrent with, the implementation of structural changes influenced the outcomes of the reforms.

8)Successful change was promoted by effective leadership, a positive school climate, realistic and flexible plans, and adequate resourcing.

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