

**EDUCATIONAL RESTRUCTURING
IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS:
A CASE STUDY
OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, WOODLAWN.
TOWARDS A PERSONALIST ACCOUNT.**

Submitted by

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Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award of this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no materials previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made. All research procedures reported in this thesis received the approval of the university's Human Research Ethics Committee.

Signed:

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Date: 28th February, 2011

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Abstract

This study focuses on educational restructuring in Catholic schools. In particular, it is a case study of an episode of educational restructuring that occurred at St John's College, Woodlawn during the years 1994 to 2000. From being a small boarding-only boys' school in 1994, the college became a co-educational day school within the short period of six years. At the beginning of 2001, St John's College became a systemic school, fully integrated into the diocese of Lismore, New South Wales.

This research study assumed that educational restructuring is a complex and unpredictable exercise. Moreover, this study recognised that those leading the episode of educational restructuring at St John's College lacked a clear theoretical foundation for their work. Consequently, the purpose of this study was framed in terms of gaining a more informed and sophisticated understanding of educational restructuring in Catholic schools such as St John's College. In particular, this study asked three research questions:

Research Question One: How did the direction givers understand the *purpose* of educational restructuring at St John's College?

Research Question Two: How did the direction givers understand the *process* of educational restructuring at St John's College?

Research Question Three: How did the direction givers understand the *leadership* of educational restructuring at St John's College?

With these research questions in mind, the study was situated within the theoretical perspective of Symbolic Interactionism and the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm of research. It also represented a particular case study and was limited in scope to the episode of educational restructuring that occurred at St John's College from 1994 to 2000. The study relied on qualitative data collection methods in two stages: exploration and inspection. Within the exploration stage, the data collection methods included the use of a researcher's journal and the compilation of a large collection of historical documents. These historical documents included official

correspondence, minutes of meetings, personal correspondence, notes, letters, reports, feasibility studies and other archival material relating to the period of the educational restructuring per se and leading up to it (e.g. from 1982). During the inspection stage, person-to-person interviews were conducted with key direction givers. Once collected, the data were analysed and interpreted according to an iterative process.

This research study resulted in a number of findings with respect to the purpose, process and leadership of educational restructuring. To support future episodes of educational restructuring, this research study recommends that those engaged in administrative leadership:

1. Articulate and communicate the moral purpose that underpins educational restructuring;
2. Adopt organic, strategic-systemic processes to educational restructuring that reflect a synthesis of strategic processes and personalist themes;
3. Frame their administrative leadership in educational restructuring in terms of intrapreneurship and the cultural and political transformation of school culture;
4. Consider the charism, spirituality and educational philosophy of a religious congregation and/or the philosophical framework of personalism as a source of support in the context of educational restructuring.

Finally, this research study makes a contribution to research in educational restructuring and educational leadership by highlighting the human dimension of educational change. In addition, it acknowledges and affirms the philosophy of personalism as being a useful interpretative lens to understand and to facilitate educational restructuring.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on educational restructuring in Catholic schools. In particular, it is a case study of an episode of educational restructuring that occurred at St John's College, Woodlawn during the years 1994 to 2000. During that period, the school was transformed from being a boys-only, boarding-only school of 276 students owned and operated by the Marist Fathers to a co-educational day school of 499 students fully integrated into the Catholic education system of the diocese of Lismore. It is this episode of educational restructuring that provides the focus for this study.

The journey to integration into the diocesan education system was not an easy one. Prior to the period under study, that is, in the early 1990s, the Marist Fathers found themselves in a very difficult situation at St John's College. The school was experiencing serious difficulties and major challenges; its very survival was in question. As a consequence, the Marist Fathers were forced by pressing circumstances and practical issues to initiate a process of significant educational restructuring.

1.2 THE BACKGROUND

A very important part of background information for any study of this nature is the role of the researcher. In fact, a number of research professionals draw attention to the potential that researchers have for adversely influencing their research and its outcomes (Merriam, 1998). In order to address this genuine concern in relation to this research study, it is important at the beginning to acknowledge this fact and to be explicit about the researcher's role at the school during the period of educational restructuring. To do this adequately, it will be necessary for the researcher to adopt temporarily the 'first person' of narrative discourse rather than use the 'third person' language which is customary in reporting empirical studies.

From the time of my ordination as a priest in 1979 until the beginning of this episode of educational restructuring in 1994, I had worked as a teacher in three secondary schools operated by the Marist Fathers. Some of that time had been spent on the staff of St John's College during the early 1980s when a major attempt at educational

restructuring met with very limited success. Besides teaching, I also had the opportunity to be involved in administrative leadership. That experience included a period of five years as assistant principal of Holy Spirit College, Bellambi, NSW (1986-90) and three years as principal of Marist Regional College, Burnie, Tasmania (1991-1993).

The difficulties the Marist Fathers were experiencing at St John's College in 1993 were compounded by the fact that, at the end of that year, the principal of the school was nearing the end of his tenure. The provincial leader needed to find a replacement to take on the role of school leadership. Subsequently, in early 1993, he began a consultation process to find a suitable replacement. I was one of those approached by the provincial as part of the province-wide consultation.

As an active and interested member of the Marist Fathers' secondary education apostolate group, I had always taken a special interest in St John's College. I felt deep affection for the school because of my earlier and very positive association with it in the 1980s. In addition, I was fully aware of the difficulties it was experiencing. Those difficulties, especially the growing struggle to attract sufficient students to retain financial viability, coalesced to raise serious concerns about the school's future. It was obvious to many that major changes were needed if the school was to have any possibility of a future, even though at the time, the exact nature of those changes was uncertain.

When approached by the provincial during the consultation process to consider taking on the role of principal at St John's College, I recall my initial feeling was one of ambivalence. Personally, I was honoured to be considered for the position. I thought it would be an ideal opportunity to apply the experience I had accumulated as assistant principal and principal and to dedicate myself to a school community for which I had a depth of concern and warm affection. However, professionally, I felt the challenges facing the school were enormous and I doubted whether I had the capacity or skills to lead a school in such circumstances. Being a school principal, I had the advantage of appreciating, from a firsthand perspective, how difficult it is to lead a school community through change processes, even when the changes being introduced are minor. Besides, at the time of the consultation, I was in the third year of my first term as principal of Marist Regional College, Burnie, Tasmania. I was

very happy in the role and I was eagerly anticipating an extension of the appointment, thus giving me another three years in the position. I was enjoying the distinctive culture of the school and my sense was that the school was doing very well.

On the first occasion when I was asked to consider making myself available for the role of principal at St John's College, I mentioned my feelings of ambivalence to the provincial and I expressed serious reservations about accepting the position. He listened to my response but asked me to give the matter further thought. Following his advice, I considered his suggestion again and reflected on it carefully and prayerfully. However, I still felt confident that the role was not for me. When he contacted me some time later to discuss my response, I expressed that view. With greater urgency and insistence, he asked me to give the matter even greater consideration. Finally, during the third stage of the consultation process, still not convinced that I had the skills for the role, he made a final 'request' and asked me to accept the position. Recognising that he needed someone to undertake the task and, that he and the members of his council considered me to be the most suitable person in the province to take up the role, I accepted the appointment.

It is important to note that during the discussions leading up to the final decision, the provincial had specifically requested that I act as an 'agent of change' at St John's College. Fully aware that major changes were needed at the school, he asked me to accept my mandate with that understanding. With this clearly in mind, I assumed the position of school principal on 1st January, 1994, and undertook the task of leading the school. It was the beginning of a period of exceptional and rapid educational restructuring, a difficult time for the school, and a period of great personal challenge.

Given the depth and extent of educational change required at the college, as well as the inexperience on the part of the Marist Fathers to undertake such a major structural and cultural change, and being uncertain how to go about it, the success of the radical educational restructuring during the short period from 1994 to 2000 is a remarkable story. The reforms, in the early years, occurred in an atmosphere that was characterised by intense uncertainty, conflict, heightened emotions, and strong resistance. However, over the years, as the school's future became clearer and the level of uncertainty decreased, people engaged more positively and confidently in

the educational restructuring. The antagonism and conflict of the early years was transformed and a positive spirit of collaboration developed.

1.3 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The notion of educational restructuring, as a category of educational change, has been on the research agenda since the 1980s (Hargreaves, 1991; Murphy, 1997). Over time, researchers have come to appreciate that educational restructuring is significantly more complex and unpredictable than first anticipated. Though it might appear naïve to many now, there was a time when people conceived of change as a rational process that was predictable, stable and controllable (Elmore, 1995). Moreover, researchers (Fullan, 2009; Hargreaves, 2009) looked to identifying the components of educational change so that they could learn how to predict what might happen. They thought that effective educational change could be achieved by following a logical sequence of steps. Despite their valiant efforts and their clear frustration, the results of their research confounded this assumption.

The educational change process is now considered to be a dynamic one, open to the influence of a considerable number of variables, most of which are unexpected. In this context, Evans (1996) observes:

Change is not a predictable enterprise with definite guidelines but a struggle to shape processes that are complex and elusive. Its result is an emerging outcome that will be modified during the process of implementation as internal and external conditions shift, data accumulate, and judgment dictates. (p. 15)

Reflecting on the episode of educational restructuring at St John's College, the researcher began to realise that the Marist Fathers and others had been operating out of a model which seemed based on 'common sense' leadership. While learning 'along the way', they followed their individual and communal intuition and lacked a clear theoretical foundation for the process of educational restructuring.

Reflecting on this experience, the researcher framed the research problem in terms of a lack of a clear understanding of this episode of educational restructuring at St John's College. Moreover, the purpose of the research study was identified in terms of gaining a more informed and sophisticated understanding of educational

restructuring. It was expected that such an understanding would not only illumine educational restructuring in Catholic schools such as St John's College but also contribute to the broader area of theoretical development in educational restructuring.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Following a review of relevant literature, three research questions guided the various moments of data collection, analysis and interpretation within this study. These research questions were:

Research Question One: How did the direction givers understand the *purpose* of the educational restructuring at St John's College?

Research Question Two: How did the direction givers understand the *process* of educational restructuring at St John's College?

Research Question Three: How did the direction givers understand the *leadership* of educational restructuring at St John's College?

These research questions are consistent with the 'meaning hypothesis' of Fullan (1991). This meaning hypothesis focuses particular attention on the people actually involved in educational change and the meaning they ascribe to the phenomenon. Here Fullan (1991) argues that "if reforms are to be successful, individuals and groups must find meaning concerning *what* should change as well as *how* to go about it" (p. xi). Thus, within this study, the researcher was interested in the meaning that the "direction givers" (Garratt as cited in B. Davies, 2006, p. 16) brought to this particular episode of educational restructuring at St John's College (1994-2000). In this case, the "direction givers" included:

- Those who had participated in the episode of educational change during the period 1994 to 2000; and/or
- Those who had a significant role in the school or major responsibility for the process; and/or

- Those who had exercised a leadership role within the group of participants; and/or
- Those who were judged to have the ability to look beyond their own perspective; and/or
- Those who had expertise necessary for effective, well-balanced, and well-considered methods needed for data gathering and decision-making.

Here it was accepted that “direction givers can rise above the daily managerial processes and crises to gain different perspectives” (p. 16) and this research study was interested in the ‘meanings’ that these key actors brought to and developed within this episode of educational restructuring.

These research questions also acknowledge the different conceptualisations of educational change and leadership informed by images of schools as machine, culture, polity and living system. It was accepted that various purposes could have consciously or unconsciously informed this episode of educational restructuring at St John’s College. For example, the episode of educational restructuring may have been motivated by purely mechanistic concerns for structural change. Alternatively, there could have been acknowledgement of the human dimension of the school as organisation and an interest in cultural and political transformation as well as moral *purposes* to do with student learning and organisational sustainability. Moreover, this episode of educational restructuring may have relied on rational-structural *processes* for educational change. Alternatively, there may have been a greater recognition of the human dimension of educational change and calls for strategic-systemic processes in support of educational change. Finally, this episode of educational restructuring may have demonstrated different styles of *leadership* ranging from mechanistic understandings of the management of change, to more humane views of cultural and political leadership as well as strategic and moral leadership.

1.5 PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK

The review of the literature also encouraged the researcher to explore the philosophical underpinnings of educational change and leadership. For much of the twentieth century, the notion of the school as machine remained the dominant image,

and, as a result, rational-structural approaches to educational change and leadership prevailed. However, there was a growing recognition of the human dimension of school and a call for more strategic-systemic approaches to educational change and leadership. Consequently, a new philosophy of education and educational leadership is needed to inform this theoretical development. Without a new philosophical framework one suspects that a mechanistic worldview will continue to prevail, and calls for humanising educational change and leadership will go unheeded. Appreciating this point the researcher looked for a philosophical position that could underpin a more humane understanding of educational change and leadership. A further review of the literature suggested the philosophy of personalism.

Personalism offers a worldview that stands in direct contrast to the science of Descartes and Newton which offers a mechanistic understanding of the cosmos. In personalism the yardstick of value and fundamental reality is the human person and as Whetstone (2002) observes, personalism places “the person and personal relationships at the centre of theory and practice” (p. 137). Thus defined, personalism offers a clearly articulated set of values and, in doing so, provides a coherent way of “transforming depersonalizing economic, political, social and religious structures” (Sayre, 1997, p. 130). Accepting this argument, the researcher situated the study within the philosophical framework of personalism, and the central ideas of this viewpoint aided the analysis and interpretation of the findings.

1.6 DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The design of this study was informed by the theoretical perspective of Symbolic Interactionism. Symbolic Interactionism as a major theoretical perspective in sociology and in qualitative research (Hewitt, 2003; Stryker, 2002) focuses on the nature of social interaction and the meaning that people give to their actions within interactive contexts. Since Symbolic Interactionism is interested in “how people define their world and how that definition shapes their action” (Charon, 2007, p. 229), it was considered appropriate that, within this study, this theoretical perspective inform the research into how the direction givers understood their action in respect to this episode of educational restructuring at St John’s College (1994-2000). For the symbolic interactionist researcher, the meanings that individuals and

groups ascribe to a situation are as important as the situation itself (Charon, 2007, p. 29).

In line with this understanding, certain principles of investigation underpin a symbolic interactionist approach to research. Firstly, researchers believe that “we can understand what is going on only if we understand what the actors themselves believe about their world” (Charon, 2004, p. 193) and, to this end, that they are prepared to “interact with the actors, observe and partake in their activities, conduct formal interviews, and try to reconstruct their reality” (p. 193). Secondly, researchers accept that research is conducted in the ‘real world’ and they adopt “careful, critical, systematic and objective” (p. 194) approaches in order to be accurate and to consider the perspective of the actors. Finally, symbolic interactionist researchers look for ways to “better understand how humans think, solve problems, role take, apply their past and look to the future in situations” (p. 194).

Given these principles, symbolic interactionist research sits comfortably within the epistemology of Constructionism (Schwandt, 1994). This epistemology offers a distinctive paradigm with its own ontological, epistemological and methodological claims (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). From an ontological perspective, constructivism assumes “local and specific constructed and co-constructed multiple realities” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 193). From an epistemological perspective, it sees knowledge as being “created” (p. 193) as the actor and the researcher interact. Yet again, an interpretive/constructivist research epistemology relies on a hermeneutic/dialectical methodology that aims to understand and reconstruct previously held problematic constructions. In other words, “The constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent co-create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 35).

In line with the theoretical perspective of Symbolic Interactionism and the requirements of interpretivist/constructivist paradigm, this study accepted the methodology of case study. In short, “the single and most defining characteristic of case study lies in delimiting the object of the study, the case” (Merriam, 1998, p. 37).

Thus a case study is limited or confined to a specific area of research. As such, it is a “bounded system” (Stake, 2000, p. 444). Defined in this way, case study supports the investigation of real life situations in their contexts and offers the opportunity to connect with the actors’ meanings through naturalistic research procedures (Merriam, 1998). The case study methodology aims to provide “a ‘rich’ description of the phenomenon under study” and is intended to “illuminate the reader’s understanding” (pp. 29-30). These clear advantages of the case study methodology confirm it as being “a direct and satisfying way of adding to experience and improving understanding” (Stake, 2000, p. 25). Consistent with these characteristics, this research study represented a particular case study. It was limited to the episode of educational restructuring that took place at St John’s College during the years 1994 to 2000.

Again consistent with the theoretical perspective of Symbolic Interactionism, this study involved two stages of data collection, analysis and interpretation. The first stage involved an “exploration” (Charon, 2007, p. 194) of the case in order to gain a general appreciation of the integral elements. The exploration stage involved an analysis of the historical documents pertaining to the case. The second stage of “inspection” (p. 195) involved a deeper investigation of key elements by means of face-to-face interviews with those who were the direction givers in the process. Throughout this study the researcher also kept a researcher’s journal which provided a valuable source of data.

Finally, during the various moments of data collection, analysis and interpretation, this study relied on an adaptation of Neuman’s (2006) “Iterative Process of Data Analysis” (p. 160). Hence there was a “first-order interpretation” (p. 160) of the data collected during the exploration stage. This first-order interpretation allows the researcher to get in touch with direction givers’ experiences, motivations and feelings in respect to the episode of educational restructuring. This is followed by a “second-order interpretation” (p. 160), within the inspection stage of the study, that elicits “an underlying coherence or sense of meaning in the data” (p. 160). The third and final order of interpretation refers to the discussion of the theoretical significance of the findings.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research study is significant in respect to documenting an important moment in the life and history of St John's College as well as of the Marist Fathers in Australia. Beyond this, it contributes, albeit in a small way, to the theoretical development around educational restructuring and leadership. At the beginning of this study, a review of existing work revealed that there was a paucity of research in respect to educational restructuring and there has been a consistent call for more to be done with respect to this phenomenon. For example, as early as 1993, Newman noted the lack of clarity in respect to restructuring in education and called for a concerted research effort to move educational restructuring "beyond common sense" by investigating "the issues of content and linkage in educational restructuring" (p. 4). In a similar vein, O'Donoghue and Dimmock (1998) posit that:

Throughout much of the world strong emphasis is placed on the role of these personnel (principals and teachers) in translating restructuring initiatives into practice. However, while advice to them has been plentiful, relatively little of it has been based on contemporary studies. Accordingly there is a large research agenda to be addressed through conducting a range of both quantitative and qualitative studies on various aspects of restructuring at school level. (p. 2)

It seems that this call has gone unheeded within the Australian education community. Mulford's (2007) overview of research into educational leadership in four Australian education journals (2001-2005) has found that leading episodes of educational restructuring is simply not on the agenda. Moreover, a search of six education databases found only one conference paper on an episode of restructuring, and this was in only one school (Gore & Lanyon, 2003, April).¹

Beyond general theoretical significance, this study also responds to calls in the literature to re-imagine the school as a 'living system' as an alternative to "machine models of schools" (Senge, 2000, p. 52). Thus this study explores the possibility of adopting a more humane approach to educational change (Evans, 1996) and engaging 'second order changes' that "require people to not just do things slightly

¹ These databases included A+ Education, Eric Plus Text, Proquest Education Journals, Education Research Complete, CBCA, and Informaworld.

differently but also to change their beliefs and perceptions” (p. 5). It also recognises the importance of maintaining a “moral purpose” (Fullan, 1993b, p. 40) in the context of educational change, and considers the role played by Marist spirituality, charism and educational philosophy in strengthening moral purpose. Finally, it suggests the possibility of applying principles of personalism (i.e. centrality of the person, subjectivity, autonomy, human dignity, community, participation, solidarity, and common good) to the challenge of educational restructuring. Whetstone (2002) has applied these principles to organisational leadership in general. This study follows his example by applying personalist principles to the challenge of leading educational restructuring.

1.8 ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

This first chapter provides an overview of the key elements of the research study and the remaining chapters provide the reader with more detail on various aspects of the study.

Chapter Two: Cultural Analysis - Clarifying the Research Problem

The second chapter provides important background information. It begins with a presentation of some of the key insights and features of Marist Fathers’ spirituality, charism, and philosophy of education. It also presents an overview of the history of St John’s College, including an explanation of the original purpose in founding a school at Woodlawn. The chapter concludes by clarifying both the research problem and the purpose of this study.

Chapter Three: Literature Review - Identifying the Research Questions

Chapter Three presents a review of the literature in respect to educational change and leadership. It begins with an historical account of the theoretical developments around educational change and notes that different perspectives of the school as organisation (i.e. the school as machine, culture, polity, and living system) have resulted in different understandings of the nature, purpose, process, and leadership of educational change. Here there is also an acknowledgement of the development of educational change as “a calculative science” (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 2) that overlooks the human dimension of educational change (Evans, 1996; Giancola & Hutchison, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2000). The chapter concludes by identifying the three research

questions that guided the various moments of data collection, analysis and interpretation in this study.

Chapter Four: The Philosophical Framework: Personalism

The fourth chapter presents a challenging and appropriate philosophical framework for the study. In this context, a case is made for using the personalist perspective to integrate much of the recent findings in educational restructuring, fundamental aspects of the Marist spirituality, charism, and philosophy of education, and suggests suitable change-effecting models of leadership that are consistent with this philosophical framework and an emerging emphasis on the human face of educational restructuring.

Chapter Five: Design of the Study

Chapter Five outlines the design chosen for this study and indicates the reasons for the choice of the theoretical perspective of Symbolic Interactionism, the epistemology of constructivism, and the case study methodology. Further, the chapter describes the empirical methods of data collection (historical documents, person-to-person interviews, and researcher's journal) and outlines why two research stages - exploration and inspection - are appropriate for research. Finally, it details the iterative process used for the analysis and interpretation of the data, and includes issues relating to the question of ethics and the trustworthiness of the data.

Chapter Six: Display and Discussion of Findings – *Purpose*

The sixth chapter deals with the first research question. It presents the data collected by the three empirical methods and, in the light of the literature review, discusses how the direction givers understood the *purpose* of the educational restructuring at St John's College.

Chapter Seven: Display and Discussion of Findings - *Process*

Chapter Seven focuses on the second research question and presents the data dealing with how the direction givers understood the *process* of educational restructuring at St John's College. It links this question to the literature review and presents a discussion of the findings.

Chapter Eight: Display and Discussion of Findings - *Leadership*

The eighth chapter focuses on the data dealing with the third research question, that is, how the direction givers understood *leadership* during the episode of restructuring at St John's College. It discusses the data in light of the perspectives of a school as machine, culture, polity, and living system. It reveals the emerging development and importance of the human dimension of leading educational restructuring.

Chapter Nine: Towards a Personalist Account of Educational Restructuring.

Chapter Nine presents a further interpretation of the findings of this research study by engaging in a philosophical analysis informed by the philosophical framework of personalism. This analysis provides a deeper understanding of the purpose, process and leadership of educational restructuring at St John's College.

Chapter Ten Review and Synthesis

Chapter Ten draws together the major findings of the research study, formulates a number of specific recommendations, suggests some directions for future research, and presents a new model for educational restructuring in Catholic schools such as St John's College.

Chapter Two: Cultural Analysis - Clarifying the Research Problem

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As discussed in Chapter One, the focus of this study is on educational restructuring in Catholic schools. In particular, it is a case study of an episode of educational restructuring that occurred at St John's College, Woodlawn during the years 1994 to 2000. From the outset, it was obvious that this school represents a unique cultural expression that "relates to the way people live and work as a group and individuals, within a particular situation or context" (O'Donnell, 2001 p. 27). Seeking to understand this unique culture, the researcher reviewed various documents and commentaries on Marist Fathers' education which provided insight into the vision that informed the establishment of St John's College. This review was followed by a study of the historical development of the College in order to gain an insight into its 'boarding school culture' and the environmental challenges that forced this episode of educational restructuring. In doing so, this cultural analysis served to clarify the research problem.

This chapter is therefore divided into three sections. The first section, Section 2.2, looks at the philosophy of education which emerges from Marist spirituality and names some of the identifiable elements and features of the Marist Fathers' philosophy of education. Section 2.3 provides an overview of the historical development of St John's College as a 'boarding school culture' and explains the challenges facing the College in the mid-1980s and during the 1990s. Finally, Section 2.4 endeavours to draw some conclusions for the chapter and to clarify the research problem.

2.2 MARIST FATHERS' EDUCATION

Each religious congregation in the Catholic Church has a particularly distinctive way of operating that sets it apart from others. In the case of the Marist Fathers, their distinctive way springs from their spirituality which focuses on Mary, the mother of Jesus. For the Marist Fathers, Mary is the 'point of reference' for all things 'Marist'. Hence their unique way of understanding their place in the world and the Church and

of being present to others in ministry is identified through their charism (Witwer, 2010). This charism is the core manifestation of their spirituality discernable in the distinctive Marist Fathers' way of existing and ministering in the Church.

Education, particularly of the young, has been one of the key ministries of the Marist Fathers since their foundation. For almost two hundred years, it has been a ministry of great importance and an ideal setting for application of Marist spirituality and charism. By referring to key documents and commentaries, the following section will focus on the nature of Marist spirituality and how that spirituality is expressed in the charism of the Marist Fathers in the context of education. Further, an attempt will be made to move towards articulating a philosophy of Marist Fathers' education.

2.2.1 Spirituality and Charism of the Marist Fathers

Though the Marist Fathers² did not receive formal recognition as a religious congregation of the Catholic Church until 1836, the origins of the congregation can be traced back to two important events which took place more than twenty years beforehand. The first event took place in 1812 and the second in 1816.

A young man named Jean-Claude Courveille, while visiting a famous Marian shrine in Le Puy, France in 1812, believed he “underwent an interior experience [which was] quite unusual in its manifestations, and of deep spiritual significance” (Coste, 1965, p. 23). Courveille later reported that he heard ‘interior words’ spoken by Mary, the mother of Jesus, in which she indicated her desire to see established a congregation which would bear her name. The purpose of the congregation was to fulfil her work in the Church and the world.

Recalling this personal revelation afterwards in the seminary of Saint-Irénéé near Lyons and sharing this experience with a number of other young men who were interested in his idea of a Society of Mary, Courveille repeated that it was Mary herself who used the words ‘Society of Mary’ to describe the congregation she wanted to come into existence, and who used the word “Marists” (Kerr, 2000, p. 130) to describe those who would belong to it. Members of this group included

² Though a clerical congregation, the Society of Mary (known as the Marist Fathers) also includes religious brothers. The brothers of the Society of Mary do not belong to the congregation known as the Marist Brothers.

Jean-Claude Colin and Marcellin Champagnat. Along with the other members of the group, they were convinced that Mary had communicated to Jean-Claude Courveille her personal desire to found a Society and that the Society would bear her name and carry out her work.

The second major event in the early history of the Marist Fathers took place on July 23, 1816. The group, then composed of twelve seminarians and newly ordained priests, gathered in the small chapel of Notre Dame de Fourvière in Lyon, to consecrate themselves to pursuing the task as it was described by Jean-Claude Courveille. They made a solemn pledge to bring this ‘Marist project’ into existence. So important is this moment in the history of the Marist project and in the development of Marist spirituality and charism, that Coste (1965) maintained that the pledge at Fourvière “was the first official act of the early Marists” (p. 33) and that “There can be no doubt that the Society’s foundation should be dated July 23, 1816” (p. 33).

As the years passed, Jean-Claude Colin, one of the twelve who signed the pledge with Jean-Claude Courveille, Marcellin Champagnat and others, took up the task of developing and articulating the implications of the communication of Mary. He became the ‘prime mover’ of the Marist project and, rather than Jean-Claude Courveille, is accepted and referred to as the founder of the Society of Mary.³ Jean-Claude Colin worked tirelessly towards giving the project a definitive shape. Reflecting on the significance of Mary’s desire to call into existence a group of people to do her work and critically meditating on the scriptural texts that referred to Mary, even though they are few in number, he committed his thoughts to paper and discussed them with others who were interested in the project. In so doing, he developed a spirituality which was founded on the original inspiration from Mary but which also incorporated his own reflections and insights.

All spirituality, as a fundamental component of human nature, is rooted in a person’s natural desires, and longings, and the hunger of the human heart. It is sometimes described as a “lived experience of depth” (McCarthy, 2003, p. 196) which is formed

³ For various reasons, Jean-Claude Courveille fell out of favour with those who had joined him to establish the Society of Mary. Some years later he entered the Benedictine abbey of Solesmes and became a monk.

intentionally in reference to something larger than oneself. Every spirituality, whether Christian or not, is composed of three basic elements. The elements are: a movement of the human spirit towards the absolute Spirit, selfless service, and a certain passivity which enables a person to be moved by the divine Spirit (Taylor, 2009). From a Christian perspective, these three elements can be found clearly manifested in the person and teachings of Jesus Christ.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the foundation of all Christian spiritualities. Like light refracted through a prism, all Christian spiritualities emanate from the single beam of the gospel and reflect particular and unique aspects of it. Marist spirituality, as an example of a Christian spirituality, is shaped by the gospel but gives emphasis to one particular aspect of it. In the case of Marist spirituality, the particular emphasis is Mary. For Jean-Claude Colin, it was Mary's presence in the Church that became a source of inspiration for his reflection and a key reference point for Marist life and action. Simply put, Mary's presence in the Church is the 'root metaphor' for Marist spirituality.

In developing this intuition, Jean-Claude Colin was not the only founder of a religious congregation to look to the example of the early Church for inspiration in developing a Christian spirituality. However, Colin's special insight, the cornerstone of a new and distinctive spirituality, is centred on Mary not only as one present among the apostles and the community in the early Church but as a unique model of the Church itself. Put in another way, Colin's original and distinctive insight emanated from his understanding of Mary as a person in *relationship*, as a *personal* role model to the apostles and members of the early Church and an example of how they were to live their Christian discipleship and to carry out Jesus' mission.

Commenting on this distinctive insight, Coste (1998) draws attention to it as a unique contribution of Colin's thought. The "essential facet in Colin's thinking ... is not only the nascent [early] Church but a church whose model is Mary" (p. 386). According to the mind of Jean-Claude Colin, the Church as the community of Jesus' disciples should take Mary as its example of how it should be and act. Developing this idea, Jean-Claude Colin identified the Marian way of being Church in terms of *personal* presence. It is an effective but hidden presence. It is an encouraging and hopeful presence. This relational dimension of the Church is highly significant

because it springs from an image of the Church which is in direct contrast to many of the commonly-held images that emphasise status, power and authority.

These aspects reflect the perceptions and experiences of ecclesial reality in the time of Jean-Claude Colin. When the maintenance of orthodoxy, position and authority take priority, specifically among Church leaders, the *personal* and *relational* dimensions are overlooked. However, while a Marian church is equally concerned about orthodoxy, etc., it has a different priority. It always gives priority to the *personal* and *relational* dimensions. For this reason, Jean-Claude Colin said “The Society (Marists) must begin a new Church over again” (Marist Fathers, 1975 doc 120, n. 1).

The “new Church” of which Jean-Claude Colin spoke was not to be a separate Church from the official Church. Obviously, Colin was not speaking literally. He did not set out to encourage the formation of an independent Church or a Church separate from the Church to which he proudly belonged. Rather he was trying to convey in somewhat poetic and symbolic language the strong emphasis that should be given to the relational aspect of the Church which he perceived as being modelled in the selfless, supportive, hidden and personal presence of Mary at the Church’s beginning at Pentecost. She was the support of the early Church at its foundation (Acts 1:14) and she continues to fulfil that role. As ‘mother of mercy’, she is the model of what the Church and Christians should be in their dealings with people.

Those who follow Jean-Claude Colin have been called by the “gracious choice” of Mary (Marist Fathers, 1988, n. 144) to become members of Mary’s Society. They believe firmly in the “original inspiration received from God and from the Blessed Virgin” (Coste, 1963, p. 475). Further, the name that they bear, the appellation “Marists” (Kerr, 2000, p. 130), brings to their consciousness what it means to belong to Mary’s Society and to be agents of Mary, acting on her behalf in the Church and in the world. They understand that the etymological significance of the word *Marist* links them to Mary and to her Society in a unique, profound and personal way.

This particularly personal and close link that exists between Mary and Marists cannot be described simply as imitation. To think of Marists as imitators of Mary is to miss one of the fundamental implications of Marist spirituality. The relationship is much deeper. Coste made this point clear when he said: “Mary remains a person

who is not to be readily confused with an idea” (*The Marist Project and Insight 1816, 1972-1973*, [unpublished text] p. 89). Further he writes: “Between [Marists] and Mary there is more than a present relationship of esteem and love; there is the density of history, that of the Society and their own personal history ... ” (Coste, 1963, p. 647). Marists therefore do not just imitate Mary they identify with Mary both as a human being and as a faithful disciple of Jesus. They seek “to think, feel, judge and act like her in all things” (Marist Fathers, 1988, n. 228). This identification speaks of being so profoundly united with her that they share the same deep, interior attitudes of mind, heart and will as she does; they are called “to be ... a special presence of Mary...” (n. 144). In this sense, it means that Mary acts in and through Marists; that the Society of Mary as a body exists as a unique and historical sign that she has chosen to be present in the Church and to the world this way.

For Marists, Mary is the “point of reference, inspiring the right attitude for relating to her son” (Perrot, 1986, p. 56) and to others. Just as Mary showed a deep love for her son and a profound concern for her neighbour, Marists are called to respond as promptly as she did “to the most urgent needs of God’s people” (Marist Fathers, 1988, n. 8). In the Marist Fathers’ Constitutions, this concern for the “salvation of their neighbour” (n. 9) is recognised as the second aim of the Society. And just as Mary was “hidden and unknown” (n. 22) in the midst of the Church, Marists are called to strive to make “self-effacement and hiddenness” (n. 18) their *modus operandi*. This is to be a characteristic of their distinctive contribution to the Church as a religious congregation. Accordingly, this approach enables them to focus attention more on the needs of others than their own. Thus, their primary task, namely, to grow in personal holiness, is intimately connected to their commitment to “build up the Christian community” (n. 18).

Marist spirituality, as described, is embodied and incarnated in the lived tradition of Marists as they strive to bring to their current context the original insights of Jean-Claude Colin. This embodiment is referred to as Marist ‘charism’. Perceived as a gift from God (Witwer, 2010), it is the outward sign of lived Marist spirituality. It is how ‘outsiders’ describe what they perceive as the living out of Marist spirituality or the special characteristics of their mission or values.

Understood in this way, the Marist charism manifests itself irrespective of what particular work Marists are engaged in. Noel Wynn (1986) draws out this point clearly when he writes, “Fr. Colin stresses on many occasions that it is not what Marists do but how they do it (that is important)...” (p. 2). Thus, the Marist charism, often referred to as ‘the Marist way’ is a distinctive, *personal* and *relational* style or approach to people and ministry.

Accordingly, when speaking of Marist spirituality and charism, it is clear that they have universal appeal. In fact, Jean-Claude Colin described the aim of the Society of Mary as “nothing less than to make the whole world Marist” (Marist Fathers, 1975 doc. 1, n.1) Hence, when referring to any of the ministries in which Marists are engaged, it is important to “speak firstly of the spiritual tradition” (Perrot, 1986, p. 55) from which the ministries spring. Hannan (2010) makes this point clearly when he says, “The Marist spirit [charism], though difficult to define, has often been remarked on as the defining quality of Marist ministry” (p. 4) It is the spiritual tradition that shapes the action and the ministry in which Marists are engaged.

In an educational context, the distinctive ‘spiritual tradition’ known as Marist spirituality and charism has shaped a unique and much appreciated philosophy of education. The Marist philosophy of education emanates firstly from an understanding of Mary’s role in the Church; she is the reference point. Having noted in this section the ‘spiritual tradition’ of Marist spirituality and charism, attention now turns to how this spirituality manifests itself in the Marist ‘educational tradition.’

2.2.2 Marists and Education

Though the Society of Mary is not limited to any particular ministry, the Marist Fathers from the earliest days have regarded the education of the young as one of their major apostolates. As early as 1822, shortly after the group of seminarians and newly ordained priests pledged to work towards establishing the Society of Mary, Jean-Claude Colin, in a letter addressed to the Pope, included education as one of the principal aims of the future congregation. This emphasis on education as a Marist ministry is not surprising since on many occasions Jean-Claude Colin spoke highly of it and considered it to be an important apostolate (Marist Fathers, 1975 doc. 44, n. 7). Further, Marcellin Champagnat, one of the original Marist Fathers and founder

of the Marist Brothers, started the first Marist Brothers' school at La Valla in 1817. He had insisted from the earliest days that education had to be an apostolate of the Society of Mary (Sammon, 1999).

Even though Jean-Claude Colin was never formally trained in the field of education, he showed a remarkable appreciation of its importance and had a profound, natural insight into how to educate children. His ability in this area was recognised by the bishop of Belley who appointed him to the position of principal of a college in Belley in 1829. The college was both a minor seminary and a school. And even though he never considered himself to be a teacher, a fact clearly acknowledged by Marist historian Drouilly (1990) who observed that "Colin entered an educational establishment through the side door" (p. 6), Jean-Claude Colin displayed a sharp understanding of the 'lofty work' of education.

As a very shy and diffident person, he found his appointment to the position of leader of the school in Belley very difficult. In fact, later in his life he referred to aspects of the role as "a martyr's tortures" (Drouilly, 1990, p. 12). Besides possessing a temperament that made the performance of the role difficult for him, another factor that increased his reluctance to assume the position was the school was experiencing serious problems. There was a clear lack of organizational discipline in the College (Kerr, 2000). A third factor was the French Restoration, the significant political and civil movement in early nineteenth century France. It had an enormously unsettling effect on civil society in general, but particularly on education and schools. Communities were deeply divided.

Notwithstanding Jean-Claude Colin's obvious reluctance to take on the role of leader of the school community at Belley, having accepted his role, he set about the task with determination and enthusiasm. One of the first objectives he set himself was to reorganise the school. For this purpose, he wrote an important text entitled *Avis à messieurs à m(essieu)rs les professeurs, préfets, directeurs et supérieur du petit séminaire de Belley. L'an 1829.*⁴ While the text does not purport to be a thorough exposé of Marist philosophy of education, a number of its ideas are original to Jean-Claude Colin and seminal to Marist education. Further, the text shows that Jean-

⁴ The English title is: *Instructions to the Professors, Prefects, Directors, and Superior of the Minor Seminary of Belley, 1829.*

Claude Colin possessed a keen insight into the nature and purpose of education (Drouilly, 1990) and that he developed some clear and distinctive characteristics which would eventually define a recognisable, Marist approach to education.

Jean-Claude Colin passed on this distinctive and very effective approach to education to the members of his congregation involved in that ministry. Like him, teachers and staffs in Marist schools, and others who wish to adopt a Marist approach to education, have drawn their inspiration from a number of key Colinian insights which can be found in the *Instructions*, from Colin's own pedagogy, as well as from an appreciation and understanding of his presentation of Marist spirituality. These insights have evolved as a result of critical reflection and practice over many years.

An example of this development is a contribution made by Ryan (1971) and the Marists of the New Zealand province. In a paper prepared for the 1971 Provincial Chapter of the New Zealand Province of the Marist Fathers, Ryan proposed that there are three essential qualities of the 'Marist way' of educating (p. 6): community, personhood, and family spirit. This thought has been further developed in a more contemporary text entitled *Characteristics of Marist Education* (Marist Fathers, 2006).

When read together, these documents suggest Marist education is characterised by a sense of community and family spirit, a concern for the formation of the whole person through loving and caring relationships, and a commitment to teamwork and shared responsibility.

2.2.2.1 *Sense of Community and Family Spirit*

First and foremost, a Marist approach to education is characterised by a sense of community and family spirit. The starting point for this Marist value is Colin's personal approach to children. Clearly warm and accepting, he was close to his pupils. In a *Founder Speaks* (Marist Fathers, 1975) this is described:

He used to put everything aside for a child and whenever one of the boys came along he would send away anyone who happened to be with him. On one occasion he asked a boy to come back later, but he was

always sorry afterwards that he had not spoken to him immediately.

“Adults can wait, he would say ...” (p. 104)

There are many other examples where Colin displayed a deep affection for the children entrusted to his care, particularly when they were sick or in need. Drouilly (1990) notes that he always encouraged the school staff to treat the students as he would: “with kindness, gentleness, courtesy and firmness” (p. 160). While it is clear that the *Instructions* to the staff of the school challenge the teachers and educators to be committed to the important task of focusing on the needs of the students, Colin also encouraged them (all clerics) to have the same affection for each other. In their dealings with each other, he said:

We shall all love each other as brothers and honour each other with affectionate respect united to Christian politeness, so that our boys having on this score nothing but good examples before them, will behave towards each other in the same way or at least with charity.
(p. 188)

This understanding of family spirit and a sense of community is an extremely important value in Marist education. In fact, Rodríguez (2008) comments that it “seems to be the most original aspect of [Colin’s] essay” (p. 273).

Developing this aspect of Marist education, Ryan (1971) describes a Marist approach in terms of relationships that are “founded on concern and respect for others” (p. 8). In a similar vein, Leonarczyk⁵ (n.d.) writing about *The Elements of Marist Education* maintains that Marist schools should be places where “acceptance and care are experienced” and where teachers should act as if “they were dealing with family members” (p. 22). In other words, teachers should be “warm-hearted” with “feelings of affection that do not clash with professional demands [and] feelings that respect freedom of the young” (Marist Fathers, 2006, p. 16). Thus while staff in Marist schools are encouraged to “deal with the reality” of the issues facing students and staff, they should “be patient and discerning” (p. 6) in the way that they deal with students and staff. In this context, authority should be exercised “with a calm inner

⁵ *The Elements of Marist Education* is a paper held in the Marist Fathers’ General Archives, Rome, Italy.

strength” (p. 8) as a mark of respect for personal dignity and the familial bonds that unite the members of the school community.

Of interest to this study is the research undertaken by O’Donnell (2001) into Marist schools in New Zealand.⁶ She has found that in Marist schools there is a strong sense that “people should be close to each other”. In her research she found that:

Marist education has a strong relational emphasis. It is, first and foremost, based on the hope that students will develop a relationship with God, through Jesus Christ and Mary. Between members of the Marist school community, such relationships are characterised by qualities of care, love, awareness of needs, and the generous offer of practical support. People should be close to each other, open and accepting in friendships that last. Love of students is seen as a precondition to teaching them. (pp. 100-101)

This research finding suggests that in Marist education the sense of community and family spirit is more than mere rhetoric.

2.2.2.2 Formation of the Whole Person

Education, according to Colin, is primarily about the ‘formation’ of a person. This summed up his understanding of the essential purpose of education. The teaching and the care of children is a very personal and relational activity, akin to ‘giving new life’. To emphasise this idea, he spoke of Christian education in lofty terms and referred to it specifically as “a second creation” (Marist Fathers, 1975 doc 13, n. 11).

According to Jean-Claude Colin, teachers are to see themselves as collaborators with God in the lofty work of giving life, meaning and purpose to a person. To this end, Jean-Claude Colin reminds teachers that they:

... contribute with God to forming a man, in a real way. When a man leaves the hands of his nurse, he is only sketched in rough. We must make him into a man, form his heart, his character, virtue etc. ... That

⁶ Though the research focused on schools in the specific tradition of the Marist Brothers, O’ Donnell’s comments apply equally to all schools in the Marist tradition.

is what education does. Nothing is more lofty. You give him as it were a second creation. (p. 68)

Reflecting on this emphasis in Jean-Claude Colin's thought, Rodríguez (2008) observes that, "Colin invites us to view our students as persons in all their fullness, in all their richness, and to work toward the integral formation of all by starting with the special uniqueness of each one" (p. 268). This personal approach stands out as one of the critically important characteristics of Marist education.

Consistent with this thought, Ryan (1971) also identifies "the formation of the total person" (p. 7) as the primary task of Marist education. The Marist approach is holistic and concerned not only with a child's academic or physical development; it is about personal development, about "nurture[ing] character" (p. 4). The ultimate goal of education is to "make a Christian" through religious education, to "form an upright gentleman" with a commitment to "harmony with others", and, "to form an educated man, by developing in him a taste for study and encouraging his progress in every aspect of life and in every area of knowledge" (p. 4).

2.2.2.3 Teamwork and Shared Responsibility

Finally, teamwork and shared responsibility are clearly identified as significant characteristics of Marist education. When Colin undertook the challenging task of leadership of the College in Belley, he accepted that such a role would involve changing the organizational and cultural dimensions of the school. Further, he realised that he could not do the work alone. Such a challenge required teamwork. Consequently, he focused on the importance of building relationships among the staff, fostering positive relationships between the staff and their superiors, and encouraging good rapport between the staff and the children.

The theme of 'teamwork' is clearly original to Colin's thought on education. According to Drouilly (1990), Colin "shows insight because he rightly emphasizes the team's importance in the school. The teachers are in solidarity with each other. Team action has at least as much importance as the activity of individual members" (p. 66). In this way, the Marist school is to be considered a "joint educational enterprise in which parents and staff collaborate in educating the young" (Marist Fathers, 1979, p. 2).

In summary, the three essential characteristics that exemplify the ‘Marist way’ of educating (p. 6) are: a commitment to community and a family spirit, a concern for the formation of the person, and the expression of teamwork and shared responsibility. As a consequence, there is a clear expectation that teachers and staff in Marist schools will participate in education by seeing their contribution as a “cooperative effort” (Marist Fathers, 2006, p. 14) in which they work with colleagues, parents and students by:

1. communicating freely with their colleagues;
 2. having confidence in each other;
 3. having confidence in the parents,
 4. having respect for each pupil as a unique person, without regard to social or ethnic origin, and by taking care to establish a similar respect between pupils;
 5. endeavouring to maintain the appropriate and irreplaceable position they hold among their pupils;
 6. not losing sight of the purpose of their work, which is the success of the young person in life, and which is broader than the success of the pupil in any particular subject;
 7. responsibly participating in the management of the school;
 8. caring for their own professional development and on-going formation
- (pp. 14-15).

Thus, in 1921, when the Marist Fathers were approached by the bishop of Lismore to build and staff a secondary school in his diocese, they responded positively to the invitation and set about establishing a Catholic school in the ‘Marist way’. It is this philosophy of education and unique spirituality that informed the development of the unique culture of St John’s College.

The following brief overview of the history of St John’s College begins with treatment of its early history and highlights its development as a school with a ‘boarding culture’. This is followed by a treatment of some of the major challenges which faced it in the latter part of the mid-1980s and 1990s and which eventually forced educational restructuring there.

2.3 AN OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE

Following an invitation from Bishop John Carroll the bishop of Lismore (1909-1949), the Marist Fathers established St John's College, Woodlawn, as a boarding and day secondary school for boys in 1931.⁷ The intention was to provide secondary education for the sons of the Catholic families who would otherwise have to leave the diocese of Lismore for a secondary education.

From its humble and struggling beginnings, the school established a fine reputation over the years. This fact is supported by the statements made by political, civic and ecclesiastical leaders in the College magazine, *Woodlawn's First Fifty Years* (Marist Fathers, 1981). Civic leaders such as the Mayor spoke of how the College "enjoys the esteem, admiration and respect of the City (Lismore)" (p. 102). Others mentioned its "splendid reputation" due to the "quality of the education it provided to its students" (p. 120) and the deputy Prime Minister of Australia at the time noted "Woodlawn's reputation is high, not just amongst its old boys, but among the people of the region" (p. 106).

As noted, boarding for boys had been essential to the school's identity since its foundation and became even stronger as the years passed, particularly as other options for secondary education made themselves available in local areas.⁸ St John's College, as a single sex boarding school, offered the students a uniquely warm, positive and special culture. As one ex-student remarked in the College magazine to celebrate the school's Golden Jubilee, "Woodlawn was not really a school but rather a second home and it is a good feeling to belong to two families" (Marist Fathers, 1981, p. 98).

Comments such as those are in line with Martin (2009) whose research found that a boarding school offers four significant perspectives: co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, "attachment", tradition and stereotype, and educational access (p. 10). Each of these has a very positive impact on the students' sense of belonging

⁷ The school was officially opened on May 24, 1931 with an enrolment of 40 boys. At the end of the year it had an enrolment of 88 boys, including ten day boys (Queensland Catholic Education Commission Feasibility Report, April, 1994 p. 2).

⁸ Boarding facilities for girls at Grafton (Mercy Sisters) and Lismore (Presentation Sisters) had closed before 1994. St John's College was the only school in the diocese offering boarding at the time.

and identification with the school, their development of ‘detachment’ from the home environment, their socialization, and their access to education. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that these perspectives would be even more influential in schools that were fully-boarding, as was the case for St John’s College.

The success of St John’s College and its development, however, were not without challenges. This was especially the case during the period when more Catholic secondary schools were being built in various towns within the diocese. The College magazine of 2000 notes that by that year there were “eight Catholic secondary schools in the diocese providing a full education to Higher School Certificate level” (Marist Fathers, 2000, p. 14). This growth in the number of local Catholic secondary schools in the diocese over the years gradually lessened the need for parents to send their children away to boarding school. And even though over the years St John’s College responded to the enrolment challenge by diversifying and seeking boarders from other parts of New South Wales and Australia, as well as from overseas, the pool of potential boarders continued to diminish significantly.

Aware of this enrolment challenge, as well as other matters, in 1982 the Marist Fathers were prompted to ask that St John’s College be included in an extensive study of Marist Brothers’ boarding schools throughout Australia. The study was conducted by Br Patrick Fahy, FMS. It recommended that the best chance for the future of St John’s College was for some kind of integration with the two other Catholic secondary schools in Lismore (Provincial Archives Information Paper: issued to the province, March 16, 1998).⁹

Accepting the recommendation, the Marist Fathers entered into negotiations with the Presentation Sisters, who owned and operated St Mary’s College, the Marist Brothers, who administered St Joseph’s School, and the diocese in order to explore the integration of St John’s College, a full boarders-only secondary school, with the two co-educational day-student secondary Colleges in Lismore. Initially, the

⁹ The report, entitled *Marist Boarding School Study 1980-1982 – St John’s College Woodlawn*, was issued March 27, 1982. The report made 21 recommendations. Among them was one which recommended: “That negotiations proceed with the other Catholic Schools of the Lismore area to establish a combined college with a comprehensive co-educational system for all students on various campuses” (n. 8). The report was privately produced for the Marist Fathers. A copy of the report is available from the Marist Fathers’ Australian Province Archives, 1 Mary Street, Hunters Hill, NSW 2110.

discussions progressed favourably. However, in late 1983, as the negotiations were drawing to close, and majority of the agenda items had been attended to, two issues remained unresolved. These two matters contributed to the development of a critical impasse.

The first contentious matter concerned the place of boarding. It became clear the new entity would not accept responsibility for residential care of students. And the second contentious matter was the significant level of dissatisfaction on the part of the St John's College staff about any form of integration with the town schools. As a result, the three school-based members of the Marist Fathers' negotiating committee resigned. This created such a significant difficulty that the provincial of the Marist Fathers eventually had to communicate with the bishop that "there is no common ground among the members of the Authority upon which can be based a co-operative amalgamation" (Provincial Archives: Report of John Jago, July 1, 1984, p. 20). Discussions were cancelled and the Marist Fathers withdrew from the negotiations.

This was a highly significant decision in the context of the history of St John's College and efforts at educational restructuring. In choosing not to proceed with some form of integration, the Marist Fathers lost an opportunity to secure the long-term future of the College. Consequently, the school remained a small independent, boys-only school, totally reliant on boarders.

For a number of years, the school enjoyed success as student numbers increased and the decision seemed to be vindicated. However, that success was relatively short-lived. A further decline in the number of boarders in the late 1980s and early 1990s showed how tenuous was the school's position. Attracting boarders became a persistent and major difficulty. This placed pressure on the College finances and the costs of running the school continued to mount as boarding numbers fell.

This problem became particularly worrisome in the early 1990s and there were obvious signs that the diminishing pool of potential boarders was putting the future of the school in doubt. There were some Marists and staff who thought the future was so bleak that the College would not survive. Unless drastic and significant measures were taken, it appeared that the College would not be viable. Simply put, the school's viability depended on the maintenance of boarders, but boarding numbers were in decline.

Three additional factors exacerbated the school's precarious position and contributed to the school's dire situation. The three factors were: a national economic recession in the early 1990s, a severe drought that affected the area from which the school drew the great majority of its students, and a national trend away from choosing boarding schools for the education of children. These factors reduced the pool of potential boarders further and consequently, St John's College, along with other boarding schools in a similar situation, was forced to compete aggressively to attract boarders from this diminishing pool of candidates.

Even though St John's College made a number of valiant efforts to attract and to maintain boarders in the early 1990s, the effect on enrolment figures was almost negligible. The situation appeared more and more beyond the school's control. Other boarding schools which enrolled both day and boarding students were not as adversely affected as St John's College which relied solely on boarders. This situation reinforced the view that the school's future was in jeopardy, and unless significant changes were made, it faced the possibility of extinction.

2.3.1 Forced to Face the Challenges

In the early 1990s, the newly elected provincial and his team realised that major changes were needed if St John's College were to have any chance of survival. They were determined to act in order to address the serious challenges facing the school. They made two very significant decisions which reflected this firm resolve.

The provincial leader and members of the provincial council were looking for a Marist to replace the school principal whose six year term was drawing to a close at the end of 1993. Earlier that year, they began a consultation process to find a suitable replacement. They were looking specifically for someone who could act as a 'change agent'. As part of the consultation process, the researcher was approached by the provincial and asked to take on that role (cf. Chapter One). With a clear mandate to act in that capacity, the researcher assumed the position of school principal on 1st January, 1994.

The second significant decision taken by the provincial and provincial council was to request a total review of the school. To this end, the Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) was engaged in mid to late 1993 to conduct a feasibility

study.¹⁰ In brief, the report of this study which was issued in April, 1994, suggested that there might be a future for the school if it were to attract day students and if it offered more flexible boarding options. As a consequence, day students were re-introduced to the school in 1995 and the options for boarders were broadened to include daily, weekly or full-time boarding.

The decision to re-introduce day students and to broaden the options for boarders, though not warmly accepted by many in the school community, contributed to a small increase in the overall population of the school. However, it did not address the deep underlying challenge facing the school. Boarding numbers continued to decline and the school did not attract sufficient day students to offset the loss of boarders and to ensure a financially secure future. In addition, the ratio of non-Catholic students to Catholic students increased significantly. Once again, there were signs that action was required. To address this matter, the Marist Fathers invited the Queensland Catholic Education Commission to undertake a second feasibility study, “A Planning Exercise”, in May, 1996.¹¹

Meanwhile, negotiations concerning the future of the school began once again with the diocese and other interested parties, especially the local Catholic secondary school, Trinity Catholic College. As in the early 1980s, boarding remained a contentious issue. It became clear that an amalgamation with Trinity would exclude the possibility of keeping the boarding component of the school. Further, the diocese also was not prepared to accept a boarding component. Effectively this meant that if the future of the school were to involve some formal connection with the local educational scene, then the boarding component, if maintained, would have to be the sole responsibility of the Marist Fathers. The provincial leader and his council were well aware of the significant difficulties associated with the maintenance of the boarding aspect of the school and also the strong emotional and

¹⁰ The first report was produced in April, 1994 and is entitled *St John's College, Woodlawn: Enrolment Options – Feasibility Study Report*. It was conducted by the Research and Review Unit, Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC). The report was privately produced for the Marist Fathers. A copy of the report is available from the Marist Fathers' Australian Province Archives, 1 Mary Street, Hunters Hill, NSW 2110.

¹¹ The follow-up report is entitled *St John's College, Woodlawn: A Planning Exercise*. The final report was submitted to the Marist Fathers April 14, 1997. It was also privately produced for the Marist Fathers and is available from the Marist Fathers' Australian Province Archives.

cultural bonds it fostered. They were also fully aware of the strength of opposition among some Marists, staff members, parents and students to the thought of phasing out boarding.

One of the critically significant moments in the whole episode of the educational restructuring of St John's College occurred when the findings of the second feasibility study were handed down. The Commission found that "the original mission of the Marist Fathers to conduct a boarding College at St John's, Woodlawn, has come to an end" (St John's College, Woodlawn: A Planning Exercise – Final Report, April 14, 1997, p. 12). This recommendation, after careful consideration and discussion, was eventually accepted and, in the face of very strong resistance, the very difficult decision to close the boarding facilities at St John's College at the end of 1999 was taken. In addition, after extensive consultation, it was decided to introduce co-education as part of a plan to amalgamate with Trinity Catholic College, Lismore.

The decision to close the boarding facilities at St John's College was not taken lightly nor was it an easy decision to make. In fact it was a sad occasion for all. At the same time, the administrative leaders were aware that the decision would most likely provoke very strong negative feelings and emotions. Nevertheless, they were convinced on the basis of the QCEC recommendation that a decision would also open up an opportunity for a new beginning that might see some healing of the sadness, anguish, and anger that surfaced during the consultation period.

Positive and significant discussions took place between the Marist Fathers and the diocese, the parish, the Catholic Education Office and Trinity Catholic College and were progressing positively towards the acceptance of a model based on the integration of St John's College with Trinity Catholic College. At first, the model under consideration consisted of two campuses of Trinity Catholic College, one in the city of Lismore and other at Woodlawn. As discussions progressed, this model evolved into having one governing body (Trinity Catholic College Limited) to oversee two campuses: one being Trinity Catholic College, Lismore, and the other St John's College, Woodlawn. However, before those negotiations finished, the diocese of Lismore suddenly and unexpectedly put forward an alternative proposal.

2.3.2 Diocesan Model Accepted

The diocese had established its own committee, the Diocesan Woodlawn Working Party, to advise the bishop in matters pertaining to the educational restructuring of St John's College. In March, 1999, the Diocesan Business Manager wrote to the provincial of the Marist Fathers putting forward a diocesan proposal. The diocese offered to purchase St John's College from the Marist Fathers and to establish it as a systemic co-educational day school, owned by the parish. The diocese made it clear that it did not wish to place St John's College under the management of another Religious Institute or under the governance of Trinity Catholic College Ltd. As a consequence of this new model, negotiations to amalgamate with Trinity Catholic College were cancelled, once again, and new discussions with diocesan and parish representatives began.

The new development was announced to staff and other stakeholders on May 31, 1999 and the Marist Fathers established a committee, the Marist Fathers' Woodlawn Negotiating Group to meet with the Diocesan Woodlawn Working Party for discussions concerning the diocesan proposal. In July, 1999 the provincial of the Marist Fathers formally accepted the diocese's intention to make St John's College systemic. In the same letter the provincial indicated that the principal at the time was willing to have his appointment extended by a further twelve months, that is, to the end of 2000, subject to the diocese's interests and wishes, in order to ensure the success of the continuing development of the school.

A Joint Management Committee consisting of representatives of the diocese, the Catholic Education Office, the parish of St Carthage's, the Marist Fathers, and St John's College was established to oversee the transition from Marist ownership and governance to the ownership of the parish and governance of the diocese. The discussions progressed amicably and concluded at the end of 2000 when, at the celebration of Mass in the cathedral, documents were signed and the Marist Fathers formally relinquished ownership of the school to the parish of St Carthage's, Lismore. In 2001, St John's College was incorporated into the Lismore Catholic Education system and became a diocesan co-educational day school.

Radical and rapid changes had taken place during the period of educational restructuring from 1994 to 2000: the school witnessed the demise of the long

tradition of boarding, the cessation of the special influence the boarding culture had on the school, the re-introduction of day students on a grander scale than 1931, the introduction of female students for the first time in the school's history, and the change of governance and ownership from the Marist Fathers to the parish and the diocese. All this restructuring took place in the short period of six years.

This episode of educational restructuring at St John's College is an extraordinary story of educational change. It is more remarkable in the light of the College's motto, "Hold fast to the traditions," which was often used to stress the importance of stability, doggedness and an unchanging tradition. Change did not come easily to St John's College. This is evident in the significant resistance that came from within the Marist Fathers, staff at St John's College, old boys, parents and students. However, educational change did occur and St John's College survived to become a viable entity.

2.4 CLARIFYING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

This cultural analysis confirmed that St John's College represents a unique cultural expression of the Marist tradition. Founded on the spirituality and charisma of the Marist Fathers, St John's College is built around Marist identity, particularly in reference to the importance of personal relationships, the experience of community, and a family spirit. Marist education gives priority to the formation of the whole person, provides a well-balanced and holistic approach to education, and stresses the importance of the uniquely personal dimension of education. Finally, teamwork and shared responsibility are significant characteristics of this Marist approach to education.

In addition, this cultural analysis took an historical perspective and considered how the unique culture of St John's College was influenced and shaped by forces beyond the school. St John's College was established, in 1931, to provide a boarding opportunity for the sons of Catholic families in the Diocese of Lismore. Fifty years on, St John's College had established a "splendid reputation" due to the "quality of the education it provided to its students" (Marist Fathers, 1981, p. 120). However, the viability of the College was threatened as boarding numbers fell. The economic recession, a drought, and a social trend away from boarding exacerbated the problem the school was facing. To address this problem, St John's College underwent a

radical restructure between 1994 to 2000 that saw the College change from being a boys-only boarding school, owned and operated by the Marist Fathers, to a co-educational day school owned by the parish and operated by the diocese of Lismore through the Catholic Education Office.

It is reasonable to claim that this episode of educational restructuring at St John's College represents a successful example of educational change. The process was motivated by a concern for the viability of the College as it faced falling enrolments. In 1994, there were only 276 students in the whole school. By 2000, at the end of the process, the enrolment had grown to 499 students. In 2009 the total student population stood at 743.¹² In hindsight, it is interesting to investigate the factors that contributed to this success.

However, at the end of the day, despite this apparent success, there were more questions than answers about the phenomenon of leading educational restructuring. What enables leaders to inspire and to manage complex educational restructuring? How do leaders balance the human, cultural, structural, political and spiritual dimensions of educational restructuring? How do change processes of educational restructuring stay true to a specific philosophy of education, such as that espoused by the Marist Fathers? What emotions do people experience during an episode of educational restructuring and how do they make sense of it? Such questions suggest that the Marist Fathers did not have a clear understanding of what educational restructuring in Catholic schools was, nor did they know how to go about leading this phenomenon.

Reflecting on this episode of educational restructuring at St John's College, the researcher began to realise that the Marist Fathers and others had been operating out of a model of 'common sense' leadership. While learning 'along the way' they had followed their individual and communal intuition and had lacked a clear theoretical foundation for educational restructuring. Consequently, within this study, the research problem was framed in terms of a lack of a clear understanding of the nature and purpose of educational restructuring in Catholic schools. Moreover, the purpose of the study was identified in terms of gaining a more informed and

¹²Official figure as at 24th November, 2009

sophisticated understanding of educational restructuring in the context of the Catholic school such as St John's College.

Chapter Three: Literature Review - Identifying the Research Questions

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The review of the literature seeks to fulfil the following four fundamental aims:

1. To demonstrate a familiarity with a body of knowledge and establish credibility;
2. To show the path of prior research and how a current project is linked to it;
3. To integrate and summarise what is known in an area;
4. To learn from others and stimulate new ideas. (Neuman, 2006, p. 111).

In addition, this review endeavours to identify the research questions that were to guide the various moments of data collection, analysis and interpretation within this study (Hart, 1998).

This study focuses on an episode of educational restructuring that took place at St John's College in the period from 1994 to 2000. The term 'educational restructuring' emerged in the literature in the 1990s when the study of school improvement took on "a new form and texture" (Murphy, 1997, p. 35) and researchers recognised that "educational problems are attributable more to the failure of the system of schooling than to the shortcomings of the individual educators" (p. 35). Thus educational restructuring represents one category of the broader phenomenon of educational change.

In coming to this study, the researcher was aware of the significant research effort around the challenge of leading educational change. Reviewing this research effort, Fullan (2009) and Hargreaves (2009) have identified the different phases of educational change research over a fifty year period. Interest in this phenomenon emerged in the United States in the late 1950s. The 1960s saw a focus on educational innovation in the classroom. By the 1970s, researchers, concerned with the high failure rate of innovation projects, turned their attention to the implementation processes that contribute to its institutionalisation. In the 1980s and

into the 1990s, as concern for public accountability grew, structural change or “educational restructuring” (Hargreaves, 1991; Murphy, 1997) became the order of the day, and reformers focused on issues pertaining to instructional methods, the management and governance of schools, and public accountability (Newmann, 1993; O'Donoghue & Dimmock, 1998; Sachs, 2003). By the late 1990s, researchers began to focus on the challenge of large-scale systemic reform beyond the classroom and school.

In the new century, there were claims of a “coming of age” as large-scale systemic reforms were becoming “more analytical and action-oriented” (Fullan, 2009, p. 107). At the same time, however, there was also concern that educational change had become “a calculative science” (Hargreaves, 2000 p. 2) and that it was too “preoccupied with effective and efficient means to change schools, teachers and others with little regard for normative issues, purposes and the lifeworld consequences of proposed changes” (Sergiovanni, 2000 p. 73). Dissatisfied with the current ‘state of play’, researchers have been “concentrating quite deliberately on investigating and articulating the basic principles of demonstrably successful and sustainable change and reform in schools, districts, networks, provinces and countries” (Hargreaves, 2009 p. 27).

As one would expect, a plethora of scholarly writing has followed this research effort, and reviewing the literature on educational change is a daunting task. Consequently, within this study, the researcher looked for key themes emerging from the literature. Three key themes were identified. Firstly, the literature has focused attention on the school as organisation. Secondly, the literature advances different images or metaphors of the school as organisation, namely, as machine, culture, polity, and more recently, living system. These images of school are then linked to different understandings of the purpose and process of educational change and offer different conceptualisations of leadership. Thirdly, it seems that over time there has been an interest in ‘humanising’ educational change and leadership in order to address the limitations of the dominant image of school as machine and its mechanistic approach to educational change and leadership.

The three themes are reflected in the conceptual framework (Figure 3.1) that guided the choice of literature for the review. The conceptual framework situates the leading of educational restructuring in the broader context of educational change.

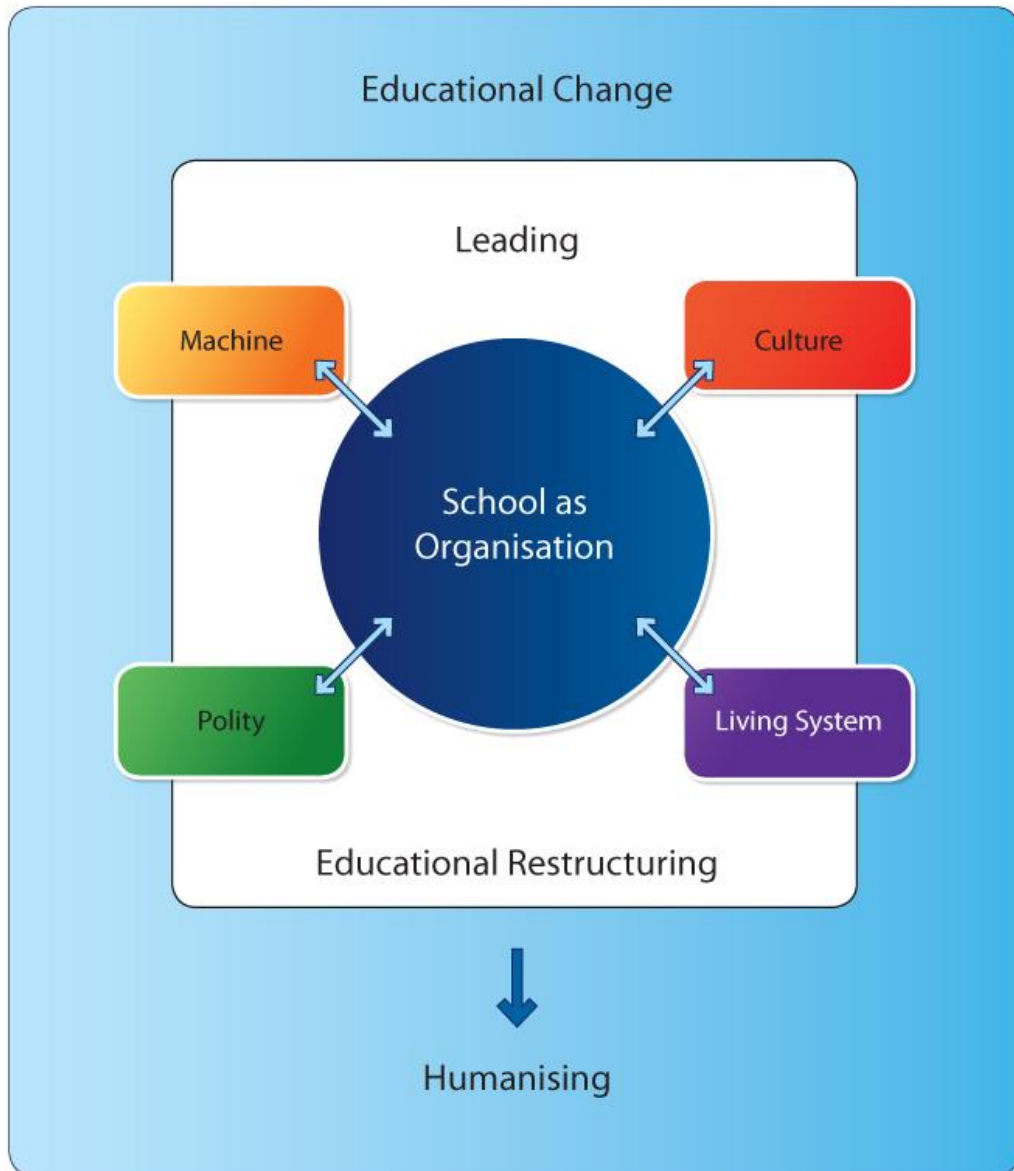


Figure 3-1 Conceptual Framework of Literature Review

Further, in line with these themes and the conceptual framework, this literature review is divided into three sections. The section immediately after the introduction, namely Section 3.2, deals with the school as organisation and explores the notion of the school as machine, culture, polity and living system. Section 3.3 explores the challenge of ‘humanising’ educational change. Finally, Section 3.4 summarises the

key themes in the literature and in doing so, identifies the research questions to guide this study. This chapter outline is indicated in Figure 3-2.

3.1	Introduction
3.2	School as Organisation
3.2.1	School as Machine
3.2.2	School as Culture
3.2.3	School as Polity
3.2.4	School as Living System
3.3	Humanising Educational Change
3.4	Conclusion and Research Questions

Figure 3-2 An Overview of the Organisation of the Chapter

3.2 SCHOOL AS ORGANISATION

The school as an organisation has been an area of research interest since the 1980s (e.g. Handy & Aitken, 1986), and over the following years, researchers (Bolman & Deal, 1997; Bush, 2003; House & McQuillan, 1998) have offered different perspectives on schools as organisation. In particular, four images or metaphors for the school as organisation - machine, culture, polity and living systems – have been advanced in the literature and, as the following discussion indicates, each of these images suggests a particular account of the purpose and process of educational change as well as different conceptualisations of educational leadership.

3.2.1 School as Machine

The image of school as machine is informed by the seventeenth century philosophy and science of Descartes and Newton who offer a clock as a model of the cosmos. “For these scientists, it became natural to conceive of the world as made up of discrete components, which fit together like parts of the machine” (Senge, 2000, p. 29). This ontology provided the foundation for a scientific revolution and the

machine-thinking of the Industrial Age as well as the image of the school as “machine” (p. 52). At the same time, this ontology offered “the beguiling implication that ultimately the universe could be understood completely ... [that] Once you analyse the parts, the world can be predicted and controlled” (p. 29).

Informed by this philosophy and borrowing from ideas institutionalised in the factories of the nineteenth century, educators from the mid-nineteenth century onwards built “an industrial-age school system fashioned in the image of the assembly line, the icon of the booming industrial age” (Senge, 2000, p. 30). In short, the school as machine is deemed to be one of those “goal-seeking organizations employing rational means to achieve their objectives by official leaders” (Bush, 2003, p. 55). Here there is an overall assumption that schools are primarily rational structures that can be easily manipulated and changed through “instrumental action” (Blenkin, Edwards, & Kelly, 1997, p. 217). The purpose of educational change, in this view, is described in terms of “product [and] fixed outcomes” (Evans, 1996, p. 7). The process is delineated as the management of change with a focus on “structure, function, tasks, roles and rules” and the planning is “objective, linear and long-range” (p. 7).

Educational leadership, in turn, is constructed as management when the implementation of educational change is perceived as being “almost purely top-down, a combination of dissemination and pressure” (Evans, 1996, p. 8). “The manager emphasises sustaining vertical hierarchies, controlling information, and maintaining guardedness in communications” rather than “horizontal networks ... [that] share information, and maintain open communication” (Giancola & Hutchison, 2005, p. 14). With respect to relationships with subordinates, “the manager relies on explanations, position of power over people, and system awareness or adherence to organizational policies and procedures” rather than fostering “empowering relationships [by emphasising] group deliberations, power sharing with people, and self-awareness” (p. 14). In the daily life of the school “the manager demonstrates passion for ideas, believes in autocratic leadership, and protects the well-being of the system” rather than showing “compassion ... democratic leadership, and [a concern to] protect the well-being of people” (p. 15). Finally, the manager emphasizes “the development of the system, promotes habits of mind, and espouses school reform” rather than “personal development, habits of the heart” (p. 15). This is in contrast

with the Humane Domain which “espouses school transformation over school reform and restructuring” (p. 15). In short, the manager constructs the school as a “managerial domain” and is blind to its “humane dimensions” (p. 14).

Thus described, the mechanistic image of school with its rational-structural paradigm of educational change and managerial approach to leadership was attractive to educational researchers who looked to identifying the components of educational change so they might predict what would happen. This conceptualisation of educational change is still popular because “it has high symbolic value, it is relatively easy to do, and it is consistent with deeply held beliefs among reformers and practitioners about what people think is wrong with schools” (Elmore, 1995, p. 24).

However, despite its popularity, this understanding of educational change and leadership is not without its critics. For instance, Hargreaves (1998) argues that it is probably unrealistic to define schools as rational organisations because decision-making, considered as a rational process, is considered to be fraught with difficulties in an era that is characterised by complexity and chaos. In addition, this mechanistic image of schools is criticised for placing too much value on organisational structures and therefore losing sight of the individual and the “role of individual identity, emotions and the development of members of the school community” (Louis, Toole, & Hargreaves, 1999, p. 269) in achieving organisational goals. Given these criticisms of the image of school as machine with its rational-structural process of educational change and managerial approach to educational leadership, researchers sought to advance alternative perspectives, namely, the school as culture and the school as polity

3.2.2 School as Culture

Influenced by the work of the organisational theorist Schein (1985, 2004), educational researchers (Sergiovanni, 2000; Starratt, 2003) present the image of ‘school as culture’ as an alternative to the dominant image of ‘school as machine’. Whilst acknowledging the difficulty of defining organisational culture, Schein (2004) identifies three basic levels of culture: “artefacts”, “espoused values and beliefs”, and “basic underlying assumptions” (p. 26). Artefacts are the readily observable aspects of an organisation, for example, language, symbols and so on. The espoused values

and beliefs can be found at a deeper level and are associated with how members of a group describe the way things are done. Basic underlying assumptions are found at the deepest level and as such, are not easily observable. They can sometimes be difficult to articulate. Thus described, culture does not operate only at the level of intellect and is not solely about action. Here culture also includes emotions and feelings.

Adapting Schein’s understanding of the levels of organisational culture to school culture, Starratt (2003) offers “the onion model” (p. 17) as a useful conceptualisation of school as organisation. Starratt’s “onion model” is presented as Figure 3-3.

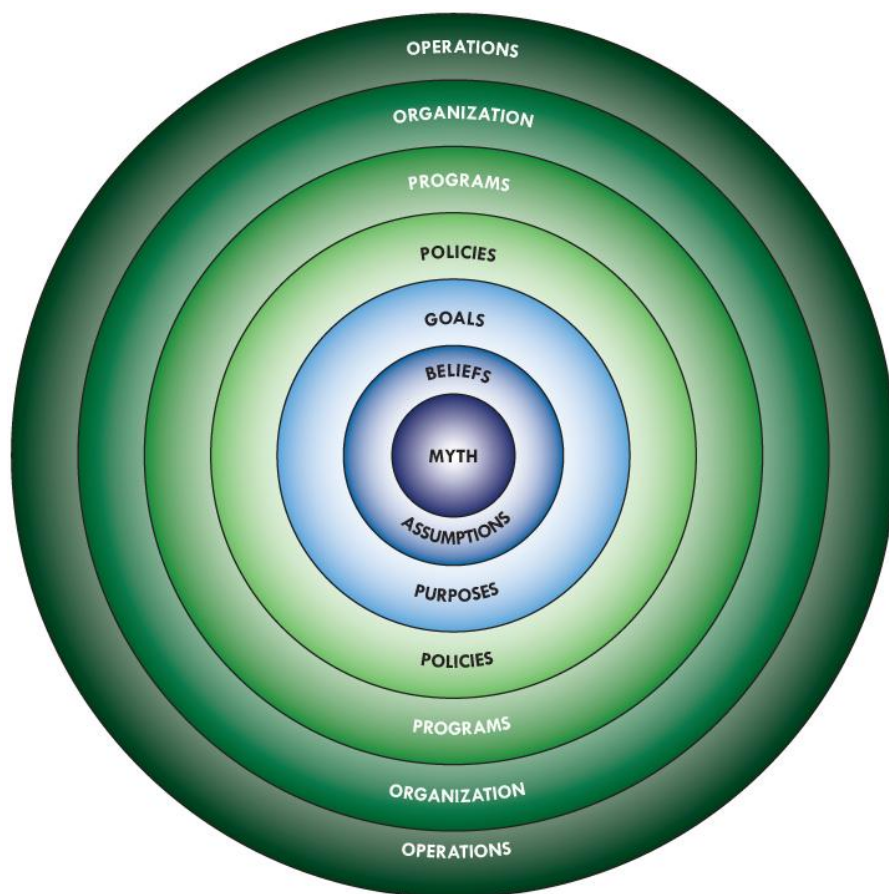


Figure 3-3 Dimensions of School Life (Adapted from Starratt (2003, p.17))

The model represents both the visible and invisible aspects of school life. The first four layers, operations, organisation, programs and policies make up the structural organisation of the school. The inner layers of the model include a school’s goals and purposes, beliefs and assumptions and myth. These inner layers represent the school’s vision. Developing this model, Starratt proposes that there is a myth at the

core of every school. Here a myth is not a fairy tale. Rather a myth is a story “whose symbolisms enable us to define value, judge human striving, and place ourselves in an identifiable order of things” (Starratt, 2003, p. 18). Thus myth influences underlying beliefs, assumptions and purposes within the school community, the school’s goals and purposes, its policies, educational programs, its organisation, and its daily operations. In this view, a school’s vision statement articulates the underlying myth, beliefs, assumptions and purposes allowing “multiple applications and representations” (p. 19) within the school’s policies, programs, organisation and operations. Thus “the vision must be embodied in the other layers of the school as organization. The onion must be energised by its core [i.e. its myth, beliefs, assumptions and purposes]” (p. 19).

Applying this cultural perspective to the challenge of educational change, theorists advance the activity of “reculturing” rather than mere “restructuring”. As Fullan (1998a) writes:

Restructuring refers to changes in the formal structure of schooling in terms of organization, timetables, roles, and the like. Restructuring bears no direct relationship to improvements in teaching and learning. Reculturing, by contrast, involves changing the norms, values, incentives, skills, and relationships in the organization to foster a different way of working together. (p. 4)

In a similar vein, Fullan (2007) posits “Structure does make a difference, but it is not the main point in achieving success. Transforming the culture – changing the way we do things around here – is the main point. I call this reculturing” (p. 177). Yet again, for Miller (2005) “school reculturing buries deep into the heart of human attitudes and relationships that hold the school together and move it forward (or fail to do so)” (p. 249). Whilst restructuring may act as “a lever for change” (p. 249), significant educational change efforts have to be directed at a deeper level of school culture. As Starratt (2003) explains:

The difficulty experienced by many educators is that they function in schools ... [with] no center, with no vision, mission or sense of purpose, other than the daily delivery of programs governed by schedules and operating procedures. The articulation of the vision

enables school communities to intentionally pursue the vision by means of programs and structural organization, rather than pursuing the vision by *fighting against* the routines of those outer layers. (p. 19)

Within this cultural perspective of the school as organisation, theorists explain the process of educational change as meaning-making. As Fullan (1982, 1998b, 2005b; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991) consistently argues, a cultural perspective locates the process of educational change within the socio-cultural environment of educational practice, and one of its central concerns is the meaning that key stakeholders as individuals and collectives ascribe to a specific change:

Real change, then, whether desired or not, represents a serious personal and collective experience characterized by ambivalence and uncertainty; and if change works out it can result in a sense of mastery, accomplishment and professional growth. The anxieties of uncertainty and the joys of mastery are essential to the subjective meaning of educational change, and to success or failure thereof – facts that have not been recognized or appreciated in most attempts at reform. (Fullan, 2005b, p. 32)

Others have developed essentially the same theme. For example, Arbuckle (1993) identifies six evolutionary stages in a model of cultural transformation (cf. Appendix 2).¹³ In the first stage, there is cultural consensus and integration. “In Stage 1 of the model the status quo is generally accepted by the people” (p. 44). However, in Stage 2, the stage of “initial unease/stress”, “internal or external forces threaten to break up the group’s mythological consensus. Some people may initially enjoy the changes, while others begin to fear their cultural and personal identity/security” (pp. 44-45). This leads to Stage 3, the stage of “political reactions”. Here there are attempts to “freeze the changes in legislative action” (p. 45) as well as attempts to “rapidly promote in-depth change” (p. 45) through alternative legislative action. Stage 4, the stage of “chaos”, will inevitably follow as:

¹³ Arbuckle (2000), in applying the essential features of this model of cultural transformation to a hospital setting, has simplified it (p. 132). The later version consists of three general stages: Separation, Liminal/reflection, and Re-entry. It appears in this study as Appendix 9.

... people become disillusioned when legislation fails to fulfil their hopes and all the cultural and personal disintegration symptoms of chaos develop – for example, anger, rage, a sense of drifting without purpose or ‘lostness’, depression, paralysis or go-it-alone efforts of the individualist, witch-hunting in order to blame individuals for the chaos, even a denial that there is a problem at all. (p. 45)

Paradoxically, there are claims that the experience of chaos can be the catalyst for significant cultural and personal growth. “Chaos provides us with a liminal space in which old familiar securities have gone and we can ask ourselves questions about the meaning of life and the authentic sources of human identity” (Arbuckle, 1993, p. 45). However, not everyone will see chaos as a catalyst for change and will “remain overwhelmed and paralysed by its confusion” (p. 46). At the same time, others will move into Stage 5, the stage of “self-help” (p. 46). Two options are available within this stage. “There is the conversionist option” (p. 46) or the developmental option in which “change is understood to be slow and at times filled with uncertainty, demanding tolerance, patience or an on-going struggle for inner and outer conversion and an openness to alternative or imaginative ways of doing things” (p. 46). There is also the “escapist option [in which others] attempt anxiously to escape the frustrations of chaos, by retreating as individuals and groups into the comfortable world of unreality, building a wall of intolerance around them and staying there; they remain rigid, see the world in black and white terms, and are deeply fearful of the new” (p. 46). It is from the first of these two options that Stage 6, the new cultural consensus/integration, will emerge. This stage represents a new mythology or new patterns of meanings embodied in beliefs, assumptions, purposes, policies, programs, organisation and operations.

Developing this thought, it is further argued that the movement to the final stage, the stage of “cultural consensus” will require the refounding cultural leadership of someone whom Arbuckle (1988) describes as an “intrapreneur”:

He or she is not just a person with a good idea or invention, but is one who, energized by the creative power of the corporate culture founding myth, sees *how* ideas can be put into practice and *actually* moves to do so ... Identification with the founding myth is not for the intrapreneur

and followers a nostalgic escape into the past, but a force propelling them into the future. (p. 33)

Moreover, the model of cultural transformation proposed by Arbuckle (1988) draws attention to the fact that:

When a people's culture is dramatically undermined, they lose their sense of meaning and belonging and thus experience chaos. The only way out of chaos is for people to enter again into the sacred time of their founding in order to relive their creation mythology. Through this experience they are reinvigorated. But for this to occur, they must want to move out of chaos and they need refounding culture leaders who have the ability to articulate the creation mythology and express it in ways that relate to the changing world around them. (p. 28)

However, this positive cultural transformation is not always achieved. Cultures and sub-cultures can become dysfunctional. Arbuckle (1993) speaks of the possibility of neurotic or sick cultures (p. 43). Deal and Peterson (2009) draw attention to some of the aspects that characterise "toxic cultures" (p. 180). In toxic cultures, the same elements of a positive culture, the "values, rituals, stories and traditions and a network of cultural players ... take on a negative valence" (p. 163). As a consequence schools displaying aspects of a toxic culture become 'focused on the negative' and 'fragmented'. Nevertheless, with courage and determination, toxic school cultures can be transformed. However, in addressing this reality, Deal and Peterson (2009) draw attention to the difficulty of the task:

Transforming a toxic culture is a risky and scary undertaking. Many teachers and administrators have tried and failed; still others succeed without ever knowing why. It's not a job for the faint-hearted or for those who need universal approval in the short term. The process is akin to the metamorphosis of a butterfly. The caterpillar enters a cocoon. We call it the ritual process of liminality, in which an intense experience produces a dramatically different form – one that soars to new places. (p. 180)

Thus, in this cultural perspective, there is a very close relationship between culture and leadership. It is the task of leadership to reflect and to promote an organisation's culture. However, since culture "consist[s] of shared values and beliefs" (Fullan, 2005a, p. 57) and "a communal vision" (Starratt, 2003, p. 21), the limitations of a single leader's role are obvious. The leader is part of a group. Consequently, the "complex group learning process ... is only partially influenced by leader behaviour" (Schein, 2004, p. 11). Nevertheless, the leader does have a significant role within the group and it is clear that "if a group's survival is threatened because elements of the culture have remained maladapted, it is ultimately the function of leadership at all levels of the organization to recognise and do something about the situation" (p. 11). Thus theorists have distinguished between the activities of cultural leadership and management. As Schein (2004) posits "if one wishes to distinguish leadership from management, one can argue that leadership creates and changes cultures, while management and administration are within the same culture" (p. 11). Thus leadership and culture are intimately linked. Indeed, culture and leadership are "two sides of the same coin; neither can really be understood by itself" (pp. 10-11).

On a practical note, theorists emphasise that cultural leaders need to be visionary. Here vision is used in two senses. Firstly, the cultural leader must be committed to an ideal and to "work[s] with other leaders and the community to define a deeply values-focused picture of the future of the school" (Deal & Peterson, 1999 p. 87). Secondly, the cultural leader needs 'sight' in the sense that he/she can see the past and present as well as the future ideal. As an "historian [the cultural leader] seeks to understand the social and normative past of the school" and as an "anthropological sleuth [the cultural leader] analyses and probes for the current set of norms, values, and beliefs that define the current culture" (p. 87).

Developing this thought, Starratt (2003) associates cultural leadership with embodiment of the leader's vision in the operations of the school. To this end, Starratt recommends that cultural leaders firstly identify the "roots of the vision" (p. 22) in terms of basic meanings. This kind of leadership "is grounded in basic meanings about the human persons, society, knowledge, human development, the natural world and schooling" (p. 16). In this way, the leader's vision is "energized by a dramatic vision of what education might and should be" (p. 16). Secondly, he recommends "articulating a vision" (p. 22) in terms of underlying assumptions and

beliefs and espoused goals and objectives. This leadership “involves the articulation of that vision and the invitation to others to articulate a communal vision of schooling” (p. 16). Thirdly, this articulation of the vision is followed by “institutionalizing the vision” (p. 22) through policies, programs, organisation and operations, and the “operationalization of the vision” (p. 22) within the daily life of the school. Thus leadership “seeks to embody the vision in the institutional mission, goals, policies, programs, and the organisation. It celebrates the vision in the ordinary and special activities and seeks a continued renewal of both the vision and its embodiment” (p. 22).

Notwithstanding its obvious strengths in terms of meaning-making, social cohesion and cultural transformation, the cultural perspective of the school does have a number of weaknesses. There is a danger that the cultural model can, in the hands of key leaders or a dominant group, be used to manipulate other participants, especially if there is strong resistance to change. Morgan (1986) identifies this as “a process of ideological control” (p. 150). It is particularly evident in cases “where culture controls rather than expresses human character ...” (pp. 150-151). This understanding of cultural leadership can fail to recognise the presence of sub-cultures and can instead ‘push’ for a monoculture. However, it is not sufficient for participants to acquiesce to the leader’s own values. A shared culture is an important outcome of the leadership process, and the influence of the individual leader or the leadership group should therefore be committed to the principle of “the evolution of culture” (Bush, 2003, p. 173) and not try to ensure that a monoculture emerges. In addition, the cultural aspect is only one part of complex organisations. In the cultural model, strong emphasis is placed on myth and symbols such as rituals and ceremonies and these may underestimate other elements such as the structural aspect.

Recognising the limits of both the mechanical and cultural perspectives, the connection between educational change and the political reality of schools has come to the fore. This applies not only to the broader politics of government influence on school policies and reform but also to the schools themselves. Hargreaves (1998) draws attention to this significant consideration when he writes:

Until very recently, within the change field, there has been little attention to how systemic social inequalities and power imbalances do

not just surround the school and its community as part of the change context, but permeate the politics of change within the school itself.
(p. 291)

To help understand the reality of politics on educational change and leadership, it would be advantageous to further explore the concept of the school as polity.

3.2.3 School as Polity

The framing of the school as polity is a more inclusive term than ‘politics’. Effectively polity is about the use of power and authority within any group of people, whether that be a large or small group, a school or any other organisation. It is about a group’s social organisation and the styles of government used by the group. Slater and Boyd (1999) indicate that the word ‘polity’ has three basic meanings when applied to an educational setting. It can be considered as referring to a political system, to a civil order, or to a system of government.

When most people speak of polity as a political system, they usually refer to a set of political institutions and interest groups, the power relationships between them, and the norms and rules that govern their functions. The emphasis here is on political negotiation and bargaining, which in cases where there are competing interests, lead to inevitable conflict. Bush (2003) clearly explains this point when he writes:

Political models assume that in organizations policy and decisions emerge through a process of negotiation and bargaining. Interest groups develop and form alliances in pursuit of particular policy objectives. Conflict is viewed as a natural phenomenon and power accrues to dominant coalitions rather than being the preserve of formal leaders. (p. 89)

Interest groups can be formal, such as in a school’s subject department, or informal in the sense of spontaneous groupings in response to a specific issue. And while the individuals within them work collaboratively with those who share their common concern and shared values, conflict arises when there is a clash of interests. This can be particularly harmful in a school situation when the goals of an interest group are in direct contrast with the goals of the school. This kind of conflict is further

accentuated when a school has to implement significant educational change which threatens the interests of the individuals and the group.

The second basic meaning of polity is civil order. It opens up a debate about the relationship between schools and wider society. What is the school's role in relation to civil order and contemporary society? The individualism and sense of uneasiness, alienation, uncertainty or anomie that are evident in modern society may indicate a general abdication of a person's acceptance of civil responsibility (Slater & Boyd, 1999). In this second meaning, 'polity' encourages people to be active and participating citizens. It stresses the importance of people taking responsibility for the society in which they live. It therefore has a clear moral dimension to it.

Finally, polity may also be identified with the characteristics of a system of government that would help realise the full potential of human happiness. Here there is support for a just and fair society and the "rule of the many in the interest of the whole" (Slater & Boyd, 1999, p. 325). In general, in a political system, people act with self-interest. However, in the context of polity understood as a system of government, emphasis is given to finding the best form of government to enable everyone in society to work for the 'interest of the whole' society. This understanding is consistent with working for the "common good ... the principle that [] organisations, like individual persons, ought to cultivate their excellences deliberately, and offer them as their unique contribution to human growth" (Alford & Naughton, 2006, p. 55). In other words, clarity concerning an organisation's purpose or mission is essential for the well-being of all who are engaged in social activity and this is intimately connected to the humane dimension of schools and all organisations.

Together these three basic meanings of the term polity also offer a micropolitical perspective on educational change that extends both structural and cultural perspectives. Whilst the cultural perspective recognises the possibility of sub-cultures within a dominant culture, there is an assumption of consensus and little understanding of competing sub-cultures with the inevitable conflict that follows (Blenkin, et al., 1997). However, a micropolitical perspective on educational change alerts us that schools are:

... arenas of struggle. As the various factions pursue their conflicting interests, bargains are struck, alliances formed and compromises made. Ideological differences and conflicting interests are brought to the surface when attempts to promote change are instigated. (pp. 221-222)

From this perspective, educational change is seen as potentially, and perhaps, inherently destabilizing since it inevitably leads to “a rearrangement of power relationships between groups” (Blenkin, et al., 1997, p. 222), the formation of new coalitions and, inevitable conflict. Given the recent emphasis on educational reform, it is therefore not surprising that recent research by Smeed, Kimber, Millwater and Ehrich (2009) has found that “schools have become inherently political institutions” and that “reform tends to politicise schools” (p. 27). Moreover, it seems that school principals use a range of micropolitical strategies that are consistent with the three types of power: “power over, power through, and power with” (p. 27).¹⁴

The inter-linking of these three types of power is indicative not only of the fact that a leader might use different types of power in different situations but also that they might use a combination of micropolitical strategies stemming from two or more types of power in a given circumstance. (p. 34)

However, this research also found that the inconsistent use of power may cause confusion and contribute to resistance if the use of different micropolitical strategies is not explained and justified. As this research highlights, there is a particular danger in situations where “change initiators” or “change agents” have been co-opted by a central agency (Smeed, et al., 2009, p. 32). In situations where the change was viewed by teachers as “unnecessary”, there appeared to be a breach of trust between principal and teachers. The way in which principals deal with the kind of teacher resistance that might arise in such cases was seen to be crucially important.

¹⁴“Power over” strategies are seen as an exercise in dominance and/or control and this kind of power “can be destructive of relationships within an institution” (p. 29). By contrast, an emphasis on “facilitation” rather than control requires the exercise of different modes of power, namely, “power through” and “power with”. The micropolitical strategy of “power through” entails “enabling and empowering others” and it “involves negotiation” (p. 30). “Power with” is particularly relational and is the mark of democratic systems where there are high levels of trust and the staff feel supported and empowered.

At the same time it should be noted that that resistance is a normal and expected part of people's response to change. As Hargreaves (1998) points out:

In a socially divided and culturally diverse society, what education is and how it is defined, will always tend to favour some groups and interests over others. So attempts to change education in fundamental ways are ultimately political acts. They are attempts to redistribute power and opportunity within the wider culture. Educational change is not just a strategic puzzle. It is, and should be a moral and political struggle ... It is the social and political dimensions of educational change which cause it to flounder the most. (pp. 282-283)

Thus, faced with the inevitability of resistance to educational change, Schwahn and Spady (2001) argue that leaders need to display "the willingness ... to risk themselves despite the likelihood of negative consequences or fear of the unknown ... to make tough choices that have the potential for productive change" (p. 55).

Within this political perspective, the purpose of educational change is linked to "socially responsible goals" (Sachs, 2003 p. 154) with a view "to challenging taken-for-granted aspects of school and teachers' practice in order to improve student learning outcomes and student performance" (p. 84). Related to this purpose, there is also a concern for more democratic forms of teacher professionalism. In an era of new managerialism,¹⁵ there is a concern that "managerial professionalism" will prevail over "democratic professionalism" (pp. 24-28). In education, managerialism has led to the promotion of devolution and decentralisation, and this development, in turn, has resulted in a form of managerial professionalism in which principals and teachers lose their decision-making autonomy and are reduced to promulgating policies developed by other authorities. Democratic professionalism is offered as an alternative to managerial professionalism.

The core of democratic professionalism is an emphasis on collaborative, cooperative action between teachers and other educational stakeholders. According to Brennan,

¹⁵ There are two themes in respect to the new managerialism: the universal pursuit of efficiency and the assumption that business theories without modification are applicable in education (Sachs, 2003, pp. 25-26).

Ryan & Willmet (1996), the teacher has a wider responsibility than the single classroom and this includes making a contribution to the whole school, the system, other students, the wider community, collective responsibilities of teachers themselves as a group, and the broader profession. Accepting this argument, the purpose of educational change is framed in terms of socially responsible goals around student learning and the related goal of democratic professionalism.

However, within the literature there is recognition that both these goals will require teachers to develop an “activist identity” (Sachs, 2003, p. 131). A democratic professional identity is socially negotiated, collaborative and cooperative, socially critical, future-oriented as well as strategic and tactical. In this context, “Being active means engaging with and responding to issues that relate directly or indirectly to education and schooling” (p. 33). Moreover, this activist identity is said to “emerge and flourish” (p. 131) in a culture that is open to ideas, trusting of people, critically reflective, concerned for the welfare of others and the ‘common good’, and committed to a democratic way of life. In contrast, an “entrepreneurial identity” or managerialist professional identity is “individualistic, competitive, controlling and regulative, externally defined, and standards-led” (p. 130). This entrepreneurial identity is said to develop within an “individualistic culture” (p. 130) and

... such cultures certainly work towards the maintenance of conservative, even reactionary practice and stand in opposition to a generative or change-embracing culture. Individualism is in stark contrast to collaboration and collegiality that are the cornerstones of democratic discourses and the development of the activist professional identity. (p. 130)

This political perspective on the purpose of educational change points to processes of educational change that support the teaching profession’s “struggle for meaning” (Sachs, 2003, p. 28) in terms of professional identity and student learning outcomes. Thus the literature advances “participatory inquiry” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005 p. 195) as the way forward. In short, participatory inquiry represents a form of action research that allows for “political participation in collaborative action inquiry” (p. 195). The impetus for this approach is to research ‘real-life’ problems and situations where the practitioner/researcher is intent on discovering practical

knowledge. This research occurs within “communities of inquiry embedded within communities of practice” (p. 196). In short, participatory inquiry allows teachers to contribute to educational change through “learning”, “participation”, “collaboration”, “cooperation” and “activism” (pp. 31-35), the hallmarks of an activist identity and a democratic professionalism.

When it comes to leadership in the context of educational change, Sachs (2003) recommends that school leaders in positions of authority intentionally support a politics of transformation:

Activist teacher professionalism is in essence about the politics of transformation. Its spheres of interest are concerned with changing people’s beliefs, perspectives and options ... A politics of transformation is not self-interested; its concern is with the wider issues of equity and social justice. Its focus is on the long-term rather than the short-term ... The politics of transformation is rooted in everyday life and this is its strength. (p. 146)

This politics of transformation requires “active trust” (Sachs, 2003, p. 144) as evidenced in new forms of social and professional working relationships. “Rather than sectional interests working independently and sometimes in opposition, active trust requires that a shared set of values, principles and strategies is debated and negotiated” (p. 140). Finally, the politics of transformation calls for a new form of “generative politics” (p. 144) that allows “individuals and groups to make things happen rather than to let things happen to them in the context of overall social concerns and goals” (p. 144). Here leadership involves providing “material conditions and organisational frameworks for people to take collective charge of their own destiny and life-political decisions” (p. 144). Finally, on a practical note, Sachs advances a number of protocols that offer new opportunities for teacher activism as well as “new kinds of affiliation and collaboration” (p. 144). These protocols include “inclusiveness, collective and collaborative action, effective communication of aims and expectations, an environment of trust and responsibility, ethical practice, being responsive and responsible, acting with passion and experiencing pleasure and fun” (pp. 147-149).

By the end of the twentieth century, it was clear that the extensive knowledge base concerning the history of educational change over the past five decades shows that educational change has “come of age” (Hargreaves, 1998) and “the field of educational change has put down roots and grown in knowledge and influence” (Lieberman, 1998, p. 19). In particular there is a greater awareness of the mechanical, cultural and political dimensions of educational change. At the same time, researchers continue to note the challenge of the theory and practice of educational change in the field. Consequently, Hargreaves (2005) argues that “pushing the boundaries of educational change ... matters for getting existing approaches to educational change more effective in more places and for deepening our understanding of whose interests are at stake in educational change” (p. 1). Moreover, he points to the need to gain a deeper appreciation of the chaotic and complex nature of educational change, to learn more about the relationship between societal change and educational reform and, to take into account the political and emotional factors that shape the purpose, process and leadership of educational change.

3.2.4 School as Living System

The perspective of the school as living system eschews mechanistic worldviews and offers an alternative to “machine models of schools” (Senge, 2000, p. 52). This understanding is informed by the “systems revolution” in science that “starts with the assertion that the fundamental nature of reality is its relationships, not things” (p. 52) and assumes that the living system is “auto poetic or self-producing” (p. 53). Thus,

Unlike machines, living systems continually grow and evolve, form new relationships, and have innate goals to exist and to re-create themselves. They are neither predictable nor controllable like machines, though they have patterns of behaviours that tend to recur and their future development can be influenced. (p. 53)

When this understanding of living systems is applied to the operation of the school, researchers come to appreciate that the school is a social construction that is always evolving. In other words, the school is an entity which is constantly being constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed as a result of human agency within its social networks.

According to Senge (2000) and his colleagues, people participate in this evolutionary process by “constantly exploring theories-in-use of all involved in the education process; and, reintegrating education within webs of social relationships that link friends, families and communities” (p. 55). This type of school is a place in which people, in teams, demonstrate a commitment to learning by applying five disciplines of organisational learning, including “personal mastery, shared vision, mental models, team learning and system thinking” (pp. 7-8).

Applying this understanding of schools as living systems, theorists link the purpose of educational change to the notions of success and sustainability. In this view, success is understood in terms of student learning. “Increasingly, educational reforms want more than improved achievement results [i.e. academic results]. They want deep, powerful, high performance learning for social and emotional understanding that prepares young people to participate in today’s society” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2000, April, p. 30). Moreover, educational reformers are interested in continuing “to meet new challenges and complexity in a way that does not damage individuals or the wider community but builds capacity and capability to be successful in demanding contexts (B. J. Davies & Davies, 2006, p. 14).

Thus sustainability is more than maintainability. It is about achieving a moral purpose. Fullan (2005a) expresses this link thus:

... moral purpose ... must transcend the individual to become an organization and system quality in which collectivities are committed to three aspects of moral purpose: (1) raising the bar and closing the gap of student learning; (2) treating people with demanding respect (moral purpose is supportive, responsive, and demanding, depending on the circumstances); and (3) altering the social environment (e.g. schools and districts for the better). (p. 15)

Motivated by this moral purpose, theorists advance strategic leadership as the way forward in educational change. Importantly, strategic leadership involves strategic thinking:

... a process by which an organization’s direction givers can rise above the daily managerial processes and crises to gain different perspectives

... Such perspectives should be both future-oriented and historically understood. Strategic thinkers must have the skills of looking ... forwards ... while knowing where their organization is now, so that wise risks can be taken while avoiding having to repeat the mistakes of the past. (Garratt as cited in B. Davies, 2006, p. 16)

Typically, strategic leadership is described in terms of a strategic cycle of five core elements including “envisioning” or thinking about the future, “engaging” people in strategic conversations and decision-making, “articulating” a vision/plan for the future, “implementing” or acting in line with this vision/plan, and “monitoring” outcomes with the intention of re-envisioning the future (Eacott, 2007, pp. 8-11). Together these elements are said to provide an iterative process for strategic leadership that cannot be confined to a linear model. “For those seeking a linear model, envisioning would be the starting point fooled by the other elements ... But it cannot be stressed enough that the process of strategic leadership is iterative and movement can occur within any feature of the process at any time” (p. 8).

Developing this thought, the literature notes that strategic leadership begins with “strategic intent” (B. Davies, 2002, p. 203) arising from a fundamental commitment to “developing a success and high achievement culture across the whole school community” (p. 203). In other words strategic intent “is about tackling deep-seated cultural change and fundamental re-thinking by building organizational capability and competencies, rather than assuming that the school has a set of simple linear plans that it can put into action” (p. 204).

In addition, strategic leadership requires a sophisticated cultural awareness. In this respect, it demands that leaders know where the school, as an organisation, is situated in relation to its “*inner* boundaries” and “*outer* boundaries” (Berg, 2007, p. 592). The ‘inner boundaries’ refer to the school’s culture, and strategic leaders need to be thoroughly conversant with these in order to know how to lead and manage a school. However, they also need to know how a school fits into the broader educational context and to recognise the limitations this context places upon them. This is the strategic leader’s “scope of action” (p. 592). It falls between the ‘inner and outer boundaries’, that is, within the understanding of the school as culture and the school as organisation.

Moreover, strategic leadership presupposes “the ability to define the vision and moral purpose, and translate them into action” (B. J. Davies & Davies, 2006, p. 104). To this end, strategic leaders develop a personal vision to inspire them. For Geijsel, Meijers and Wardekker (2007), “it is important that the vision is something in which the leader personally and strongly believes – a merely bureaucratic stance will not be credible and will not inspire trust” (p. 147). Maak and Pless (2006) make an important link between this sense of vision and caring leadership:

... in times of constant change, any transformation should be conducted and facilitated in a caring and responsible manner and that it is, first and foremost, a leadership task. It implies creating an appropriate vision, mobilizing people, building and sustaining commitment through ongoing sensemaking activities, and finally keeping momentum in times when change causes complexity, insecurity and disorientation. (p. 48)

At the same time, strategic leaders need to move beyond the implementation of a personal vision. As Hargreaves (1991) cautions, “ultimately the responsibility for vision building should be a collective one, not an individual one. Collaboration should mean creating the vision together, not complying with the principal’s own” (p.13).

Yet again, the literature on strategic leadership also alerts educationalists to the need for clarity in purpose. Vaill (1989) devised his own word to describe the process of maintaining connection with fundamental purposes. The word is “purposing” (p. 52). Purposing is a “... continuous stream of actions by an organization’s formal leadership that has the effect of inducing clarity, consensus, and commitment regarding the organization’s basic purposes” (p. 52). It is particularly important in the context of complexity and chaos, the context of ‘surprise’. “Surprises call into question what you’re trying to do. Surprises force organization members to integrate the actions they were taking before the surprise with the actions the surprise itself requires *and still* stay on course regarding the main purposes” (p. 52). Evans (1996) echoes similar sentiments when he says, “For reform to work, everyone involved must be clear about its purpose, policies and procedures” (p. 77). This is the central task of the strategic leader: to ensure that this clarity is evident.

However, in line with earlier discussion, not every purpose will do. For Fullan (2005a) strategic leadership means “engag[ing] in the complexities of continuous improvement consistent with deep values of human purpose” (p. ix). The educational leader is effective as a change agent only when there is moral purpose. It is for this reason that Fullan (1993a) argues that “... moral purpose and change agency make perfect partners [because they] quite literally *define* (and redefine) each other as they interact” (p. 18). When moral purpose and change agency are taken seriously, the purpose for and the meaning of change are established, and there is an enhanced capacity for change because people understand and accept the exercise of leadership.

The necessity of a sound moral dimension of strategic leaders is reinforced by Ciulla (2006). She raises an important and significant question: “The main question people ask about leadership is not, ‘What is leadership?’ It is, ‘What is *good* leadership?’ We want leaders who do things right and do the right thing” (p. 30). The ‘good leadership’ needed for educational change requires the exercise of “leadership ethics” (p. 30), that is, the ability and willingness to undertake the difficult task without seeking easy solutions and regardless of personal gain or popularity. Good leaders, who are committed to understanding the moral dimension of their leadership, recognise that they must base their decisions on principle not the whim of the moment. They understand that these principles must be impartial and therefore applicable to all. They also recognise that they must consider the welfare of all those who will be affected by their decisions (Greenfield, 2004) and act with this in mind. Finally, they understand that a commitment to wide-ranging and extensive consultation represents positive and clear evidence of “ethically informed decision-making” (Paine, 2006, p. 54). Thus:

Formulating a sound strategy requires a careful process of analysis that takes into account a number of potentially competing considerations. Reasonable people can and do disagree; they bring to the process different facts, different interpretations of the facts and different beliefs about the likely future, as well as different aims and priorities. It is by sifting through the relevant considerations, deliberating about the merits of available alternatives, and imagining like futures that decision makers arrive at what looks to be the most promising course. (p. 56)

In support of ethically informed decision-making, strategic and moral leaders demonstrate genuine respect for people, and work towards the development of a school culture of collaborative work systems, consultation, and consensus. Consequently, they appreciate the importance of relationship-building in the context of educational change and leadership. As Fullan (2001) explains:

... we have found that the single factor common to every successful change initiative is that *relationships* improve. If relationships improve, things get better. If they remain the same or get worse, ground is lost. Thus leaders must be consummate relationship builders with diverse people and groups – especially with people different from themselves. Effective leaders constantly foster purposeful interaction and problem solving, and are wary of easy consensus. (p. 5)

In this way, strategic and moral leadership in schools endeavours to create communities around shared values and a common moral purpose. This kind of leadership emphasises the importance of the moral dimension to education, not only to decision-making but also to the quality of the relationships within the school community itself. It calls for high standards of moral integrity in social relationships within the school and recognition of the moral dimension of educational change. These are personal qualities. “To understand [strategic] and moral leadership requires that one gain an understanding of the perspectives, the lived experiences and the subjective meanings, of the participants in the leadership relationship” (Greenfield, 2004, p. 191).

In summary, this section discussed the substantial body of work around the notion of the school as organisation. Further, ideas around school as machine, culture, polity and living system have been advanced. Since the 1980s, a mechanistic perspective of a school viewed as an organisation, has been very popular with policy makers and, as a consequence, rational-structural approaches to educational change have prevailed. At the same time, though to a lesser extent, theorists have also advanced cultural, political and living systems perspectives on the school as organisation. As discussed this chapter, each of these perspectives suggests a different understanding of the purpose, the processes and the leadership of educational change. These differences are summarised in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1 *Leading Educational Change from Four Different Perspectives*

Leading Educational Change	Purpose	Processes	Leadership
School as Machine	Rational-Structural Change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficiency and Effectiveness • Product • Fixed outcomes • Institutional well-being 	Instrumental Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on structures, functions, tasks, roles • Objective, linear, long-term planning 	Management of Change by Staying in Control <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top-down, disseminating, pressuring
School as Culture	Cultural Transformation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reculturing • Meaning-making • Patterns of meaning 	Evolutionary Stages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural consensus/integration • Initial unease/stress • Political reaction • Chaos • Self help • New cultural consensus/integration • Relationships 	Cultural Leadership as the Embodiment of the Vision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying the roots of the vision • Articulating the vision • Institutionalising the vision • Operationalising the vision.
School as Polity	Political Transformation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic culture • Order and harmony • Relationships within and beyond the school • Realising the full potential for human happiness 	Participative Inquiry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning • Participation • Collaboration • Cooperation • Activism 	Political Leadership through the Politics of Transformation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active trust • Generative politics • Protocols for affiliation and collaboration
School as Living System	Moral Purpose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success (student learning) • Sustainability (enhances organisational capacity and individual capabilities in demanding contexts) 	Strategic Cycle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Envisioning the future • Engaging people • Articulating plans • Implementing plans • Monitoring outcomes 	Strategic and Moral Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic intent • Cultural awareness • Personal/shared vision • Ethically informed decision-making • Relationship building

The table provides an overview which illustrates how the different perspectives on the school as organisation (i.e. school as structure, culture, polity and living system) frame the purpose and the process of educational change and suggest different approaches to educational leadership.

This overview alerts us to the distinction in the literature between the image of school as machine and the other more recent accounts of the school as culture, polity and living system. Here it seems that these perspectives on school as culture, polity and living system offer, in various ways, an alternative to the model of school as machine. Moreover, this distinction is significant given that the image of school will influence the approach to educational change. Thus, as the theory of educational change has moved away from the image of school as machine towards the school as culture, polity and living system, researchers have witnessed attempts to ‘humanise’ the purpose and process of educational change as well as the approach to educational leadership.

3.3 HUMANISING EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

In considering the school through the lens of a machine, it was noted that there is a temptation to see change largely as a “rational redesign of the school’s goals, roles and rules” (Evans, 1996, p. xii). As indicated, there are a number of shortcomings in this approach. But one of the major ones is that it overlooks a very significant and crucially important aspect of the change process: the human dimension. The images of the school as culture, polity and living system indicate that educational change needs to be set within the context of the human story. After all, educational change is generated by and affects human beings. Recognising the human dimension of change provides a better way of understanding it and makes it more effective.

Recognising the importance of the human side of leadership and educational change, Evans (1996) was one of the first to advance a comprehensive approach to change that:

... emphasises people’s means to find meaning in their life and work, and the role for the school in providing that meaning. It endorses a new kind of leadership that emphasizes authenticity, translating integrity,

core beliefs and natural strengths of school leaders into practical strategies for problem-solving. (p. xiii)

Here the purpose of leading educational change is linked to meaning-making and problem-solving in response to an overarching concern for human well-being and development. Moreover, this author recommends a “strategic-systematic” model (p. 10) of educational change that stands in contrast to a more traditional “rational-structural” model of educational change. The following Table, taken from Evans’ book, makes the comparison clearer:

Table 3-2 Evans' Paradigms of Change (Evans, 1996, p. 7)

	Rational-structural	Strategic-systemic
Environment:	stable predictable	turbulent unpredictable
Organisation:	stable logical	fluid psychological
Planning:	objective, linear long-range	pragmatic, adaptable medium-range
Innovation	product fixed outcome	process emerging outcome
Focus:	structure, function tasks, roles, rules	people, culture meaning, motivation
Implementation:	almost purely top-down disseminating pressuring	top-down and bottom-up commitment-building “purposing”

Evans (1996) argues that, at best, a rational-structural approach will simply ensure “first-order change” or greater “efficiency or effectiveness of what we are already doing” (p. 5). On the other hand, a strategic-systemic approach is more likely to result in change at a deeper level, that is, “second-order changes”, that “modify the very way an organization is put together, altering its assumptions, goals, structures,

roles and norms” (p. 5). In other words, second-order change requires “people to not just do old things slightly differently but also to change their beliefs and perceptions” (p. 5).

This understanding of the purpose and process of educational change is not new. It is in line with the intention of cultural leadership which is to move beyond “restructuring” to “reculturing” (Busher, 2006, p. 4) in terms of “changing the norms, values, incentives, skills, and relationships in the organization to foster a different way of working together” (p. 4). In addition, this understanding is sympathetic to the “political models [which] assume that in organizations policy and decisions emerge through a process of negotiation and bargaining” (Bush, 2003, p. 89) and, the recommendations of “activist professionalism [and] the politics of transformation [where the] spheres of interest are concerned with changing people’s beliefs, perspectives and options” (Sachs, 2003, p. 146). This understanding recommends that school leaders in positions of authority actively support activist teacher professionalism and acknowledge the significant place of human emotion and feelings.

However, Evans (1996) provides a more in-depth understanding of these psychological issues at play in the context of educational change. He draws attention to the influence of human emotions and feelings on educational change. As he observes, “... any transition engenders mixed feelings. Understanding these feelings is vital to the successful implementation of change” (p. 26). Any form of intervention to change or to improve matters takes an extraordinary human effort. Change is taxing. And while this is an important consideration, it often appears to go unrecognised or is scarcely acknowledged. Successful change initiatives require an acknowledgement that no intervention aimed at bringing about change will ever be easy, especially if the intervention is urgent. As Evans (1996) rightly notes, “No institution can readily abandon the deep structures on which its very coherence and significance depends” (p. 50). Such a situation applies just as much to those who orchestrate the change as to those who are affected by it. This recognition has led researchers such as Evans (1996) to suggest a new paradigm for understanding and interpreting change that draws upon a combination of “systems thinking and strategic approaches to organizational development” (p. 6) in order to address the obvious difficulty that arises from educational change.

Thus Evans (1996) offers a way forward by considering the living and dynamic quality of human interaction which takes place in groups, large and small, and which helps to address the turbulence and variability that are part of modern organisations, particularly schools. Moreover, he recognises the role of emotions, interpersonal dynamics, culture and other crucially important non-rational influences. In other words, he alerts researchers to the significant part that the human response plays in the process of bringing about change.

In short, change threatens people's self-esteem and the human need to feel effective, valued and in control. No wonder, therefore, that one of the very significant and common human responses to change is resistance. Recognising it as an expected and, in some respects, a welcome response to efforts at achieving significant change, is crucially important for the implementation of successful change. As Evans (1996) observes:

Rooted in the most profound depths of the human psyche, our ambivalence – especially our resistance – needs to be seen as part of the solution, not just part of the problem; it demands the attention and respect of all who seek innovation. (p. 38)

As a way forward, Evans (1996) recommends “transformational leadership” as necessary for leading educational change:

Motivated by such deep values as freedom, community, and justice, transformational leadership is concerned with not just what works but with what is good. It speaks to a fundamental human need to affiliate with transcendent values and overarching purposes. (p. 168)

Since transformational leadership begins with trust, in the first instance, transformational leadership presupposes an “authentic leadership” (Evans, 1996, p. 186) that is characterised by a personal “integrity” (p. 185) and “savvy” (p. 190). Here “integrity” is defined as “character in action” and is evidenced in “a fundamental consistency between one's values, goals and action” (p. 185). “Savvy” is described in terms of a “practical problem-solving wisdom that enables leaders to make things happen” (p. 190).

In addition, this transformational leadership is reflected in the leader's 'clarity and focus' in terms of the vision for the school and on the focus on action to make that vision a reality: "they [authentic leaders] have strong convictions about how things ought to be, they concentrate tenaciously on a few key goals, they prefer directness and specificity in their dealings with constituents about these goals, and they exemplify their commitment in their behaviour" (Evans, 1996, p. 206). Yet again, authentic transformational leadership appreciates that educational change "is embedded in an ethos of empowerment and collegiality" (p. 229) and emphasises the notion of the school as community: "a democratic community governed by its members, an intellectual community of lifelong learners, and in some cases a moral community sharing a covenant of values" (p. 231). Empowerment, however, does not mean unrestricted or free license. Empowerment "refers to obligation and duty and accountability. It does not free people to do whatever they please but to make sensible decisions that embody the school's values" (p. 252).

3.4 CONCLUSION AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This review of the literature was informed by the plethora of scholarly writing that has coalesced around the issue of educational change. Interest in this area emerged in the United States in the late 1950s and the early 1960s and saw an interest in educational innovation in the classroom. By the 1970s, researchers, concerned with the high failure rate of innovation projects, turned their attention to the implementation processes that contribute to the institutionalisation of educational change. In the 1980s and 1990s, as concern for public accountability grew, structural change or "educational restructuring" (Hargreaves, 1991; Murphy, 1997) became the order of the day and reformers focused on issues pertaining to instructional methods, the management and governance of schools, and public accountability (Newmann, 1993; O'Donoghue & Dimmock, 1998; Sachs, 2003). By the late 1990s, researchers focused on the challenge of large-scale systemic reform beyond the classroom and school.

In the course of this theoretical development, it seems that researchers (e.g. Bush, 2003; Fullan, 2007; Senge, 2000) have gained a deeper appreciation of the school as organisation. The result has seen advancement in understanding the different perspectives on educational change. In particular, four major images or metaphors

on school as organisation, namely machine, culture, polity and living systems, have been advanced in the literature, with each of these images suggests a particular account of the purpose, process and leadership of educational change (cf. Table 3-2). At the same time, there has been a growing concern that educational change has become “a calculative science” (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 2) that overlooks the human dimension of educational change. Consequently, there is a new interest in ‘humanising’ educational change and leadership in order to address the limitations of the dominant image of school as machine and its rational-structural process of educational change and managerial approach to educational leadership (Evans, 1996; Giancola & Hutchison, 2005).

In the light of these themes within the literature, the following research questions were identified:

Research Question One: How did the direction givers understand the *purpose* of educational restructuring at St John’s College?

Research Question Two: How did the direction givers understand the *process* of educational restructuring at St John’s College?

Research Question Three: How did the direction givers understand the *leadership* of educational restructuring at St John’s College?

These research questions are also consistent with Fullan’s (1991) ‘meaning hypothesis’ in respect to the crucial relationship between personal meaning and educational change. As Fullan argues “if reforms are to be successful, individuals and groups must find meaning concerning *what* should change as well as *how* to go about it” (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. xi). This argument forces attention on the people who are actually involved in educational change and the meaning they ascribe to this phenomenon. In addition, these research questions recognise the special role played by direction givers within this episode of educational restructuring. Here it was accepted that “direction givers can rise above the daily managerial processes and crises to gain different perspectives” (Garratt as cited in B. Davies, 2006, p. 16) and this study was interested in the ‘meanings’ that these key actors brought to and developed within this episode of educational restructuring.

Given the growing interest in ‘humanising’ educational change, this study was particularly interested in whether these direction givers saw this episode of educational restructuring in terms of a “calculative science” (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 2) or did they recognise the human dimension of educational change? Did the purposes, the processes and the leadership of educational restructuring at St John’s College assume the image of the school as a machine, culture, polity, or living system? Did the direction givers favour mechanistic or moral purposes? Did they follow structural-rational or systemic-strategic processes? Did they see leadership in terms of the management of change or in terms of moral leadership?

With these research questions in mind, the researcher looked to the philosophy of personalism with the intention of discovering if this philosophical framework could underpin a more humane understanding of educational restructuring at St John’s College.

Chapter Four: The Philosophical Framework: Personalism

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As discussed in Chapter Three, a review of the literature alerts us to emergent theories of educational change that seek to humanise the purpose, the process and the leadership of educational change. Appreciating these themes, the researcher looked to situating this study within a philosophical framework, in the hope that this would open up new possibilities in connecting educational change, leadership and human experience. A philosophical framework is important because, as Biesta and Miron (2002) explain:

... philosophical analysis can help those involved in educational leadership to get a better understanding of the situation they are in and, hopefully, a sense of a possible new direction. The ‘way out’ will not be one of those new and better techniques for solving problems. It will be first and foremost ... a way of seeing things differently and perhaps envisaging possibilities that nobody has seen yet. (p. 106)

Appreciating this point, this study was situated within the philosophical framework of personalism.

Personalism is a school of thought or an intellectual movement that insists on the innate value of the human person (Cowburn, 2005) and seems to offer a way of bringing together educational change, leadership and the human experience. Personalism offers a worldview that stands in direct contrast to the science of Descartes and Newton that advances a mechanistic view of the cosmos. “For these scientists, it became natural to conceive of the world as made up of discrete components, which fit together like parts of the machine” (Senge, 2000, p. 29). This understanding provided the foundation for a scientific revolution and the machine-thinking of the Industrial Age as well as the image of the school as “machine” (p. 52).

As discussed in Chapter Three, theorists have moved away from this image of the school as machine which viewed people as servants of efficiency and production,

and call instead for a humanising of educational change and leadership that recognise the place of human emotions and feelings. Consequently, within this study, the researcher wondered if the philosophy of personalism would provide an ontological view to inform emergent theories of educational change and leadership. Would it be “a way of seeing things differently and perhaps envisaging possibilities that nobody has seen yet”? (Biesta & Miron, 2002, p. 106). After all, in personalism the yardstick of value and fundamental reality is the human person and, as Whetstone (2002) observes, it places “the person and personal relationships at the centre of theory and practice” (p. 137).

Personalism cannot be attributed to one particular person or group or event. However, as Bengtsson (2006) and many other commentators suggest, elements of personalist thought can be detected in many works of philosophers of both the Western and Oriental traditions from the time of the Greeks. During the 19th century, ideas that are now placed under the umbrella of personalism began to surface in discussions among philosophers as they engaged in a critical assessment of the growing influence of the mechanical sciences and the radical rationalism of the Enlightenment. Thus a modern appreciation of personalism developed as philosophers looked to maintain and preserve the dignity of human beings (Bengtsson, 2006; Rudman, 1997). Since then the development of modern personalism has continued to evolve and by the second half of the twentieth century this school of thought had taken many different forms. In fact, personalism has been referred to more accurately as “a family of movements” (Sayre, 1997, p. 129). Some people categorise it as phenomenological, existentialist, or Catholic (Bengtsson, 2006). Others, like Burrow (1999), hold that it exists in at least a dozen forms. Bengtsson (2006) identifies four branches of personalism namely, idealist, realist, naturalist, and ethical, with the first two branches, idealist and realist, being the most well-known. His approach provides a useful scaffold.

The realist form of personalism is represented by the French or European school of Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950) and the idealist by the American school begun by Borden Parker Bowne (1847-1910). These two schools of modern personalist thought developed independently of each other and, even today, there remain between them clear points of divergence (Cowburn, 2005).

In relation to the understanding of the 'person', Cowburn (2005) maintains that for the idealist Bowne, "the person is the soul or the mind"; whereas for Mounier and other realists, "the person was the whole being, body and senses as well as the soul or mind" (p. 64). In addition, Bowne tends "to exclude material beings from the properly personal sphere" whilst "Mounier personalists included them in it" (p. 64). Mounier's personalism avoids mind-body dualisms and even material-spiritual dualisms: "To be a person is to live an embodied existence..." (Sayre, 1997, p. 130). And finally, Mounier's personalism is "more communitarian than the Boston variety" (Cowburn, 2005, p. 64) because people are understood to find meaning in the context of deep communion with others.

Recognising the distinction between the idealist and realist schools of personalism, founded by Bowne and developed by Mounier respectively, this study was primarily informed by Mounier's realist account of personalism. Like many of the 19th century personalist thinkers of his time, Mounier and those of his circle were deeply concerned about political and philosophical movements in their own society that seemed intent on devaluing the person. They saw obvious danger in this 'depersonalisation' of people and felt compelled to address it. As Mounier (1938) saw the situation, "The greatest of evils is perhaps the depersonalization of man, the reduction of man to a mere cog in a machine, or a microcosmic robot of the macrocosmic robot that is the gigantic industrial Frankenstein of today" (p. xv). Accordingly, Mounier and his colleagues sought an alternative approach to the growing social movements of communism and fascism which, according to their opinion, viewed human persons as objects and as secondary to the State, or whose value seemed to depend on the personal whim of political and industrial leaders.

Developing this thought, Mounier and the realists who followed, offer a particular understanding of the person in the world. Accordingly, a realist personalist perspective recognises the person as a dynamic being who is an individual, who is simultaneously unique and singular, who possesses intentionality and consciousness, who finds his or her identity through relationships in community, and who is able to exercise personal freedom through choice, while possessing absolute dignity (Spaemann, 1996). Thus realist personalism offers a unique philosophical framework for the study of persons within social systems.

By privileging the person, personalism offers an intriguing philosophical framework for those seeking to ‘humanise’ the purpose and process of educational change and leadership. Moreover, since realist personalism is also called Catholic personalism (Bengtsson, 2006) due to its moral and ethical stance, this philosophy is of particular interest to researchers in Catholic organisational settings. Yet again, as the researcher soon discovered, realist personalism is also consistent with the values of the educational philosophy of the Marist Fathers that clearly links the ‘Marist way’ of living and educating with the essential elements of the person, community and family spirit, and teamwork (T. Ryan, 1971). For these reasons this study was situated within the philosophy of realist personalism.

4.2 REALIST PERSONALISM

As discussed above, realist personalism privileges the ‘person’ in theory and practice, and in doing so offers a particular philosophical thought. Though Mounier (1938) recognised that the concept of ‘person’ was “not capable of strict definition” (p. 68), he accepted that personhood “reveals itself in everyone’s definite experience of his human freedom, not in any immediate experience of one’s substance but rather in the progressive experience of one’s life, which is actually a personal life” (p. 68). Thus for him:

A person is a spiritual being, constituted as such by its manner of existence and independence of being; it maintains this existence by its adhesion to a hierarchy of values that it has freely adopted, assimilated, and lived by its own responsible activity and by a constant interior development; thus it unifies all its activity in freedom and by means of creative acts develops the individuality of its vocation. (p. 68)

Over time realist personalists have kept ‘true’ to Mounier’s understanding of the ‘person’ and, typical of more recent writing, Sayre (1997) writes that:

To be a person is to be in the process of becoming a person and hence contributing to the process of personalization. We become persons through the activity of choosing, and with each choice we make we transcend and hence must sacrifice our former selves. (p. 129)

It should be noted that realist personalists emphasise the ‘person’ as embodied, that is, physical. According to Sayre (1997), Mounier maintained that “to be a person is to live an embodied existence, and precisely because we are embodied, we are situated from the start in a world that extends beyond our immediate selves” (p. 130) and which calls a person to engagement with it. Embodied in a world “beyond our immediate selves”, realist personalists hold the view that politics and spirituality were historically linked and that this connection has to form part of any genuine philosophical anthropology.

Consequently, informed by this understanding of the ‘person’, most realist personalists would support the key features identified by Williams (2005), including:

- An insistence on the radical difference between persons and non-persons;
- An affirmation of the dignity of persons;
- A concern for the person’s subjectivity;
- Attention to the person as object of human action to be treated as an end and never as a mere means;
- Particular regard for social (relational) nature of the person. (p. 118)

4.2.1 Difference between Persons and Non-persons

Based on human reason and experience, but also drawing strongly from Judeo-Christian biblical tradition, realist personalism makes a clear distinction between persons and non-persons (all other beings). Spaemann (1996) holds that “persons are singular in an unparalleled fashion” (p. 35) and he elaborates on this important point by explaining the indispensable place that intentionality plays in identifying a human being as a person.

Intentionality discloses itself in the activities of deciding and choosing and these are key to understanding the difference between person and non-person. Only human persons have the capacity and freedom to choose or to decide their course of action. Non-persons do not. In practical terms it means that the way people deal with persons should be radically different from the way they deal with animals or inanimate things. As Lamiell (2003) states:

A person is an entity which, though consisting of many parts, forms a unique and inherently valuable unity and, as such, constitutes, over and above its functioning parts, a unitary, self-activated, goal-oriented being ... A thing is the contradictory opposite to a person. It is an entity that likewise consists of many parts, but these are not fashioned into a real, unique and inherently valuable whole, and so while a thing functions in accordance with its various parts, it does not constitute a unitary, self-actuated and goal-oriented being. (p. 216)

To reinforce this point, Spaemann (1996) also notes: “there is no graduated transition from a ‘something’ to a ‘someone’” (p. 242). In other words, an object is either a ‘something’ (i.e. an inanimate thing) or a ‘someone’ (i.e. a person). It cannot be both.

4.2.2 Affirmation of the Dignity of Persons

Developing this thought, realist personalism affirms that each person is special and has a unique dignity. This dignity is inherent in the nature of the person and therefore confers an absoluteness that is not found in other beings. Speaking in the context of the unique dignity of the person and relations with others, Rourke and Chazaretta Rourke (2005) observe: “The person is also a substance; it exists of itself, not as part of another being. The human person has an abiding “centre” of identity which grounds all relations and other attributes and which distinguishes it ultimately from all other persons and beings” (p. 25). To put it another way, personalism holds that every person is of irreplaceable value. As Cowburn (2005) describes it, “ ... persons have value as persons, over and above the value which they have as beings, and this is a higher value” (p. 119). Though persons are social by nature, their worth cannot be lost even when they are part of a collectivity.

As noted above, the dignity of a person requires that in every circumstance and situation, the person be respected as ‘someone’ and never ‘something’. In this sense, realist personalism “recognizes each person as significant and irreplaceable in the position he or she occupies in the world of persons” (Sayre, 1997, p. 130). Reinforcing this idea and elucidating the concept with a practical example, Cowburn (Lecture notes, 2008 February) writes, “I am appreciated as a person, or as myself, only by people who value me as unique, or as ‘irreplaceable’, so that if I were to

leave them and someone similar to me were to come into their lives, their appreciation of me would follow me to wherever I had gone” (Lecture notes, 2008 February).

This affirmation of the dignity of the person is also developed in theological accounts of realist personalism by Pope John Paul II (Wojtyla, 1993). Though not all personalists are theists, it is clear that the majority are. Those who are theists hold the view that the dignity and absolute value of the human person is derived from a human being’s status as one who has been created in the image of God. Theist personalists maintain that human beings are endowed by God with a soul, an intellect and a rational free will (Boileau, 1998). As beings possessing intellect and free will, the faculties for knowing and loving, human beings are personal in their human nature just as God is personal in the divine nature. They possess a value that identifies them as unique creatures with an eternal destiny, and every human being must be treated as a subject in and of himself or herself.

4.2.3 A Concern for Subjectivity

In this respect, realist personalists assert that persons possess ‘subjectivity’ and this subjectivity manifests itself in a person’s “interiority, freedom and personal autonomy” (Whetstone, 2002, p. 336). A person’s subjectivity, the uniqueness of the individual person, the value of their personal experience, the “I”, shows itself in the fact that the cause of a person’s actions is not extrinsic to himself or herself and that “each person is self-aware, consciously experiencing himself [or herself] from within” (p. 386). Only persons, through their personal autonomy and freedom, can rightly cause their own actions because they have an innate capacity to make choices, the exercise of their freedom (Mounier, 1938).

This understanding of subjectivity means that there is a close connection between a person’s subjectivity and his or her behaviour. This connection is considered by realist personalists to be essential to the nature of a human being. As Woznicki (1980) indicates, John Paul II maintained “that human entity is indeed a real individual subjectivity, but only when it constitutes itself through man’s [sic] acts, manifesting thereby man [sic] as “person-act”. Consequently, man [sic] is a causative subject of his own acts and the efficient cause of all his human experiences” (p.60). Similarly, Rourke and Chazaretta Rourke (2005) describe the

person as “an abiding ‘centre’ of identity which grounds all of its relations and other attributes” (p. 25). In other words, a person exists in himself or herself but manifests his or her personhood and subjectivity in and through action.

In addition, this understanding of subjectivity also means that the person can be held responsible for his/her moral and ethical behaviour. Within realist personalism, the ultimate and fundamental principle of self-realisation for a human being as a “person-act” (Woznicki, 1980, p. 60) is love or a moral disposition to goodness because “the motive for altruistic behaviour is love ... ” (Cowburn, 2003, p. 44) and “properly human acts are, as such, moral acts” (Alford & Naughton, 2006, p. 78). Here it is understood that persons, as relational beings, achieve their personhood through loving relationships by means of their commitment to living with moral purpose.

Underpinning this thought is a particular understanding of individual freedom. As Rudman (1997) warns, “genuine freedom is not simply spontaneity or autonomy, but the freedom of a community of persons exercising responsible choice” (p. 109). For Mounier (1970?), absolute freedom was a ‘myth’. The word ‘myth’ is here understood in a colloquial sense. Mounier maintained this view because he understood freedom as being “strictly conditioned and delimited by the common laws of our concrete situation” (p. 59) and “human freedom is the freedom of a *person*, moreover of *this person*, thus and thus constituted, situated in the world and in the presence of definite values” (p. 59).

Thus, within this understanding of subjectivity, there is a clear relationship between the good of the person and the good of the community to which a person belongs. This aspect is clearly described by Macmurray (1961) who observes that “Individual independence is an illusion; and the independent individual, the isolated self, is a nonentity” (p. 211) or in other words, “human beings are radically interdependent” (Alford & Naughton, 2006, p. 78). While individualism would place the good of the person before the good of the community, and socialism places the good of the community before the good of the individual, personalism does not give one priority over the other. Thus a person is influenced by two “poles”, namely, the “pole of relationality and a pole of self-subsistence” (Rourke & Chazarreta Rourke, 2005, p. 52). There is a mutually beneficial relationship between both poles, and a strong

commitment to both is evidenced in what the realist personalists refer to as the “common good” (p. 54). In short, “the common good is the good, fully human life of people in communion” (p. 54) and it is meant to enrich all members of the community as persons.

4.2.4 Persons Should Never Be Treated as a Means to an End

Being responsible for one’s moral and ethical behaviour reinforces the fact that other human beings deserve respect because of their uniqueness and innate dignity. Realist personalists (e.g Macmurray, 1961) stress that an awareness of the dignity of persons means that persons should never be treated as a means to an end. To treat another person as ‘a means’ is to treat the person ‘impersonally’ and denies the freedom of personhood. Macmurray (1961) puts it clearly when he writes:

If one person treats another person impersonally, he treats him as if he were an object and not a person. He negates the personal character of the other, then, that is to say, his freedom as an agent; and treats him as one completely conditioned in his behaviour, as if he were not free but determined. (pp. 33-34)

Here there is a moral obligation to ensure that the dignity of each person is respected in its entirety, and this includes recognition of personal freedom.

In relation to political systems, realist personalism maintains that any system of government or authority, and hence leadership, should reflect recognition of the value of the human person, particularly through respect for a person’s autonomy and dignity. In any society, power belongs to the people as a whole and “authority exists for the sole purpose of being the agent which determines the specific material content of [the] common good” (Alford & Naughton, 2006, p. 200). And the best political system which preserves the dignity and importance of the human person is one that is respectful of the principle of subsidiarity. This principle allows people to have “input into decisions which impact on their lives through representation whenever they cannot participate directly in the decision-making processes” (p. 200). This principle assures the right of persons to be respected in their own right and never to be used as a means to an end, no matter how noble the end might be.

4.2.5 Persons are Relational

In realist personalism, the human person aspires to a relationship with other persons, not separation. Macmurray (1961) makes this point emphatically clear when he writes, “Persons ... are constituted by their mutual relation to one another. ‘I’ exist only as one element in the complex ‘You and I’. We have to discover how this ultimate fact can be adequately thought, that is to say, symbolized in reflection” (p. 24). Yet again, “The self-realization of any individual person is only fully achieved if he is positively motivated towards every other person with whom he is in relation” (p. 159). This is neither a base level “contingency relationality” (Russell, 2003, p. 181) nor a case of transactional relations, similar to business dealings, but a progressive realisation of human personhood through interpersonal relationships. As Williams (2005) explains:

The person never exists in isolation, and moreover, he finds his human perfection only in communion with other persons. Interpersonal relations, consequently, are never superfluous or optional to the person; they are constitutive of his inherent makeup and vocation. (p. 120)

This understanding of the person as relational is more significant than the notion of a society being composed of individual relationships. The emphasis here is on every person being “in communion” (Macmurray, 1961, p. 151). To understand this more clearly, Macmurray uses the example of a mother-child relationship as a metaphor for all human relationships (p. 43). However, while human relationships are not reducible solely to this biological level which is characterised by intense personal mutuality, they do require a shared life and the sharing leads to the transformation of both parties. What Macmurray understands by being “in communion” implies the “openness of being and even more than that ... a movement towards communion which leads to a transcendence of the ‘self’ and thus to *freedom*” (Zizioulas as cited in Russell, 2003, p. 173).

This understanding of person as relational, as being “in communion”, raises questions regarding the kind of communication that should take place within the specific field of interpersonal relationships. As McArdle (2007, July) writes, “faced with an invitation to dialogue, be it offered explicitly or implicitly, an individual can either enter into the communication with some degree of openness to the other, or

treat the other merely as an object” (p. 9), that is, a person of no significance. Thus communication ceases to be a dialogue and “is restricted to a monologue in which the active party receives and responds merely to echoes of itself” (p. 9). Thus opportunities for personal and communal transformation are lost in situations characterised by distorted relationships and monologic communication. However, these always remain open to transformation (p. 10) and, in this regard, leadership may have a significant role to play in opening up the possibility of improved relationships and dialogical communication.

4.3 PERSONALISM AND LEADERSHIP

Of particular interest to this study, personalism has been applied to the phenomenon of leadership. Some commentators (Sayre, 1997) have described personalism as being too idealistic and suggest that it is not possible to implement its key ideas in organisations. Realist personalism, on the other hand, believes in concrete engagement with society. Thus Bayer (1999) argues that:

Human history must move forward to a Personalist future, but that future is not known deductively through an idea nor is it evident solely through examination of the situation. It is known and advanced through “engagement” in a situation. As exigency, Personalism demands *social action* which is prophetic, effective, leads to personal development, and promotes the common good. (p. 102)

In support of this argument, Cowburn (1985 – unpublished notes) makes the point that Mounier “promoted Personalism as a social philosophy, or as a vision of life that ought to guide us in our social action” (p. 6). For Mounier (1970?) “The primary action of the person, therefore, is to sustain, together with others, a society of persons, the structure, the customs, the sentiments and the institutions of which are shaped by their nature as persons; a society whose moral contribution we are as yet only beginning faintly to discern” (p. 21). This understanding offers rich and fertile soil for developing an approach to leadership within social systems, including the educational settings of schools.

Developing this thought, Whetstone (2002) looked across the existing plethora of leadership models to “identify a leadership approach that best fits with the moral

philosophy of personalism” (p. 385). In preparation for this task he identified key themes of personalism in terms of “the centrality of persons”, “subjectivity and solidarity”, “human dignity”, “the person within community”, and, “participation and solidarity” (p. 386). He then used these themes to compare three models of leadership, namely, transformational, post-industrial, and servant leadership in terms of this understanding of personalism. Table 4-1 summarises Whetstone’s comparison across of each of these models of leadership. The symbol ‘✓’ indicates a strength in terms of personalism. The symbol ‘X’ indicates an area of weakness.

Table 4-1 Whetstone’s Summary – Comparison with Themes of Personalism (Whetstone, 2002, p. 390)

Personalism Themes	Normative Leadership Paradigms		
	Transformational	Post-industrial	Servant
Centrality of the Person	✓	X	✓
Subjectivity	✓	✓	✓
Autonomy	✓	X	✓
Human Dignity	X	X	✓
Community	✓	X	✓
Participation	X	✓	✓
Solidarity	X	✓	✓

As Table 4-1 shows, Whetstone (2002) identifies the strengths of transformational leadership in terms of the centrality of the person, autonomy, subjectivity and community. “In theory, a transformational leader has the goal of raising the level of morality of his/her followers and the organization, creating a more moral climate, fostering independent action, and serving the common good” (p. 387). However, Whetstone also alerts educationalists to possible weaknesses in this model of leadership in terms of human dignity, participation and solidarity. For Whetstone, “transformational leadership can lead to a reality, or at least the suspicion of manipulation, of the leader using his followers for his own purposes rather than respecting them as worthy ends” (p. 387).

At the same time, Whetstone identifies the strengths of post-industrial leadership in terms of subjectivity, participation and solidarity. “Post-industrial leadership emphasizes relationships ... is communitarian; leaders and followers combine to

define and then pursue the common good of shared values in a process of mutual influence” (p. 388). However, within post-industrial leadership, there may be weaknesses in terms of the centrality of persons, autonomy, human dignity and community. Accordingly, this type of leadership is inconsistent with the philosophy of personalism as “its focus [is] on the process of interrelationships rather than the inherent value and dignity of persons” (pp. 388-389).

Finally, Whetstone (2002) concludes that the ‘servant leadership’ model is the one which “fits with personalism more satisfactorily even if imperfectly, than do the paradigms of transformational and post-industrial leadership” (p. 385). In this context, Whetstone advances that servant leadership is a practical philosophy for leaders who choose to serve first, and then to lead as a way of expanding service to individuals and institutions. He writes:

There is no unique formula for the servant leader, although persuasion and example are preferred methods. The servant leader needs to abandon his own preconceptions of how best to serve, then wait and listen until others define their own needs and can state them clearly. A leader builds people through service when he genuinely puts people first, viewing them as humans worthy of dignity and respect. The process of change starts within the servant who, while belonging to Nature, also believes he can subdue Nature. When a problem appears the servant leader first addresses what manner it may have originated within himself, then invents and develops solutions without ideological bias or preconception. Success is measured by growth within people served and the positive effects on the least privileged in society. (p. 389).

The model of servant leadership, with its clear and precise focus on persons, their growth as persons, their autonomy and freedom, is clearly aligned to the personalist approach to the person:

... genuine servant leadership is consistent with the five themes of the philosophy of personalism. The servant leader focuses on himself as a person and how he can beneficially serve others, whom he values for their dignity as persons, helping them to exercise freely their personal

subjectivity and autonomy in a morally responsible manner. He seeks to build true community, one involving full participation and solidarity. (p. 390)

However, in making this judgement, Whetstone (2002) is mindful there are critics of servant leadership who suggest that the servant-leadership model is unrealistic because servant leaders can be “susceptible to manipulation by less naïve followers” (p. 391). Consequently, he recommends adopting some aspects of transformational leadership to strengthen the servant leader model. According to Whetstone:

A theoretically superior approach is a combination in which a morally tough servant leader adopts certain behaviours of the altruistic transformational leader. To inspire followers with the strength and sensitivity of a transforming vision, the servant leader would use proven transforming techniques such as developing a vision, enlisting others, planning small wins, linking rewards to performance, and celebrating accomplishments. (p. 391)

Of particular interest to this study, McArdle (2007, July), exploring the links between theology, relationship and leadership in Catholic education, supports Whetstone’s recommendation for a combination of servant leadership and transformational leadership. He argues that leadership in Catholic schools should be guided by four principles:

- The important place and, indeed, priority of relationality in the ministry of leadership;
- The challenge of service in building an experience of Christian community and encouraging a commitment from all members of the school to form a genuine and authentic community;
- The clear focus on working for the vulnerable and needy of the school community and of wider society;
- The understanding of communication as a dialogical process.

In line with personalist philosophy, McArdle (2007, July) encourages leaders in Catholic schools to see relationality as the central aspect of their role: “This means recognising that persons are relational beings and that any encounter with them must either build up their personhood or reject their personhood” (p. 14).

4.4 THE ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS OF PERSONALISM

Notwithstanding all that has been written previously in support of personalism, there are critics of personalism who argue that it is not a philosophical system at all. They base their arguments on the fact that personalism does not possess systematic development (Schmiesing, 2005) nor can it be clearly defined. While there is some truth in these assertions, the criticism does not necessarily discredit personalism’s legitimacy as a philosophy. Indeed, as Schmiesing (2005) notes, “it has been said of many schools of philosophy, from pragmatism to phenomenology, that it is impossible to arrive at a rigid definition of the school” (p. 1). In this respect, schools of philosophy clearly represent an ‘approach’, or a ‘perspective’, or an ‘emphasis’ on basic issues of human experience and values.

Personalism, as a philosophy, has shown that it is a relevant and significant approach to anthropology and ontology and that it provides a coherent way of presenting an invaluable perspective on the human person. The fact that it emerged during the 19th century and gained popularity in the 20th century when individuals and societies were under pressure against the rising tides of individualism, totalitarianism, capitalism, etc., indicates that it is becoming a significant factor in drawing attention to the value of the human person as an indispensable consideration for all modern philosophical, political, and social systems. In addition, Schmiesing (2005) observes “Personalism continues to attract philosophers, theologians, and social ethicists who operate under its name and utilize its tradition but who do so in varying ways and to disparate ends. Its usefulness as a definition of a clearly delineated set of ideas is questionable; however, in its broad outlines, it remains a compelling approach to philosophical, political, and social issues” (p. 4).

In this respect, comments to the researcher written in a personal letter dated February 17, 2010 by Cowburn seem particularly relevant. The emphasis here is less on ‘ideas’ and more on ‘values’. Cowburn writes:

One thing which I believe about Personalism is that it is not so much concerned with truths but with values. If one can distinguish between judgements of truth and value judgements, one might say that the essence of Personalism is a value judgement. If someone says he is an Aristotelian or a Hegelian, he is primarily telling you what he believes to be true, but if someone says he is a Personalist he is primarily telling you that he believes in the value of persons. Of course, Personalists believe in some truths – for one thing, they believe in free will as a matter of fact – but what mainly interests them is not so much that it is true that we have free will as that it matters. So if one is asked to summarise Personalism, one does not give a list of things that Personalists believe to be true, but says what they believe to be of prime importance. This may be why Personalism is not another philosophy like scholasticism or linguistic analysis, which are ensembles of statements which certain (people) believe to be true.

From the perspective of values, personalism is not only consistent with many of the fundamental aspects of biblical and Christian revelation such as the dignity of the human person, freedom, subjectivity, community, the common good, and social justice but it actively promotes them as being significant in every philosophical anthropology. Thus personalism may be used by Christians to challenge contemporary society in implementing religious values as well as its moral and social obligations, particularly to its poor and more vulnerable members.

4.5 CONCLUSION

As discussed in Chapter Three, a review of the literature alerts the researcher to the emergent theories of educational change that seek to humanise the purpose, the process and the leadership of educational change. A further review of literature, as outlined in this chapter, develops this thought by revealing the personalist emphasis on the radical difference between persons and non-persons, affirms the dignity of persons, and promotes the subjectivity of the person (Cowburn, 2005; Whetstone, 2002; Williams, 2005). Moreover, this philosophical framework highlights the role of community in the development of persons, and challenges those who treat persons as a means rather than an end in themselves (Macmurray, 1961). In addition, a

personalist account of leadership (McArdle, 2007, July; Sayre, 1997; Whetstone, 2002) advances servant leadership and transformational purposes and processes as the way forward.

Of particular interest to this study of educational restructuring within St John’s College, a Catholic school, is the fact that personalism is consistent with Catholic social teaching in respect to a concern for integral human development and a commitment to the importance of the common good (Alford & Naughton, 2006). In addition, articles which explore the links between theology, relationship and leadership in Catholic education support the recommendation for servant leadership and transformational purposes and processes (e.g. McArdle, 2007, July).

Table 4-2 summarises a number of significant points about personalism which are contiguous with an account of the purpose, process and leadership of educational restructuring that is authentically person-centred.

Table 4-2 Summary of a Number of Significant Points about Personalism

Purpose	Process	Leadership
Individual and communal transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relational approaches • Centrality of the person • Subjectivity • Autonomy • Human dignity • Community • Participation • Solidarity • Common Good 	Servant leadership with a transformational vision.

In this way, personalism appears to offer a positive and meaningful philosophical approach to understanding the human person and human activity. Moreover, personalism suggests a way forward for those seeking to humanise the purpose, the processes and the leadership of educational change.

Appreciating the advantages of personalism, the researcher decided to situate this study within this philosophical framework. Consequently, personalism played a significant role in the interpretation of the research findings within this study. In particular, the researcher was interested in the ‘fit’ between the perspectives of the

direction givers in this episode of educational restructuring at St John's College and the philosophical framework of personalism.

Chapter Five: Design of Study

5.1 INTRODUCTION

As outlined in Chapter Three, following a review of the literature, the researcher settled on three research questions:

Research Question One: How did the direction givers understand the *purpose* of educational restructuring at St John's College?

Research Question Two: How did the direction givers understand the *process* of educational restructuring at St John's College?

Research Question Three: How did the direction givers understand the *leadership* of educational restructuring at St John's College?

The identification of these research questions was a significant milestone in this study. According to O'Donoghue (2007) the various methodological choices in research should be guided by the research question/s and, in line with this recommendation, the three research questions identified in Chapter Three were used to guide the various moments of data collection, analysis and interpretation within this study. Given the focus of these research questions, the research study was situated within the theoretical perspective of Symbolic Interactionism. In line with this methodological choice, this study employed case study as a methodology and engaged various qualitative methods.

Data collection involved a two stage data collection process and an iterative process of data analysis and interpretation.

5.2 SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

Symbolic Interactionism is a major theoretical perspective in sociology and in qualitative research (Hewitt, 2003; Stryker, 2002). Formulated by Blumer (1969) and strongly influenced by George Herbert Mead (1934), it focuses on the nature of social interaction and the meaning that people give to their actions within interactive contexts. Social interaction is here understood in terms of the dynamic and social activities taking place among actors. "Individuals interact; societies are made up of

interacting individuals ... Interaction means that the acts of each individual are built up over time, depending in part on what others do in the situation in relation to them” (Charon, 2007, p. 27). Within such a context of social interaction, meaning arises and is transformed as people define and act in social situations. Meaning is created by experience (Hewitt, 2003) and the meaning-making process depends on people’s ability to interpret symbols which have shared meanings or understandings in society. Such symbols can include words, gestures, body language, routines and rituals. “With words as tools, the human is able to construct new ideas, new syntheses, new strategies” (Charon, 2007, p. 204). Thus Symbolic Interactionism is interested in “how people define their world and how that definition shapes their action” (p. 229). It focuses on the subjective aspects of social life and personal experience. For this reason, Symbolic Interactionism offers an appropriate theoretical perspective for this study which focuses on understanding the perspectives of direction givers within an episode of educational restructuring.

For the symbolic interactionist researcher, a person’s definition of a situation is seen to be as important as the situation itself (Charon, 2007) and, in line with this purpose, certain principles of investigation underpin a symbolic interactionist approach to research. Firstly, researchers believe that “we can understand what is going on only if we understand what the actors themselves believe about their world” (Charon, 2004, p. 193) and, to this end, that researchers are prepared to “interact with the actors, observe and partake in their activities, conduct formal interviews, and try to reconstruct their reality” (p. 193). Secondly, they accept that research is conducted in the ‘real world’ and therefore they take a “careful, critical, systematic and objective” (p. 194) approach. These approaches are adopted in order to be accurate and to give consideration to the perspectives of the actors. Finally, symbolic interactionist researchers look for ways to “better understand how humans think, solve problems, role take, apply their past and look to the future in situations” (p. 194).

Thus described, symbolic interactionist research sits comfortably within the interpretivist/constructivist research paradigm (Schwandt, 1994). This research paradigm offers a distinctive approach with its own ontological, epistemological and methodological claims (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). From an ontological perspective, it assumes “local and specific constructed and co-

constructed multiple realities” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 193). From an epistemological perspective, as the actor and researcher interact, it sees knowledge as being “created” (p. 193). In addition, an interpretive/constructivist research paradigm relies on a hermeneutic/dialectical methodology that aims to understand and reconstruct previously held problematic constructions. In other words, “The constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent co-create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 35). Thus it is argued by Heck and Hallinger (1999) that the strength of the constructivist approach is its ability to illuminate that about which little is known or which is hidden from view. From a symbolic interactionist view, an interpretive/constructivist paradigm of research serves to illumine the hidden meanings of actors within an interactive context. The perspectives, meanings and understandings of those intimately associated with an inquiry help to construct new knowledge about this context and thereby bring greater clarification and possibilities.

5.3 CASE STUDY AS THE METHODOLOGY

In line with the theoretical perspective of Symbolic Interactionism and the requirements of the interpretivist/constructivist research paradigm, this study accepted the methodology of case study. Whilst there is some “lingering uncertainty about the nature and appropriate usage” (Merriam, 1998, p. 27) of the term ‘case study’, it is clear that “the single and most defining characteristic of case study lies in delimiting the object of the study, the case” (p. 37). Thus a case study is limited or confined to a specific area of research. As such, it is a “bounded system” (Stake, 2000, p. 444). This means that the case under consideration effectively becomes the researcher’s unit of analysis.

Defined in this way, case study supports the investigation of real life situations in their particular contexts and offers the opportunity to connect with the actors’ meanings through naturalistic research procedures. As Merriam (1998) notes:

The case study offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon. Because it is anchored in real-life situations, a case study results in a rich and holistic account of a

phenomenon. It offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand the readers' experiences. These insights can be construed as tentative hypotheses that help structure future research; hence case study plays an important role in advancing the field's knowledge base. (p. 41)

Thus case study, as a methodology, allows the researcher to enter into the world of the participants in order to understand how they make sense of their experience. What is significant is how people describe their experience and what meaning or relevance they find in it. Merriam (1998) uses the terms "descriptive and heuristic" (p. 29) to describe this aspect of the case study methodology. Further, the case study methodology allows the researcher to provide a full and deep description of the object of the research. From this perspective, the case study aims "to provide a 'rich' description of the phenomenon under study" and is intended to "illuminate the reader's understanding" (pp. 29-30). These clear advantages of the case study methodology confirm it as "a direct and satisfying way of adding to experience and improving understanding" (Stake, 2000, p. 25).

Finally, this research study represented a particular case study. It was limited to the episode of educational restructuring that took place at St John's College during the years 1994 to 2000. As discussed later, the 'limits' of this case informed decisions regarding the sources of data.

5.4 DATA COLLECTION

Consistent with the theoretical perspective of Symbolic Interactionism, this study involved two stages of data collection, analysis and interpretation. The first stage, "*exploration*" (Charon, 2007, p. 194) focused on becoming acquainted with the research situation. In other words "*Exploration* is using any ethical procedure that aids in understanding 'What's going on around here?'" (p. 194) and requires the researcher to be open to ideas, concepts, thoughts and leads which might have altered the researcher's perceptions. The "*inspection*" stage involves isolating certain elements "within the situation and describing the situation in relation to those elements. Inspection also involves forming descriptive statements about the element in the situation, and then applying that to other interaction situations" (p. 195). Issues identified in the exploration stage are further investigated during the inspection stage.

5.4.1 The Exploration Stage

At the outset of this study, the researcher made a commitment to keeping a researcher's journal. Here it was recognised that the researcher, in the role of College principal, was a key direction giver in this episode of educational restructuring. In order to access the researcher's personal perspective of the episode, prior to beginning of the study, the researcher recorded his understanding, observations, comments and questions concerning the episode of educational restructuring. In addition, the researcher continued to maintain the research journal throughout the study.

In effect, the researcher was the research instrument (Merriam, 1998; Walford, 2001), seeking to "make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 5). However, it must be acknowledged that the researcher as the "the primary instrument of data collection and analysis" (Merriam, 1998, p. 42), is open to human subjectivity. In situations such as these, it is necessary to have strong checks to ensure reflexivity. In this respect, the researcher's journal together with a commitment to ethical research may help the researcher overcome any personal bias. Overall, the researcher's journal proved to be invaluable as a record of impressions, general ideas, possible future directions, questions, and reflections on the research.

The exploration stage of this research study also involved accessing a large number of historical documents. It was fortunate that the episode of educational restructuring at St John's College (1994-2000) had been well documented. Historical documents put the researcher "in more direct touch with the very object that he or she is investigating" (Peräkylä, 2005, p. 869) because these "constitute specimens of the topic of the research" (p. 869). Of the documents read and considered, 406 were deemed to be directly applicable to the research topic. The documents included minutes of meetings, memos, personal reflections, official correspondence, personal letters, feasibility studies, media releases, school financial statements, accountants' independent assessments, enrolment data and other research-related material. They were placed in chronological order and categorised according to their subject matter. Table 5-1 lists the sources and the number of

documents, other than the researcher’s journal, that were included in the exploration stage of the data collection process.

Table 5-1 List of Documents used in the Exploration Stage of Data Collection

Name	Date	No of Documents
Enrolment Options - Feasibility Report Queensland Catholic Education Commission	April, 1994	1
Provincial Archives	1992-1994	48
Provincial Archives	1995-1996	33
Saint John’s College Woodlawn Planning Exercise	1996-1997	53
Report - “Woodlawn Beyond 2000” Queensland Catholic Education Commission	1997	1
Woodlawn College Working Party	1997-1998	82
Integration with Diocese Committee	Feb 1998 – June 1998	42
Woodlawn Development Committee	1998-1999	45
Provincial Archives	1999 – 2000	32
Woodlawn Working Party and Joint Management Committee	March 1999-December 2000	69

5.4.2 The Inspection Stage

During the research study, the inspection stage comprised person-to-person interviews with each of the direction givers. Interviews are an indirect way for a researcher to access the object he or she is researching because interviews consist of accounts given to a researcher about issues of interest. The focus in an interview is on the interviewee’s account of the topic. As Peräkylä (2005) observes, “the topic of the research is not the interview itself but rather the issues discussed in the interview” (p. 869). However, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) draw attention to other equally significant aspects of interviews, particularly in relation to interview analysis. They remind researchers of the need to be conversant with the skills required for valid “meaning condensation” and “meaning interpretation” (pp. 205 - 207). In empirical research of a qualitative nature, this is an important and significant consideration.

Within this study, the researcher chose to interview participants who were closely involved in decision-making within the process of this episode of educational

restructuring at St John's College. In one way or another, a large number of people participated in this episode.¹⁶ However, given the research purpose and the research questions, the researcher decided to restrict interviews to those who were influential in the decision-making process. In this context, the study was particularly interested in understanding the perspectives of those who were the "direction givers" or "strategic thinkers" (Garratt as cited in B. Davies, 2006, p. 16).

In line with the conventions of qualitative research, the participants were chosen on the basis of "sample selection" (Merriam, 2009, p. 16). In qualitative research this selection is usually, but not always, non-random, *purposeful*, and small. This is in contrast to larger, more random sampling. The participants were selected as a sample of those who influenced the direction in the episode of educational restructuring that took place at St John's College from 1994 to 2000. Further, the sampling was based on 'purposeful selection' because the researcher intended to "discover, understand and gain insight" (Merriam, 1998, p. 61) into how this particular group of participants, involved in the episode at St John's College, understood the purpose, the process, and the leadership of the educational restructuring. In particular, invitations for interviews were sent to those who were deemed to be 'direction givers' or 'strategic thinkers' in this episode of educational restructuring, namely:

- Those who had participated in the episode of educational change during the period 1994 to 2000; and/or
- Those who had a significant role in the school or major responsibility for the process; and/or
- Those who had exercised a leadership role within the group of participants; and/or

¹⁶ The consultation process was far-reaching and was carried out among a number of groups: members of the Australian Province of the Marist Fathers, those directly involved in the school such as staff, teachers, students, and parents, interested educational personnel (Catholic Education Commission Queensland, Catholic Education Office, Lismore, the principal of the local Catholic school, local university staff), the bishop of Lismore, and members of the clergy of the diocese, the industrial teachers' and employees' unions, prospective parents, and members of the wider community.

- Those who were judged to have the ability to look beyond their own perspective; and/or
- Those who had expertise necessary for effective, well-balanced, and well-considered methods needed for data gathering and decision-making.

Overall, 21 key participants were identified as fulfilling the above criteria for the purpose of the research study. Fifteen took the opportunity to participate in the study. In all, three groups formed the direction givers and were represented in the research study (cf. Figure 5-1).

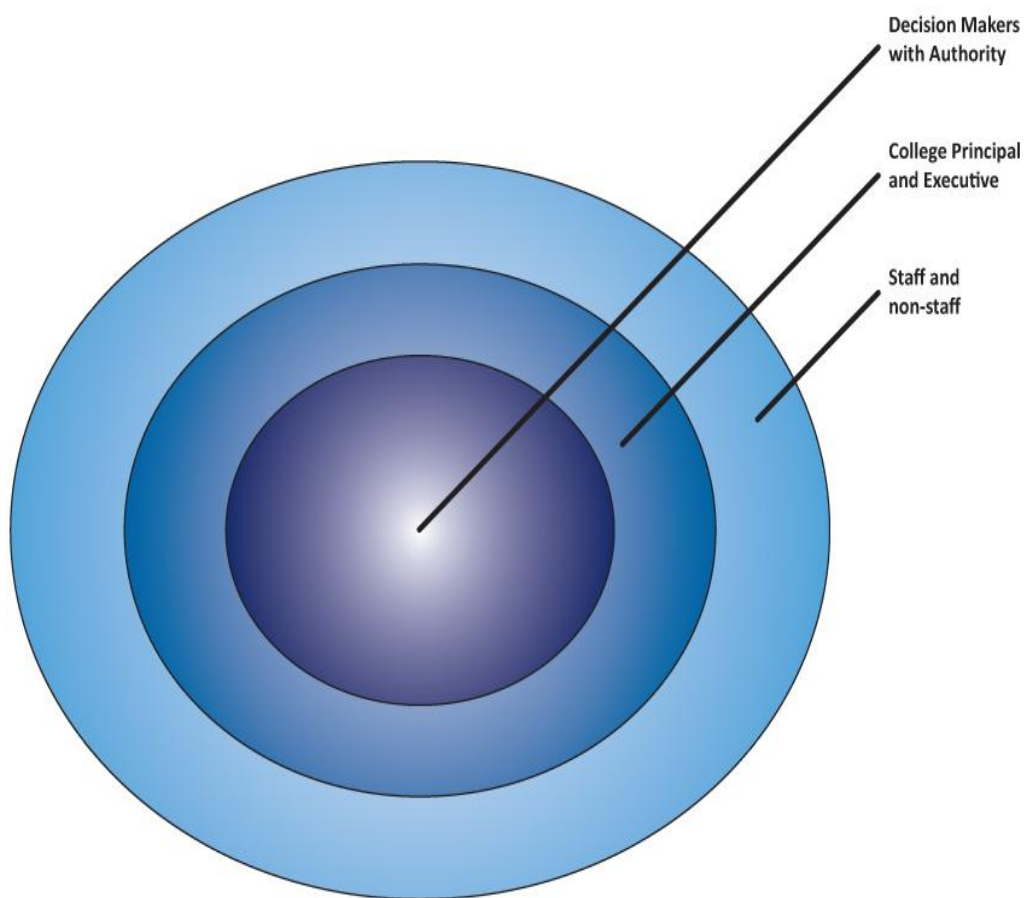


Figure 5-1 Three Groups who formed the Direction Givers

The decision makers included those who, within the Marist Fathers, had the ultimate authority for taking the decisions concerning the school; the principal and members of the College Executive; and those who either as staff (both teaching and ancillary) or non-staff participated extensively in the process. Some of the non-staff direction

givers included the school's Executive Officer and representatives of the Catholic Education Office, Lismore and the Queensland Catholic Education Commission.

Prior to the interview, each interviewee received a letter in which he/she was invited to indicate if he/she was willing to participate in an interview of approximately one hour's duration (cf. Appendix 5). The researcher made contact by phone with each of the fifteen direction givers who, by return of a signed, formal letter of consent, indicated his or her willingness to be involved in the research. During the follow-up phone conversation, a mutually convenient time was arranged to conduct the interview.

To ensure consistency between interviews, an interview guide had been prepared that contained some of the key questions and listed some topic areas. The interview guide appears as Appendix 6. The most suitable form of interview chosen for this research study was the 'semi-structured' interview: the kind that lies between the very structured interview type and the unstructured interview type (Fontana & Frey, 2003). Being semi-structured, the interviews allowed the questions to be used as a guide. This enabled the interviewees to be open-ended in the way that they responded, recognising that "the only person who understands the social reality in which they live is the person themselves" (Burns, 2000, p. 425). At the same time, the semi-structured nature of the interview allowed the interviewer to respond to new and emerging issues as they arose.

All interviews were recorded digitally, and verbatim transcripts were written up immediately afterwards by a professional secretary. The transcripts were invaluable aids to creating a database analysis and involved repeated listening "to reveal previously unnoted recurring features" (Silverman, 2006, p. 207). During the interview phase of the research study and following the production of the transcripts, an interview log was developed to maintain a visual, hard copy record of the main elements of the interviews and to record themes. Themes are abstract, and often fuzzy, constructs that investigators identify before, during, and after data collection (G. W. Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The interview log was based on the example given by Merriam (1998) and is displayed as Table 5-2.

Table 5-2 Sample of Interview Log Based on Merriam (1998, p. 92).

Interview Log	
Name of Participant:	Interview Code:
Respondent's Comments	Researcher's Notes - Themes

The fifteen interviews took place over a four month period, between October 22, 2008 and January 24, 2009. In order to facilitate the study and to enable the interviews to be conducted in an atmosphere that was comfortable for the interviewee, the researcher travelled to the places where the interviewees lived or worked. This required visits to Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Campbelltown (NSW), Lismore (NSW), and the Gold Coast (Qld).

During the course of the research, the researcher maintained a record of insights, ideas and possible connections in his research journal. This empirical material was important, along with the historical documents and the person-to-person interviews, for the generation of the codes and themes (the second order interpretation) of data analysis and interpretation. In addition, frequent discussion with the researcher's supervisors at regular intervals (Neuman, 2006) and written, personal reflections facilitated the interpretation of the data and the development of a number of theoretical propositions (third order interpretation).

5.5 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The process of data analysis and interpretation is the process of making sense out of the data that has been collected. This was the purpose of the qualitative inquiry and it was intended to produce findings (Patton, 2002). As Merriam (1998) observes, "Thinking about data – *theorizing* – is a step towards developing a theory that explains some aspect of educational practice and allows a researcher to draw inferences about future activity" (p. 188).

As data analysis and interpretation is the process of looking closely at the data, identifying emerging themes and issues, and interpreting that material in the light of theoretical considerations to develop theoretical propositions, it was necessary to do

this in a systematic way. The researcher, consistent with a commitment to the humane dimension of the educational restructuring, wanted to ensure the experience and voices of those engaged in the study could be clearly heard and understood. As there was a considerable amount of data, it needed to be categorised. To achieve this, the researcher had to “assign significance or coherent meaning” to the data (Neuman, 2006, p. 159) by making a continual comparison with what emerged from the interviews, the historical documents, and the researcher’s journal in order to reinforce the rigour of the case study.

The researcher employed Neuman’s (2006) “Iterative Process of Data Analysis” to make sense of the data collected in the exploration and inspection stages of this study. According to the model, the analysis and interpretation involve three stages. The first stage endeavoured to categorise the data in order to learn about its meaning from the people being studied. This “first-order interpretation” (p. 160) enabled the researcher to get in touch with the direction givers’ experiences, motivations, and feelings. Here it was assumed that the direction givers were the people “who created the social behaviour” and who had “personal reasons or motives for their actions” (p. 160). In the case of this research study, it referred also to the official documents, records, the researcher’s personal journal and the transcripts of the direction givers’ interviews.

The “second-order interpretation” refers to the researcher’s interpretation of what the direction givers shared. “In a second-order interpretation, the researcher elicits an underlying coherence or sense of meaning in the data” (p. 160). In other words, the researcher discovers and reconstructs the first-order interpretation. In this case it was done by taking the data from the interviews and beginning the process of putting them into categories. A strict interpretative approach stops at the second-order of interpretation. However, “many qualitative researchers go further to generalize or link the second-order interpretation to general theory” (p. 160). The third and final order of interpretation refers to the discussion of the theoretical significance of what has emerged from the data. In this research study it was also to be linked to scholarly literature in respect to educational change and leadership as well as the philosophical framework of personalism.

Based on Neuman’s (2006) “Iterative Process of Data Analysis” and Charon (2007), Figure 5-2 presents an overview of an adapted iterative process of data collection, analysis and interpretation as used in this research study. This figure brings together the two approaches.

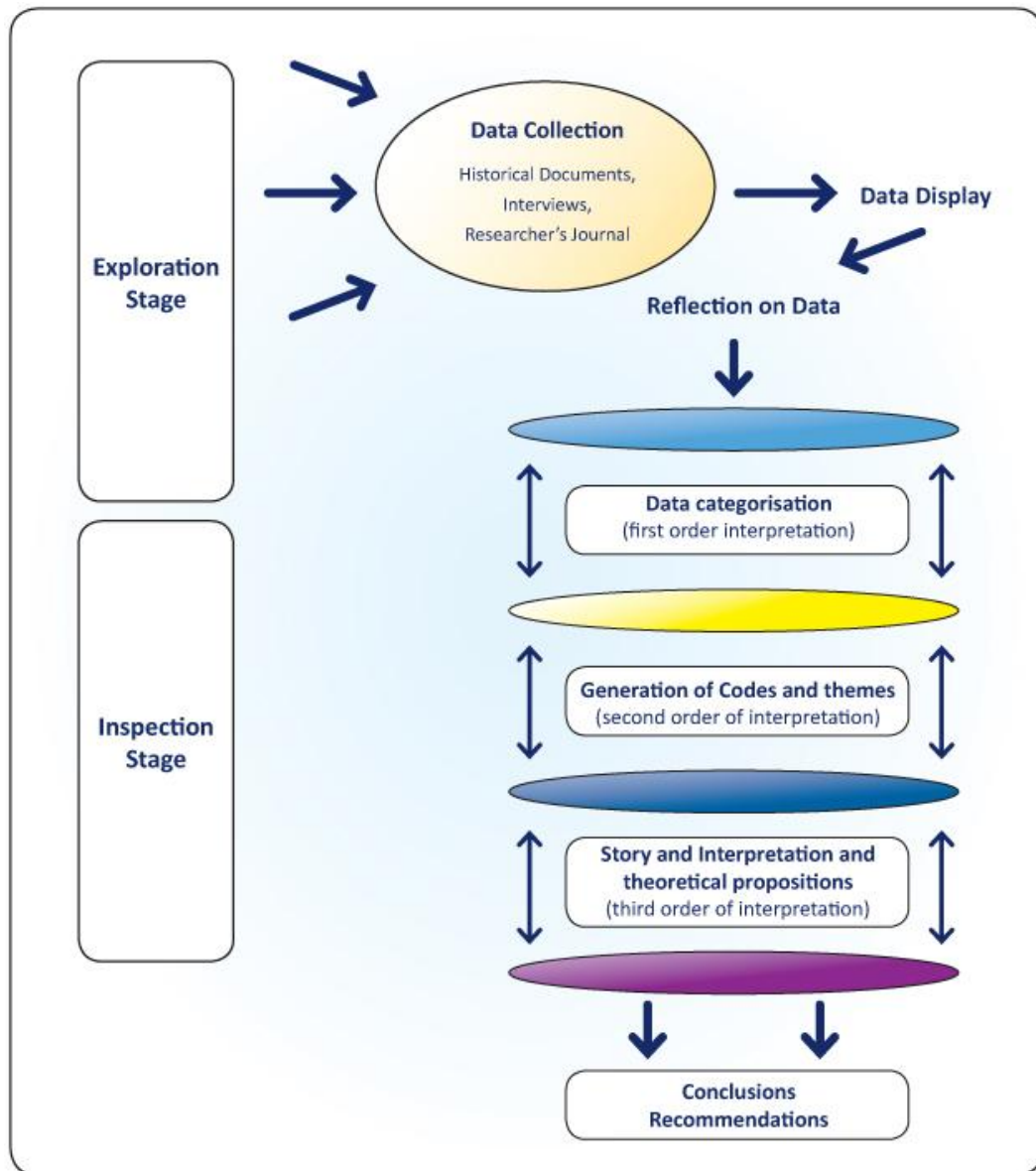


Figure 5-2 Data Collection, Analysis, Interpretation and Conclusions using Neuman (2006, p. 160) and Charon (2007, p. 194).

5.5.1 Historical Documents

The analysis of the various historical documents provided rich and valuable material to inform the findings of this study. Each of the 406 documents relevant to the period prior to and during the restructuring was carefully read and studied, and listed

in an Event Register. The Event Register, a record of the information arising from a careful study of the documents, was assigned headings according to: the event (date and person); its relationship to the *purpose* of the restructuring; its relationship to the *process* used during the restructuring; and its connection with the theme of *leadership*. (cf. Table 5-3 for an example of the Event Register format). The Event Register also included comments from the researcher. In most cases, recorded material included direct quotations from the document at hand.

Table 5-3 Example of Event Register Format

Event Register – Provincial Archives 1992 - 1994				
Event	Purpose	Process	Leadership	Comments
Letter: From “X” to “Y” dated November 2, 1992	“... concern for future of the school ...”	free to investigate possibility ...	Report contains some comments by members of the teaching staff re “low morale”, “ship without a rudder”, there is “poor communication”, “teachers not pulling their weight”, etc.	Staff obviously experiencing a need for clear direction and strategic planning.

Once all the data had been entered into the Event Register, the researcher made summaries, looking carefully for material related to the research questions. This information was highlighted and extracted, then cross-referenced and included in three Overviews one of which dealt with *purpose* (the first research question), one with *process* (the second research question), and one with the comments and references related to *leadership* (the third research question). This provided the researcher with a clear and accurate summary of the historical voice concerning the formal documents. From these summaries, a further distillation of information occurred around the major themes from the second order of interpretation (Neuman, 2006).

The two major themes that emerged for the first research question on purpose were: Driven by Pragmatic Concerns and Focus on Mission. These major themes and the relevant sub-themes have been replicated in Table 5-4:¹⁷

¹⁷ The data is also replicated in Table 6-1 of Chapter Six.

Table 5-4 Display of Data on Purpose according to Themes and Sub-themes that Emerged from the Research Study

Research Question 1: Purpose

Themes	Sub-themes
Driven by Pragmatic Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and Economic Factors • Decline in Number of Marist Fathers • Growing Recognition of the Problem
Focus on Mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission of the Marist Fathers in the School • Mission of the School within the Diocese

The major themes that emerged for the second research question on process were: Managerial Processes and Organic Processes. The summary of the material for this question appears in Table 5-5, according to themes and sub-themes:¹⁸

Table 5-5 Display of Data on Process according to Themes and Sub-themes that Emerged from the Research Study

Research Question 2: Process

Themes	Sub-themes
Managerial Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top-down decision-making • Linear planning
Organic Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open and honest • Consultation and collaboration • Professional expertise

The major themes that emerged from the data concerning the third research question about leadership are contained in Table 5-6 according to themes and sub-themes:¹⁹

¹⁸ The data is also replicated in Table 7-1 of Chapter Seven.

¹⁹ The data is also replicated in Table 8-1 of Chapter Eight.

Table 5-6 Display of Data on Leadership according to Themes and Sub-themes that Emerged from the Research Study

Research Question 3: Leadership

Themes	Sub-themes
The Challenge of Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistance • Divergence of Opinion and Emotional Reactions • Uncertainty
The Nature of Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change Agency • Objectivity • Vision • Courage • Charism

5.5.2 Interview Analysis

The analysis of the interviews with the direction givers required the digital recording of each interview. After each interview, the digital recording was transcribed and each interviewee was assigned a code to ensure anonymity. A hard copy in the form of a transcript was used to check the record against the digital recording for accuracy. The researcher used the transcripts to analyse the responses to the questions, noting not only the verbatim report but also any allusion to other related issues which were the subject of the research study. This occurred frequently, as a direction giver often moved from the original question to include other material that he/she felt needed to be included in his/her responses.

A summary of each interview was made from the transcript. The summary included the direction giver's comments and direct quotations concerning the principal themes emerging from the interview. These were noted accordingly. This enabled the researcher to identify the interviewee's comments against a common theme and to systematise that information. The systematisation was deemed necessary to ensure that significant material arising from the interview was not lost. Each of the related comments was cross-referenced against the participant's transcript. Table 5-7 is an example of the transcript summary for one direction giver.

Table 5-7 Example of the Transcript Summary for One Participant

Direction giver PC 02 – Summary Points	
Theme Emerging	Participant’s Comments
St John’s College	Held an “iconic role” (p. 1) “etched deeply into the consciousness and to the whole life of the province” (p. 1)
Purpose	wanted an outcome “that progresses ongoing Catholic education in the diocese” (p. 6) “only way to go” (p. 8)
Process	Took a lot of counsel and impossibility of long term survival (p. 1) “working together for a positive outcome” (p. 7) “... we had to maximize the consultation process ...” (p. 13) “Our decision was not pragmatism but it was based on the evidence that we had to hand, the clear indicators that suggested that we couldn’t survive even with the changes that had taken place.” (p. 17)
Leadership	Importance of “frontline person”, “the man on point duty” – cannot see how it could have happened otherwise (p. 2)
Culture	“Culture ... is of the heart. Heart issues are the hardest to change when they are fixed.” (p. 3)
Personalism	Marists developed human face at Woodlawn (p. 18)
Marist Philosophy of Education	“... represented by Woodlawn ... represented by the way we minister ...” (p. 26)
Result of restructuring	“... was certainly a serendipitous outcome” (p. 23) “... the outcome has far exceeded what I expected ...” (p. 27)

Finally, the information from both the historical documents and each interview was correlated and then placed alongside information from the researcher's journal before the findings of the research were written up. That material is presented in Chapter Six, Chapter Seven, and Chapter Eight of this thesis.

5.5.3 Researcher's Journal

The researcher's journal proved to be an invaluable part of the data collection method and frequent reference was made to the journal through the study. Figure 5-3 provides an example of how the journal was annotated during the research study.

chapter, the provincial Council decided to move in the direction of accepting day students at Woodlawn. This meant that the all-boarding aspect of St John's College Woodlawn culture would cease and a new era was to begin. *What shape the future? (Vision)*

The decision to re-introduce day students was a very significant decision and had far-reaching consequences. When the College started in 1931, it consisted of day students and boarders. However, the day students did not continue. And for most of its history Woodlawn had been a school for boarders only. In fact, it was one of only two schools in the whole state of New South Wales that was boarding only. The other school was St Joseph's College, Hunters Hill. *"gateway" (Rayner)*

Two other factors worthy of consideration were the geographical location of Woodlawn (it is five kilometres outside of the city of Lismore) and the fact that it would have to compete with the local Catholic high school for students. The local Catholic high school had a very good reputation for academic success. Woodlawn did not. It was noted more for its success in sport, particularly rugby league. Being on the northern side of the city meant students had to pass by the local Catholic high school in order to get to Woodlawn.

As principal, it was my responsibility to *active professionalisation (Sachs)* over see the introduction of the changes. I felt it was important to do so in a pro-active and positive way. The school was fighting for its survival and its condition was extremely fragile. If the new changes were to be successful, then it was necessary to engender in the staff, students and parents a positive approach. *Rational redesign (Evans) + "strategic intent" Eacott*

Naturally, there was opposition in some quarters; the boarding students found the changes particularly difficult to adjust to. However, there was sufficient interest outside of the College from the local community and parents wishing to enrol their sons. So day students were re-introduced to Woodlawn in the 1995. *resistance: natural phenomenon to change*

The addition of day students saw an immediate, though moderate increase in the student population. At the same time, it became evident, particularly through the reorganization of staff and the implementation of day-school structures (such as buses, etc) that the cultural change on which the school had embarked was underway. The boarding-only culture, which had sustained the participation, the interest, and the life of Woodlawn for so many years was changing, and drawing to a close (though this was not evident at the time). *divergence of views*

As a school principal, when I had first *strategic approach* arrived at Woodlawn, it became clear that there was a serious need to review the financial situation of the school. Further, I knew that the school needed to formulate a plan for its financial future. To this end, we engaged the services of Mr Jeff Knott.

Mr Knott belonged to a professional accounting company that specialised in financial review of schools. I had worked with him when I was principal of Marist regional College in Tasmania and was impressed with his work and the value of his expertise. He was engaged by the College to undertake a review of its financial situation and asked to provide a future plan. *Evans: "difficult task... to abandon deep structures"*

The results of Mr Knott's survey indicated the College was in a perilous state financially. Not only was it experiencing a large deficit for each financial year (\$300,000), but the amount of outstanding school fees was adding enormous pressure. *Professional expertise - engaging in strategic consultation (Eacott)*

Cultural change? (Sachs)

Social analysis

School as machine

Designers: "real challenge of leadership"

restructuring (Dullan)

cultural change - looming crisis

e.g. of Authentic Leadership (Evans)

Figure 5-3 An Example of an Annotated Page in the Researcher's Journal

In this study, the researcher was particularly conscious of the possibility of researcher bias (cf. Chapter One). As previously mentioned, this case study represents a version of 'insider research' since the researcher, in the role of principal, was a key direction giver within this episode of educational restructuring. It was

therefore particularly important to safeguard the research against claims of bias emanating from the researcher's former position at St John's College.

5.6 VERIFICATION

Verification concerns the truthfulness of data as well as its analysis and interpretation. It is particularly important in applied educational inquiry of an interpretative, constructivist type and particularly when, as in this case study, the researcher is the principal research instrument (Patton, 2002). In effect, the researcher must show clearly that not only do the data, the analysis and the interpretation "make sense" (Merriam, 1998) but that these are acknowledged in the text, in order to address possible concerns raised about its validity, due to the bias and human subjectivity of the researcher.

While the concepts of validity and reliability are fundamental to all scientific research (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), in constructivist research the concern rests more around the accuracy of the interpretation of the findings from the combined perspective of the researcher and the participants. The terms used in the literature to discuss this concept include rigour, verification, legitimation, trustworthiness and authenticity, to name just a few (Creswell, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Even though the terms may be different, a total of eight primary strategies to assess the accuracy of the findings in qualitative research have been consistently discussed in the literature (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2003). It also is recommended that a range of these strategies be incorporated into the planning and conduct of a qualitative study (Creswell, 2003) to ensure validity and reliability. The eight strategies are: "triangulation, member checking, rich descriptions, attention to bias, presence of negative or discrepant information, prolonged time in the field, peer debriefing and use of an external auditor" (p. 196).

To attend to the issue of researcher bias, and in order to ensure that the concepts of rigour, verification, legitimation, trustworthiness and authenticity were addressed, this study used the strategies of triangulation, negative or discrepant information, and researcher journaling. Triangulation involves the collection of different data types across a variety of methods allowing for cross validation to occur (Patton, 2002, p. 307). Consistent with this strategy, this study used a range of research methods including the collection, analysis and interpretation of a considerably large number

of historical documents, which resulted in an accurate representation of the developing themes, and a detailed researcher's journal as well as person-to-person interviews with the direction givers within this episode of educational restructuring.

The researcher was alert to the presence of negative or discrepant information and such discrepancies were further investigated during the latter part of the inspection stage of the study. By insuring that an open and accurate interpretation of findings had been captured, the researcher was well positioned then to write a descriptive account of the findings.

The researcher used his research journal as an opportunity for critical reflection prior to undertaking the data collection in a bid to ensure trustworthy research. The research journal facilitated the organisation, tracking, and development of important ideas, concepts and observations about the research and helped the researcher make decisions on the basis of 'fit' (Stake, 2000) with respect to experiential knowledge, existing theory, and the data arising from the historical records and the interviews.

Finally, during the course of this study, to ensure the validity and reliability of this research, the researcher used a data trail (Burns, 2000). The data trail guaranteed that all data were collected, collated and stored for accessibility and for further attention if necessary. The data trail involved the maintenance of digital audio records, transcripts, summaries, and research logs to "authenticate how the data were obtained and decisions made about data and categories" (p. 475).

5.7 ETHICAL ISSUES

Ethics is the cornerstone of research. In qualitative studies the ethical issues lie more in the area of data collection and in the dissemination of the research findings. This research was based on a commitment to respect for the truth, for the process used, and for the people involved in the study. Given the nature of the study and the relationship between the researcher and the direction givers, the dialogic relationship was given due emphasis (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). In many respects, a positive relationship made the communication between researcher and participants more open and tension-free.

Ethics also involves issues of privacy and confidentiality. To this end, the following principles were followed in this research study:

- Voluntary Participation in Research: the direction givers were invited to participate in the research;
- All protocols were followed to ensure that the research was undertaken in a professional and ethical manner;
- Formal consent: each participant signed a formal consent form to verify that he/she was willing to participate in the research study and that he/she was doing so freely and without any coercion. Each was aware that he/she could withdraw from the research project at any time;
- Assurance that Privacy and Confidentiality would be respected. It was necessary to ensure that the research study was undertaken in a way that guaranteed privacy and, where requested, confidentiality.

Every effort has been made to ensure confidentiality and privacy. This has been possible in respect to all the comments and data arising from the interviews. However, it has not been possible to maintain such confidentiality in respect to the document analysis. When using official source material, it is necessary to reference the material. This meant the identity of some direction givers is clearly recognised, and it is hoped this does not cause embarrassment for those concerned. Every effort was made to protect a person's identity where possible.

Formal approval for the research was sought from the Australian Catholic University Research Projects Ethics Committee. The Human Research Ethics Committee approved the project on September 12, 2008. The register number is Q200708 39 (cf. Appendix 3). Also, written formal approval to conduct the research study was requested from the Catholic Education Office, Lismore. The letter of approval has been included in the appendices (cf. Appendix 4).

In summary, it is stressed again the researcher acknowledges the potential for bias and human subjectivity in this research study. While every effort was made to ensure that "equivocal evidence or personal views do not influence the direction of the findings" (Burns, 2000), it has to be remembered that "since the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection, data have been filtered through his or her particular theoretical position and biases" (Merriam, 1998, p. 216). With a clear

commitment to keeping a data trail, in order to ensure that personal bias and human subjectivity are acknowledged and addressed, the researcher:

1. Maintained a record of new ideas and developments as the research study unfolded. The record also acknowledged any limitations the researcher became aware of during the course of the research study;
2. Kept all the digital audio records and transcripts of all interviews securely locked;
3. Created a transparent filing system;
4. Engaged in extensive discussions with the principal supervisor during the second and third-order interpretation stages of the data analysis and interpretation, and discussed emerging themes and propositions with research supervisors.

5.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a description of the methodological choices that respond best to the research problem. The theoretical perspective of Symbolic Interactionism was chosen as the most appropriate study design for this research because it focuses on the social interaction that takes place between people, believing it to be central to all human activity. It is interested in “how people define their world and how that definition shapes their action” (Charon, 2007, p. 229). Moreover, case study was chosen as the methodology because it offers a research paradigm that investigates real life situations in their contexts and offers the opportunity to connect with the subjects’ meanings. This was considered to be important in the light of the research problem.

Consistent with Symbolic Interactionism, the data collection involved two stages of investigation. The first stage involved *exploration* during which the researcher became acquainted with the focus of study. It involved being open to ideas, concepts, thoughts and leads which might alter the researcher’s perceptions. The second stage in the process of inquiry was *inspection*. This involved identifying and isolating key elements “within the situation and describing the situation in relation to those elements (e.g. conflict, alienation, domination, and cooperation). Inspection also involves forming descriptive statements about the element in the situation, and

then applying that to other interaction situations” (Charon, 2007, p. 195). Overall there were three sources of data within this study: historical documents, person-to-person interviews, and a researcher’s journal. These provided ample empirical material on which to base the research.

To analyse and interpret the data, the researcher chose to adapt Neuman’s (2006) Iterative Process of Data Analysis and to modify it so that it reflected this particular research study. According to that model, analysis and interpretation involves three stages. The first stage categorises the data in order to learn about its meaning from the people being studied. The second stage generates codes and themes which formed the basis of the discussion. And finally, the third stage covers the discussion of the theoretical significance of what has emerged from the data and the development of theoretical propositions. The accompanying Overview of the Research Design (Table 5-8) summarises the process of data analysis and interpretation presented in this chapter.

This chapter has presented the design for the research study and the reasons for its choice. It has also described the processes of data collection, analysis and interpretation. The following three chapters focus on the three research questions by displaying the data collected and discussing the findings for each: the *purpose*, the *process*, and the *leadership* of educational restructuring at St John’s College during the period 1994 to 2000, as understood by the direction givers.

Table 5-8 Overview of Research Design

Research Questions	Stages	Data Gathering Process	Analysis and Interpretation	Timeline
How did the direction givers understand the <i>purpose</i> of educational restructuring at St John's College?	Exploration	Step 1: Data Collection: Documentation and Personal Reflection Step 2: Data Analysis	First-Order Interpretation (learn about the meaning from people being studied) ↕ ↕	Completed by October, 2008
How did the direction givers understand the <i>process</i> of educational restructuring at St John's College?	Inspection	Step 1: Interviews	Second-Order Interpretation (researcher's discovery and reconstruction of first-order: develop codes and themes)	Interviews completed by March, 2009.
How did the direction givers understand the <i>leadership</i> of educational restructuring at St John's College?		Step 2: Data Analysis Step 3: Data Interpretation	↕ ↕ Third-Order Interpretation (Link the second-order to general theory: Interpretation and Formulation of Theoretical propositions)	Completed June, 2009. Completed December, 2009.

Chapter Six: Display and Discussion of Findings - Purpose

6.1 INTRODUCTION

It is evident from the data that a “seismic shift” (Researcher’s Journal, p. 1) took place at St John’s College during the period 1994-2000 as the school experienced a major and rapid episode of educational restructuring. In 1994, the school existed as a small boys’ boarding school owned and operated by the Marist Fathers. It was facing a major crisis and struggling for survival. Its future was very uncertain. Within a relatively short period of time, that is, by 2001, it had been transformed into a successful co-educational day school owned by the local parish and operated by the diocese of Lismore.

This study focuses on educational restructuring in Catholic schools. In particular, it is a case study of an episode of educational restructuring that occurred at St John’s College, Woodlawn during the years 1994 to 2000. The research problem was framed in terms of a lack of a clear understanding of the nature and purpose of educational restructuring at St John’s College. Moreover, the purpose of the study was identified in terms of gaining a more informed and sophisticated understanding of educational restructuring. Three research questions informed the various moments of data collection, analysis and interpretation in this study. The research questions are:

Research Question One: How did the direction givers understand the *purpose* of educational restructuring at St John’s College?

Research Question Two: How did the direction givers understand the *process* of educational restructuring at St John’s College?

Research Question Three: How did the direction givers understand the *leadership* of educational restructuring at St John’s College?

This chapter addresses the first research question which is concerned with the direction givers’ understandings of the *purpose* of the educational restructuring at St

John's College. In particular, this chapter discusses the theoretical significance of the findings of this research study by drawing on literature in the area of educational change and leadership. The chapter concludes by presenting a theoretical proposition that illumines the purpose of educational restructuring at St John's College and beyond.

6.2 DISPLAY OF FINDINGS

As the study progressed through the iterative process of data collection, analysis and interpretation, a number of key themes and sub-themes emerged around the purpose of educational restructuring. The themes and sub-themes are displayed in Table 6-1.

Table 6-1 Display of Data on Purpose according to Themes and Sub-themes that Emerged from the Research Study

Research Question 1: Purpose	
Themes	Sub-themes
Driven by Pragmatic Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and Economic Factors • Decline in Number of Marist Fathers • Growing Recognition of the Problem
Focus on Mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission of the Marist Fathers in the School • Mission of the School within the Diocese

With respect to the *purpose* of educational restructuring at St John's College, this study found two key themes. Initially, this episode of educational restructuring was driven by pragmatic concerns which were focused on rational-structural issues. Then, as the direction givers came to understand the complexity of educational change and to appreciate that deeper cultural and political issues were involved, a more significant issue emerged. The purpose became linked to mission.

6.2.1 Driven By Pragmatic Concerns

The data show that during the period immediately prior to 1994, and for most of the six years that followed, St John's College was facing a serious crisis. The crisis came about due to a series of social and economic factors beyond the school's

control. Besides external factors, there were others of an internal nature which also had serious implications for the future of the school. Among the latter was an increasing decline in the number of Marist Fathers available for secondary education and a school culture that was strongly resistant to any significant change, preferring rather to maintain the status quo.

6.2.1.1 *Social and Economic Factors*

Since its foundation in 1931, St John's College had always been a relatively small, independent secondary boys' school. For most of its history, it had managed to maintain its administrative independence and to stay in a sound financial position. It had been able to attract sufficient students to offer a varied, though limited curriculum. In 1987, when the student population stood at record high of 426 students, the school seemed to be progressing well and the future looked positive. However, that year marks a watershed in the school's illustrious history.

Table 6-2 Number of Students at St John's College from 1984 to February, 1994 by Year Level (Table 1 in the QCEC Feasibility Study Report, April 1994)

Year Level	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
12	62	79	61	81	74	72	82	81	76	80	52
11	82	67	89	80	81	95	87	89	86	52	54
10	67	80	69	72	77	78	72	83	63	65	49
9	80	62	70	75	71	72	79	56	55	47	50
8	53	53	72	67	55	64	45	56	43	46	40
7	51	68	59	51	53	43	53	37	37	36	31
	395	409	420	426	411	424	418	402	360	326	276

As Table 6-2 indicates, from 1987 onwards, there is a significant decline in the number of students in the school, and by 1994 the decline had reached frightening proportions. This alarming situation was compounded by the fact that there did not appear to be any sign of an immediate improvement.

At the beginning of 1994, in a school which was offering a full secondary curriculum across Years 7 to 12, there were only 276 students. The number of Year 12 students enrolled that year was the lowest since 1983 and the number of Year 7 students enrolled that year was the lowest for a considerably long period of time. The number

of students enrolled in the junior years between 1991 and 1994 gives a clear indication of a frightening downward trend.

Though St John's College experienced difficulty in attracting students in the early 1990s, it was not the only boarding school in Australia to do so. Across the state of New South Wales, the number of boarding students had been in decline since the 1960s. However, the decline was particularly noticeable during the period 1990 – 1993. Of the fourteen boarding schools operating in New South Wales during this period, only two went against the trend and showed an increase in numbers. This overall decline in student numbers during the early 1990s was explained in part by a significant change in the pattern of parental choice in relation to boarding schools in the late 1980s and early 1990s (QCEC Feasibility Study Report April, 1994 p. 42). However, what accentuated the crisis and made the situation at St John's College extremely more alarming was that the school was totally reliant on boarders.

The precarious position at St John's College became more startling during the period 1990-1993. During that time, the number of students (boarders) at St John's College declined by 20.5%. Compared to the other fourteen boarding schools in New South Wales, St John's College was placed in the 'worst scenario' category (QCEC Feasibility Study Report, April, 1994 p. 42). Having no prospect of improvement, the small boarding school found itself forced to compete in a very difficult environment.

Besides the general decline in interest in boarding across the state, there were other factors which contributed to the decline in the school's student population. The development of new Catholic secondary schools over the years, particularly in the diocese of Lismore, and the prospect of other dioceses building their own Catholic secondary schools, had an adverse effect on the potential number of students who might have gone to St John's College. In the Lismore diocese alone, eight Catholic secondary schools had been built in various major centres since the foundation of St John's College in 1931 (Marist Fathers, 2000, p. 14). The building of each new Catholic secondary school made the enrolment situation more difficult for St John's College. The consequence of these positive and welcome developments for Catholic education in the local towns meant St John's College was forced to look elsewhere for students.

In addition, a severe drought in the early 1990s exacerbated the pattern of falling enrolments evident in the figures for 1994. The drought had a severe and negative impact on the incomes of many in the rural sector. As a consequence, many of the families from rural properties and towns, who were often forced to send their children to boarding schools to gain a broader education, were unable to do so. Recognising the significance of these factors, namely, the major impact of the drought on enrolment numbers at St John's College, the possibility of Catholic secondary schools being built in the Armidale diocese, and being conscious that the school was struggling to make ends meet, one direction giver recalled:

We had a series of three or four years of droughts ... [the Armidale diocese was] planning to set up a secondary school in Moree and I think Narrabri ... a big percentage of our boarders came from Moree/Narrabri area ... we were flat out to make our ends meet. We were really struggling to have enough students to run a viable school because we had to rely entirely on boarders. (Transcription KI 02, pp. 1-2)

Even those from the drought-affected area who were able to keep their sons enrolled at the school struggled to pay fees. In many cases, the administration allowed the student to stay at the school on reduced or minimal fees.

A clear corollary of the pressure of small student numbers and the consequential change in the enrolment pattern for the school was low morale of the staff. This compounded the crisis that faced the school. This aspect was noted in the researcher's journal as a significant reason for the educational restructuring that took place at St John's College:

A significant factor which contributed to the 'malaise' of the school was that the school was attracting a very different clientele. More and more students from dysfunctional families were coming to the school. Significant behaviour problems were evident. This put additional stress on the discipline structures and contributed to the frustration felt by many teachers. (Researcher's Journal, p. 2)

Of major importance also was the fact that the low numbers of students put enormous pressure on the school as it struggled to maintain financial viability. This fact was recognised by the Queensland Catholic Education Commission which indicated that by 1994, the number of boarders was “below that required for financial viability” (QCEC Feasibility Study Report, April 1994, p. 24). The College was operating at a deficit and drawing upon its investments to function. The researcher recalls that in the early years of the educational restructuring, the College deficit for one year was in the vicinity of \$300,000 (Researcher’s Journal, p. 3). Further, there did not appear to be any prospect of a reduction in this deficit for subsequent years as the forecast of student numbers indicated further declines.

Recognising this situation, the school administration at St John’s College went to great lengths to attract students. Extensive television advertising, the production of short films, visits to overseas countries to attract foreign students, participation in the AusAID program, an emphasis on the education of indigenous students, and participation of staff and students at the various Agricultural Shows in the North West part of New South Wales, were all tried. However, the efforts failed to arrest the downward trend. In fact, the situation continued to get worse and only served to increase competition among boarding schools for the small pool of potential boarders. As noted in the researcher’s journal, “Competition amongst the boarding schools replaced cooperation. And the competition for the small number of potential boarding candidates was intense. Woodlawn was unable to compete” (Researcher’s Journal, p. 2).

Notwithstanding the valiant efforts of staff and parents to increase the student numbers, the trend in enrolments was clearly downward. The crisis was becoming clearer. Thus the College’s future, as a full boarders-only secondary school and even as an educational establishment in its own right, was uncertain and becoming extremely tenuous. St John’s College faced the distinct and real possibility of closure. The situation was becoming so serious that it could have been disastrous for everyone associated with the school. As one direction giver observed: “One alternative was just to close down and walk out and we thought we’d have a white elephant on our hands there” (Transcription KI 02, p. 2). The school was in an extremely awkward and dangerous predicament in terms of student population, curriculum, staff morale, finances and its prospects for the future.

6.2.1.2 *Decline in the Number of Marist Fathers Available for Secondary Education*

Compounding the rapid decline in the number of students attending the school, the presence of a high percentage of students from dysfunctional families, and the low morale of the staff was the fact that the number of Marist Fathers available to staff the school was also in decline. It also appeared that their interest in supporting the work of education at St John’s College was waning. Tables 6-3 and 6-4 show the number of Marist Fathers at St John’s College from 1984 to 1993.

Table 6-3 Number of Marist Fathers (priest and brothers) in the Community at St John’s College 1984 - 1993

Year	Teaching²⁰	Non-Teaching	Total
1985	8	4	12
1986	6	6	12
1987	5	6	11
1988	5	6	11
1989	5	7	12
1990	5	7	12
1991	4	8	12
1992	7	8	15
1993	5	7	12

Table 6-3 separates the Marists in the religious community into two groups. The reason is that besides being a place of ministry for the Marist Fathers (priests and brothers) actively engaged in the work of the school, St John’s College was also a residence for retired or semi-retired members of the Marist Fathers. Thus it was necessary to categorise the figures as either “teaching” or “non-teaching”. In terms of the financial viability of the school, the more relevant column is the ‘teaching’ column.

²⁰ Teaching group includes the College rectors.

Table 6-4 Number of Marist Fathers (priests and brothers) in the Community at St John's College 1994 - 2000

Year	Teaching²¹	Non-teaching	Total
1994	6	6	12
1995	4	5	9
1996	3	5	8
1997	4	4	8
1998	1	4	5
1999	1	5	6
2000	1	4	5

The tables, particularly Table 6-4, capture the significant downward trend in Marist Fathers available for work in the boarding school and illustrate that there were fewer and fewer Marist Fathers available to staff St John's College. This situation had been foreseen a decade before and had been one of the reasons that had prompted the Marist Fathers to consider restructuring the school in the mid-1980s.²² As one direction giver indicated during an interview:

I can remember initially it was John Jago as provincial really asking the whole question about whether Marists ought to be in education and whether even if they were to remain in education, would there be enough manpower to handle the school as we had done in the past. (Transcription PC 01, p. 1)

Over the years, particularly since the decision taken in 1984 not to proceed with some form of amalgamation with the Catholic schools in Lismore, the school had adjusted well to the diminishing number of Marist Fathers available for ministry at St John's College. More lay staff were appointed to undertake the tasks once performed only by Marists. Members of the teaching staff became housemasters and assumed full responsibility for students in the dormitories and in residential care. At the same time, however, the number of Marist Fathers available or willing to work at St John's College continued to decline.

²¹ Teaching group includes the College principal. This table shows how significant was the decline in the number of Marists at St John's College during the period of educational restructuring.

²² Marist Boarding School Study 1980-1982 – St John's College Woodlawn, March 27, 1982 Br. Patrick Fahy, FMS.

Gradually more Marists began to foresee a time when very few Marist Fathers, if any at all, would be available to work at St John's. The possibility of not having priests or brothers in the school was not of serious impact in itself. Religious orders continue to run schools without the presence of religious staff. However, in the context of this period of restructuring at St John's College, the scenario had two very serious implications.

What seems to have made this possibility more stressful is that having fewer Marist Fathers available for work in the school required more lay staff. This had clear consequences for the school's financial position, which was growing more precarious each year.²³ In addition, the absence of Marist Fathers had implications for the nature and type of Marist engagement in the school and the kind of association the Marists were willing to have with the College in the future. This was the more important issue. This was linked more directly with the second purpose of the educational restructuring: mission.

During an interview, one direction giver spoke of the restructuring with particular reference to the previous attempt to restructure the school in the 1980s. He referred to the fact that even at that stage there were signs of a need to transform the school:

The issue of Woodlawn and its future was on the agenda throughout the 80s. I think there were signs emerging that Woodlawn wouldn't survive in its current format. So there was some movement to transform it to another environment or another situation ...
(Transcription PC 01, p. 1)

At this point, in the early 1990s, it seems that the number of Marist Fathers who were willing to acknowledge and to discuss openly the possibility of a non-Marist future for St John's College was increasing. However, it certainly was not the commonly held opinion. Some Marist Fathers remembered the congregation's sudden and unsatisfactorily-handled departure from Chanel College, Geelong. That school "was virtually closed down and handed over to the Christian Brothers. There was still a lot of feeling against that move and thought there were other ways to

²³ Members of religious congregations who work in Catholic schools do not receive a salary or wage. Their congregation is given an amount of money for their services. The money is called a stipend which is considerably less than a salary.

proceed ...” (Transcription PC 01, p. 1). They did not wish to see the scenario repeated at St John’s College. Nevertheless, by 1994, and for the years immediately following, it is evident that the number of Marist Fathers available for ministry at St John’s College was declining and the attendant issue of congregational ownership, investment and participation in the school had come more to the fore as a serious pragmatic concern.

6.2.1.3 *Growing Recognition of the Problems*

With the backdrop of the crisis affecting the school, the Marist Fathers became aware of the seriousness of the school’s situation. As early as November 1992, in the light of staff disquiet about the future of St John’s College, the new provincial leader at the time informed the school that the Marist Fathers had made a strong commitment to the future of St John’s College. In a letter to the school principal and to the College Executive, he wrote that he was “... impressed with the keenness of both Marist and lay staff at Woodlawn to see Woodlawn prosper into the future ... I feel very confident that the present concerns and issues which have been raised can be addressed in a positive way ...” (Provincial Archives: Letter from Tony McCosker to Bill Ryder, November 2, 1992, p. 3).

The data clearly suggest that a number of direction givers also recalled that there was at the time a growing urgency about needing to acknowledge and to address the significant problems facing the school. They commented that there “were signs that we had to do something” (Transcription KI 06, p. 2), that “without the restructuring, Woodlawn would not have had a future ... we had to do something where it was going to be more viable ... There were signs that now was the time” (Transcription KI 07, pp. 1, 2 and 10), that the Marist Fathers “couldn’t keep supplying the personnel for the apostolate ... Something had to be done ... [and] it was getting harder and harder to make ends meet with on-going expenditure ... and less income” (Transcription KI 09, pp. 2-3), and that restructuring “was a necessity” (Transcription KI 12, p. 1).

In the provincial archives, the researcher came across an important letter written by the provincial to a staff member which reflected the provincial’s acute awareness of the seriousness of the problems facing St John’s College. The letter demonstrates the provincial’s assessment of the school’s fragile condition and indicates his strong

determination to address the problems facing the school. He used the word “crisis” to describe the school’s condition:

I am convinced that if we do not act in the near future in such a way as to ensure a future for Woodlawn, then Woodlawn itself and all positive aspects of “Tenete Traditiones” will be either a “dead duck” or very much a faint shadow of its former self ... Hence, I am prepared to present any possible solution to the crisis that is realistic for all concerned: however, we will not act in an independent fashion which may jeopardise the future of others involved in secondary education in the local area. (Provincial Archives: Letter from Tony McCosker to G. Green, July 2, 1993 – (1) p 7)

The letter indicates the provincial leader’s realistic assessment of the school’s situation and also reveals another significant factor: his steadfast position to counteract and oppose the pressure and resistance from some Marist Fathers and staff members who wanted to maintain the status quo. It is a clear and definitive statement that change was inevitable; some major restructuring of St John’s College had to take place.

This commitment to change is evident again in the provincial’s letter to the Chair of the Secondary School Authority of Lismore, but the exact nature of the intended change is unclear. At this stage of the restructuring, it appears as though the idea of change is limited to the continued independent existence of St John’s College. In a clear statement of the Marist Fathers’ position at the time, he wrote: “I can now see that Woodlawn should not enter into any amalgamation where it loses its identity or where the need for a boarding component was not accepted as a given” (Provincial Archives: Letter from Tony McCosker to Mary Cannane, August, 12, 1993, p. 1). Simultaneously, he puts forth a possible scenario for the remote future:

It is conceivable that in ten to fifteen years’ time the Marist Fathers may not be able to staff secondary education apostolates and this raises for us the question as to what the long-term future of the Marist Fathers and Woodlawn may be ... set up two secondary education establishments – at Woodlawn and in Lismore. (Provincial Archives: Letter from Tony McCosker to Mary Cannane, August 12, 1993 p. 1)

This letter shows a determination to forge a new future for the school by addressing the crisis occasioned by the pressing pragmatic concerns. A key direction giver later recalled:

... At that stage the provincial council was very much on board with the idea that we had to make some positive plans for Woodlawn ... In the minds of the provincial council and myself at that stage, was to save what had been developed at Woodlawn as much as we could but obviously to devolve it to the local education scene as that it could survive into the future and the Marist input wouldn't be totally lost.
(Transcription PC 01, p. 5)

While the evidence indicates the provincial leader was committed to finding a long-term solution to the 'crisis' at St John's College, at that point, the long-term considerations were not being addressed explicitly. The pragmatic concerns had created a crisis and were of immediate concern. They had taken centre stage and had to be dealt with.

A significant part of the process of taking serious steps to deal with the pragmatic concerns was a decision by the Marist Fathers in August 1993 to commission the Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) to undertake "a study of the feasibility of options that might increase enrolments" (QCEC Feasibility Study, April 1994, p. 31). This coincided with the researcher being approached to take up the role of principal at St John's College with a mandate to act as a 'change agent' (cf. Chapter One). The principal was also asked to cooperate fully with those who had been assigned by the QCEC to undertake the feasibility study. The data indicate that it is still clear at this time that the major purpose of the educational restructuring, through the feasibility study, was to address the pragmatic concerns and thereby to ensure the long-term survival of the College.

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission's feasibility study identified three possible enrolment options to increase student numbers. The first option included full boarding, weekly boarding, day boarding (single sex or co-educational). The second option included full boarding, weekly boarding, day boarding, and day students (single sex boarding with co-educational day students). The third option included full boarding, weekly boarding, day boarding, and day students (single sex).

The only enrolment option that was considered, and eventually implemented, related to boys' education. At the time, there was clear resistance to the possible introduction of co-education in any form.

Recognising the potential market for day students in the area, and suggesting that the school consider expanding the enrolment option to include day students as well as offering more flexible arrangements for boarders, the third of the QCEC recommendations was accepted by the Marist Fathers following widespread consultation and, the researcher as principal, along with the school community, developed plans to implement the changes.

The decision to introduce day students at St John's College initially met with some strong local opposition. It was felt that the move could impact negatively on Trinity Catholic College²⁴ and that it was outside St John's College's charter which was seen as being to cater for boarders only. The Marist Fathers acknowledged that "difficulties ... could be foreseen which in the end maybe insurmountable" (Report on Discussion between Tony McCosker, Peter McMurrich and Bill Ryder, July 28, 1993, par. 3, p. 2). However, following further discussions, the QCEC recommendations were eventually accepted and implemented in the 1995 academic year. Though very little time had been allocated to prepare for the introduction of day students - the feasibility study was released in April, 1994 and day students were re-introduced to the school in February, 1995 - the school was able to meet the challenge and to implement the changes smoothly.

However, the change in enrolment patterns was not a panacea. Despite the adoption of the new enrolment pattern of day students and the introduction of more flexible boarding arrangements, there was only a slight increase in the overall enrolments. It soon became clear that the pragmatic concerns which had been the catalyst for the restructuring at the College were much more serious than first thought. Three issues made this obvious. Firstly, towards the end of 1995, on the basis of prospective students and departing students, the net increase in students for the 1996 academic year was predicted to be only 8 – 10 students. Secondly, the Year 7 boarding

²⁴ Trinity Catholic College is the other Catholic secondary college in the Lismore area. While St John's College is situated 5kms outside the city, Trinity Catholic College is located within the city.

numbers were still declining and set to be the lowest in the school's history. And thirdly, 60% of the Year 7 intake of 58 students was non-Catholic.

In summary, the data clearly show that the purpose for the second major restructuring effort from 1994 to 2000 was initially driven by a need to address a crisis which had been occasioned by pragmatic concerns. As the Marist Fathers reflected on and engaged in consultation, however, the data indicate that there is a movement away from the concept of a continuing independent entity called St John's College to a more inclusive conceptual understanding. By July 1993, in calling for an educational restructure, the provincial and the provincial council were now open "to any possible solution to the crisis that [was] realistic for all concerned" (Woodlawn Archives: Letter From McCosker to G. Green, July 2, 1993 – (1) p.7). To this end, they sought professional advice from the QCEC and appointed a new principal with a mandate for change. However, the recommendations of the QCEC and the structural changes, based on purely pragmatic concerns, failed to address the fundamental issues confronting the school. Consequently, the purpose of this episode of educational restructuring at St John's College shifted from dealing with pragmatic concerns to the adoption of a clearer focus, one that endeavoured to address the broader and deeper question of 'mission'.

6.2.2 A Focus on Mission

In August 1993, at a specially convoked meeting of the provincial council, at which the principal at the time and the researcher as in-coming principal were in attendance, the decision was taken to initiate a feasibility study to look at future enrolment options for St John's College. As previously mentioned, the Queensland Catholic Education Commission was engaged to conduct this feasibility study.

While the focus of the discussion at that meeting was still clearly pragmatic, it is worth noting that in the report contained in the provincial archives concerning the difficult situation at St John's College, there is a record that the in-coming principal, the researcher, raised the concept of 'mission'. The Minutes show that he "asked whether, at Woodlawn, [the Marist Fathers] have completed our original mission" (Provincial Archives: Minutes of Provincial Council meeting, August 12, 1993). As it turned out, this was a significant intervention. Later the provincial took up this subject of 'mission' in his three point summary of the meeting and indicated that "a

need must exist at the College in line with our mission for us to continue there” (Provincial Archives: Minutes of Provincial Council meeting, August 12, 1993).

In hindsight this question about mission represented the beginnings of a paradigmatic shift in thinking away from the primary focus on pragmatic concerns about survival. Focus on the mission of the school and the presence of the Marist Fathers at St John’s College began to emerge and to take centre stage.

While the question of mission emerged formally for the first time in the data in 1993, it took some years to come to the fore, as pragmatic concerns continued to dominate. However, there was a change in the provincial leadership in 1995 and this event had clear implications for the re-emergence of the focus on ‘mission’ as the primary purpose of the educational restructuring.

6.2.2.1 *Mission of the Marist Fathers in the School*

At the beginning of his leadership, the new provincial’s letter to the Catholic Education Office in Lismore contained a very insightful comment concerning his understanding of the purpose of the educational restructuring at St John’s College, and foreshadowed a shift in the reason for the significant changes at the school. In the letter, he alluded to the success of the re-introduction of day students and said he believed there was a need for “re-imagining the vision” of the school in light of the fact that “between 35% and 40% of the student population are other religions” (Provincial Archives: Letter from Jim Carty to John Riley of the Catholic Education Office, Lismore, June 13, 1995).²⁵ More significantly, however, he demonstrated clarity in his understanding of the mission of the school when he wrote:

... it is very appropriate that a complete outsider – not an old boy or former teacher on staff – be responsible for this big transition.²⁶ Where will it end who knows? I believe the critical issue is the mission of the school – Christian education of youth. All other issues are secondary and should serve the primary task. (Provincial Archives:

²⁵ As of 15 June 1995 the school population stood at 323 students, of whom 55.7% were Catholic and 44.3% non-Catholic. In Years 7, 8 and 9 the non-Catholic students outnumbered the Catholic students.

²⁶ In fact, Ray Chapman was a former staff member, having taught at St John’s College from 1982 to mid-1984

Letter from Jim Carty to John Riley of the Catholic Education Office,
Lismore, June 13, 1995)

This statement clearly enunciated his thinking on the primary task and mission of the school, the “Christian education of youth”, and how other considerations concerning St John’s College should fit into this broader context. This was another watershed moment in the history of the episode of educational restructuring. Clearly, no longer was the purpose of the educational restructuring to be understood as tied to ensuring the existence of St John’s College as an independent school. Further, in a letter written the same day to the superior and members of the Marist community at St John’s College, he described the introduction of day students as a “survival move” which might “very well prove providential.” He also saw the move as “an important step towards an evolving vision for the future of Woodlawn” (Provincial Archives: Letter from Jim Carty to Chris Austin and Marist Community at St John’s College, June 13, 1995).

Here there is clear recognition that the issues the school was facing were not merely cosmetic or structural; according to the researcher, it was evident that they were of a more serious nature. Reporting to the Provincial Council in 1995, the researcher as principal wrote: “Woodlawn [St John’s College] needs to be ‘fired from within’ concerning its vision ... otherwise it will continue to be a ‘languishing dinosaur’” (Provincial Archives: Report from R. Chapman to Provincial Council June 15, 1995). A few months later in a memo to the Provincial Council, the provincial leader commented on the school’s inability to “adapt to changing realities”:

Woodlawn was founded to provide Christian education for the sons of Catholic families for North Coast NSW. Over the years the reality has changed dramatically but perhaps isolation, the success and development of its own subculture did not adapt to changing realities. Ten years ago it was provided with a real opportunity, but it would seem did not seize the moment ... Finally, we must seriously ask the question, do we as Marist Fathers have a future at Woodlawn? If so, what is that future? If not, how best to set in motion a process which will leave Woodlawn a viable secondary Christian educational institute? I believe we do not have the luxury of time to ponder these

critical questions for too long. (Provincial Archives: Memo to Provincial Council from Jim Carty, September 2, 1995)

Clearly, what emerges from the data is a greater willingness to ask ‘the bigger questions’ about vision and mission rather than changing mere structures. The questions now were concerned with: the very purpose of the school as a Catholic school; how the Marist Fathers understood the mission of St John’s College; and how the Marist Fathers understood their own mission as a religious congregation in relation to it. These questions emerged from what the provincial described as a “changing culture” in the school, and the changing culture which in turn had an impact on “the original vision and mission of the school ...” (Provincial Archives: Letter from Jim Carty to R. Chapman, September 21, 1995).

Six months later, in a letter to the Marist community at St John’s College, the provincial leader explicitly put the whole restructuring question in the wider context of Marist mission:

If the current trend continues, and all indicators suggest that it will, within five years Woodlawn will have as many as 60 or 70 per cent non-Catholic. This is an enormous transition, for it goes to the very heart of vision and stated mission of the Marist Fathers who founded Woodlawn. This is not to say that teaching non-Catholic students is not a valid ministry ... But the transition must not only be recognised but a new vision articulated and a new mission statement proposed to give purpose to the enterprise. To assume that the original vision and mission is still operating, or to see these percentages as a transitional time hoping that the trend will be reversed, would be to make a serious and perhaps fatal mistake ... if it is to succeed, [the Marist Fathers] must clearly know what the vision and mission of the enterprise are ... There is nothing more destructive to any human endeavour when those who are responsible for that enterprise are not unified around a common vision and mission. (Provincial Archives: Letter from Jim Carty to Marist Community at St John’s College, January 10, 1996, p. 2)

As the educational restructuring progressed, the broader question about the mission of the school and the Marist Fathers at St John's College had moved to the fore. The original and central mission of the College had been to provide a secondary education for youth from isolated areas; it was established as a boarding school (Marist Fathers, 1981, p. 7). However, it became clear that that particular need no longer existed. Local Catholic secondary schools had been built in St John's College's catchment areas and they were meeting that need. Further, the high percentage of non-Catholic students at St John's College seemed to indicate that its understanding of its vision and mission had to change to meet the new, changing circumstances.

6.2.2.2 *Mission of the School within the Diocese*

In April 1996, aware of the new challenges that came with the re-introduction of day students, the Marist Fathers considered asking for a second research study with a broader purpose than the first. Its aim was to "research the challenges confronting St John's College Lismore in the areas of its functioning", and "to ascertain the needs of the diocese in secondary education and determine possible roles for St John's College within that framework" (Provincial Archives: Minutes of Secondary Education Apostolate meeting, April 9–10, 1996, pp. 1-2). In May 1996, the Marist Fathers' leadership formalised their decision and requested that a second feasibility study be undertaken by the Queensland Catholic Education Commission. This time co-education was placed on the agenda and identified as a clear area for further investigation (Provincial Archives: Letter from Jim Carty to Garry Everett of Queensland Catholic Education Commission, May 8, 1996).

An interim report arising out of this second study was presented to the provincial on February 19, 1997 and the final report was submitted on April 14, 1997. In a clear statement to his council on April 7, 1997, based on the report's significant findings, the provincial leader indicated that "... we believe the future of Woodlawn College, as it is now constituted, is finished" (Woodlawn Archives: Direct quote referred to in a Letter to Staff from R, Chapman, May 23, 1997). This was in response to the QCEC report's "over-riding conclusion". This was stated directly and clearly:

The over-riding conclusion, based on those above, and on extensive discussions with the Provincial (Team), is that the original mission of

the Marist Fathers to conduct a boarding College at St John's, Woodlawn has come to an end. The Marist Fathers no longer have the personnel nor the necessary drive to sustain a major educational endeavour in the spirit to which they have been accustomed. An era has been concluded. (St John's College, Woodlawn: A Planning Exercise – Final Report, April 14, 1997, p. 12)

In speaking of this clear finding in his interview, the Queensland Catholic Education Commission consultant who oversaw the feasibility study recognised it as “radical” statement. Yet it accurately summed up the Commission's findings. The consultant described the implications of the statement in the following words:

... [It was] one of our clear conclusions and it sort of laid the platform for more changes of a radical nature if you like. Once you could see that the mission, as we always understood it at Woodlawn, had, through historical processes, reached its conclusion, it had finished, then a new kind of mission could emerge ... it would be a different mission to a different group of students a whole new scenario at the College could happen. (Transcription KI 04, p. 13)

This was an extremely significant moment in history of the Marist Fathers, the school, the diocese and the educational restructuring of the College, because the clear observation made by the Queensland Catholic Education Commission touched the very reason for the existence of the school both in its own right as well as an apostolate of the Marist Fathers. As one of the key direction gives put it, the school was “no longer a viable operation, in terms of its original focus” (Transcription PC 03, p. 8).

The initial purpose of the educational restructuring, to address the crisis facing the school which had been occasioned by pragmatic concerns, had inexorably developed and evolved into an understanding of the very purpose of the school itself and the Marist Fathers' involvement. Consequently it was now recognised that the Marist Fathers had to find a new vision and mission for St John's College and design new organisational structures that reflected the new vision and mission. This understanding eventually led to the closure of boarding, to the introduction of co-education, to the relinquishment of both the governance and ownership of St John's

College from the Marist Fathers to the local parish, and to the passing of management of the College to the local Catholic Education Office.

6.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

It is clear from the data that there was a significant shift in the understanding of the purpose for the educational restructuring of St John's College. In short, the shift in the purpose was from addressing pragmatic concerns to ensure the survival of St John's College as an independent boys' boarding school to a focus on mission. This shift is consistent with theoretical developments in respect to educational change and leadership. It also reflects a growing appreciation of the Marist Fathers' spirituality and philosophy of education as well as a personalist understanding of moral behaviour and the common good. Overall, this shift in purpose reflects the intention to humanise educational change and bring 'new life' to the school community.

As discussed in Chapter Three, researchers (Bolman & Deal, 1997; Bush, 2003; House & McQuillan, 1998) offer different images or metaphors of the school as organisation that, in turn, suggest different perspectives on the purpose of educational change (cf. Table 3-1). The perspective of the school as machine became the dominant image of the school as organisation and, within that understanding, educational change is described as rational-structural change and the purpose of educational change is understood in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, product, fixed outcomes and institutional well-being (Evans, 1996). Over time, however, theorists moved away from the perspective of the school as machine by pointing to the school as culture (Fullan, 2007; Starratt, 2003) and the purpose of educational change became linked to the notion of cultural transformation or "reculturing" (Fullan, 2007, p. 177). Parallel to this theoretical development, others (Hargreaves, 1998; Smeed, et al., 2009) have highlighted the political nature of the school as organisation. This perspective of the school as polity linked the purpose of educational change to "socially responsible goals" (Sachs, 2003, p. 154) with a view "to challenging taken-for-granted aspects of school and teachers' practice in order to improve student learning outcomes and student performance" (p. 84).

However, despite this theoretical development, the literature continued to point to the hegemonic status of the perspective of the school as machine, and notes with

concern that educational change was now “a calculative science” (Hargreaves, 2000). In other words, that educational change was too “preoccupied with effective and efficient means to change schools, teachers and others with little regard for normative issues, purposes and the lifeworld consequences of proposed changes” (Sergiovanni, 2000, p. 73). Consequently, by the mid-1990s, there were recommendations in the literature (e.g. Evans, 1996) to humanise educational change by re-framing its core purpose in terms of human well-being and development. This recommendation is consistent with a perspective of the school as living system, and offers an alternative to “machine models of schools” (Senge, 2000, p. 52) by highlighting “relationships and not things” (p. 52) and assuming that the living system is “auto poetic or self-producing” (p. 53).

When the understanding of living systems is applied to the operation of the school, people come to appreciate the school as a social construction which is always evolving. The school is constantly in the process of being constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed as a result of human agency within social networks. Here the purpose of educational change is linked to the notion of success in terms of “deep, powerful, high performance” student learning (Hargreaves & Fink, 2000, April, p. 30) and organisational sustainability that “meet[s] new challenges and complexity in a way that does not damage individuals or the wider community but builds capacity and capability to be successful in demanding contexts” (B. J. Davies & Davies, 2006, p. 14). Thus, this concern for success and sustainability is about achieving a moral purpose shown by:

... (1) raising the bar and closing the gap of student learning; (2) treating people with demanding respect (moral purpose is supportive, responsive, and demanding, depending on the circumstances); and (3) altering the social environment (e.g. schools and districts for the better). (Fullan, 2005a, p. 15)

In light of this literature, it can be seen that the shift in purpose identified in this study reflects the perspective of the school as living system and the emergent theories of educational change and leadership. During this episode of educational change the direction givers at St John’s College initially saw the school as a machine and accepted “the beguiling implication that ultimately the universe could be

understood completely ... Once you analyse the parts, the world can be predicted and controlled” (Senge, 2000, p. 29). The engagement of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission to undertake “a study of the feasibility of options that might increase enrolments” (QCEC Feasibility Study, April 1994, p. 31), the appointment of a new principal mandated as ‘change agent’ (cf. Chapter One), and the attempts to negotiate with Trinity Catholic College and the diocese of Lismore, suggest that the direction givers saw educational restructuring at St John’s College as rational-structural change. Moreover, they understood the purpose of this educational restructuring primarily in terms of institutional well-being.

Over time, however, their focus changed as they adopted a mission focus consistent with the Marist Fathers’ spirituality and philosophy of education. This mission focus, in turn, provided a moral purpose for this episode of educational restructuring at St John’s College. The Marist Fathers, through this episode, were thereby able to reclaim their founding sense of mission and to realign themselves again with the key focus of education, that is, the needs of students.

The literature on strategic leadership alerts educationalists to the need for such clarity in purpose. Vaill (1989) devised his own word to describe the process of maintaining connection with fundamental purposes. The word is “purposing” (p. 52). Purposing is a “... continuous stream of actions by an organization’s formal leadership that has the effect of inducing clarity, consensus, and commitment regarding the organization’s basic purposes” (p. 52). It is particularly important in the context of complexity and chaos, the context of ‘surprise’. “Surprises call into question what you’re trying to do. Surprises force organization members to integrate the actions they were taking before the surprise with the actions the surprise itself requires *and still* stay on course regarding the main purposes” (p. 52). Evans (1996) echoes similar sentiments when he says, “For reform to work, everyone involved must be clear about its purpose, policies and procedures” (p. 77). For Fullan (2005a), strategic leadership means “engag[ing] in the complexities of continuous improvement consistent with deep values of human purpose” (p. ix). The educational leader is effective as a change agent only when there is clear moral purpose.

As discussed in Chapter Two, a number of major themes inform the Marist Fathers' philosophy of education (Marist Fathers, 2006). Firstly, Marist philosophy clearly identifies the formation of the person as its primary purpose. In this education philosophy, the educator is seen as a person who collaborates with the Creator and who is called upon to reveal to a student his or her true identity. Thus the Marist approach is not concerned solely with academic development; it is about forming character. Secondly, in this creative process, the teacher is encouraged to respect the dignity and participation of the student. The Marist philosophy encourages teachers to be "warm-hearted" (Marist Fathers, 1979, p. 2) and conscious of how their example 'speaks' to their pupils. In this context, it is recommended that authority be used "with a calm inner strength" (Marist Fathers, 2006, p. 8) as a mark of respect for personal dignity.

Thus, by adopting a mission focus during this episode of educational restructuring, the direction givers were motivated by a moral purpose that is successful in terms of the achievement of "deep, powerful, high performance" student learning (Hargreaves & Fink, 2000, April, p. 30), ensures sustainability that "meet[s] new challenges and complexity in a way that does not damage individuals or the wider community" (B. J. Davies & Davies, 2006, p. 14). Evans (1996) illuminates this dimension of educational change when he puts forward the view that "change is a generative process" (p. xii). In other words, change is intended to give life, to improve situations, and it achieves this when those engaged in educational change recognise that the ultimate purpose of educational change is to humanise. He writes, "change requires a belief in the potential for improving people" and "to truly accomplish all that we can, we must hold fast to the core commitments that give life ..." (Evans, 1996, p. 299) The change in the understanding of the purpose of the educational restructuring at St John's College from pragmatic concerns to a focus on mission, released "core commitments that give life". It allowed St John's College to move forward with a new moral purpose.

6.4 CONCLUSION

This study has identified two major findings in response to the first research question: How did the direction givers understand the *purpose* of educational restructuring at St John's College? Initially, the direction givers within this episode

of educational restructuring were motivated by pressing pragmatic concerns that threatened the survival of the College. However, in the course of the educational restructuring, the focus shifted to one of mission, and the Marist Fathers' spirituality and educational philosophy informed the project. This spirituality and philosophy of education provided a moral purpose that was consistent with both emergent theories of educational change.

In light of this display and the discussion of these findings, the chapter concludes by offering the following theoretical proposition:

Theoretical Proposition One: Different understandings of purpose may inform educational restructuring. Educational restructuring may be motivated by pragmatic concerns as well as moral purposes. It is important to identify the underlying purpose of educational restructuring as different types of purposes elicit different responses. Pragmatic purposes focus on rational-structural change in the interest of efficiency, effectiveness, product and fixed outcomes with the intention of ensuring institutional well-being. Moral purposes focus on the mission of the school, and go beyond structural change to focus on student learning, individual well-being and social relationships. Here the intention is to humanise educational change and bring 'new life' to the school community.

Following this theoretical proposition, Chapter Seven discusses the findings of this study with respect to the *process* of educational restructuring at St John's College.

Chapter Seven: Display and Discussion of Findings - Process

7.1 INTRODUCTION

As discussed in the previous chapter, the *purpose* of the educational restructuring as understood by the direction givers shifted from addressing pragmatic concerns to adopting a mission focus. This shift in purpose was also reflected in how the direction givers understood the *process* of educational restructuring. This chapter displays and discusses the findings of the study in terms of the direction givers' understandings of the *process* of educational restructuring at St John's College. In doing so, the chapter addresses the second research question:

How did the direction givers understand the *process* of educational restructuring at St John's College?

The chapter concludes by presenting a second theoretical proposition with respect to the process of educational restructuring.

7.2 DISPLAY OF FINDINGS

Overall, the data indicate that the direction givers appeared to have better understandings of the processes than of the purpose of the educational restructuring at St John's College. This could be due firstly to the fact that, as direction givers, they had greater exposure to and involvement in the restructuring that took place at the local level. Secondly, they were very much involved in the process at the decision-making level. As direction givers, they participated more directly in the practical aspects of the restructuring than general staff members, particularly through consultation, discussion, and informal dialogue. This was especially true during the key phases of its implementation.

As the study progressed and the data were collected, analysed and interpreted, a number of key themes and sub-themes emerged. The key themes to emerge from the research on *process* are Managerial Processes and Organic Processes. In respect to the Managerial Processes, the sub-themes are: Top-down Decision-making and Linear Planning. With respect to the Organic Processes, the sub-themes are: Open

and Honest, Consultation and Collaboration, and Professional Expertise. These key themes and their associated sub-themes are displayed in Table 7-1.

This chapter will present the display of data for each of the key themes and their respective sub-themes. This will follow the sequence indicated in Table 7-1. The discussion of the key themes and sub-themes will follow the display of data. The chapter finishes with a conclusion which draws together the major findings and provides a commentary on their significance in light of the literature on educational change.

Table 7-1 Display of Data on Process according to Themes and Sub-themes that Emerged from the Research Study

Research Question 2: Process	
Themes	Sub-themes
Managerial Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top-down Decision-making • Linear Planning
Organic Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open and Honest • Consultation and Collaboration • Professional Expertise

In short, this study found that, over time, the key direction givers relied on different processes. At first they relied on managerial processes to the restructuring. Later this evolved into a more organic approach.

7.2.1 Managerial Processes

Initially, the direction givers relied on managerial processes to ensure educational restructuring at St John’s College. As discussed in Section 6.2.1, motivated by pragmatic concerns around student enrolment and staffing, the provincial leaders were committed to finding a solution to the ‘crisis’ at St John’s College. As a consequence, in late 1993, the Marist Fathers commissioned the Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) to undertake “a study of the feasibility of options that might increase enrolments” (QCEC Feasibility Study, April 1994, p. 31). At the same time, the researcher was approached to take up the role of principal at St John’s College and he was mandated to act as a ‘change agent’ (cf. Chapter One) and to cooperate fully with the researchers from the QCEC. The

feasibility study recommended the enrolment of day students as well as the introduction of more flexible options for boarding, such as day-boarders and weekly boarders.

The Marist Fathers recognised that at the local level the opposition from the Catholic school authorities in Lismore to the recommendations was a challenge which could have, in fact, become an obstacle to achieving a positive outcome. One key direction giver observed that the difficulties had the potential to be “insurmountable” (Report on Discussion between Tony McCosker, Peter McMurrich and Bill Ryder July 28, 1993, par. 3, p 2). As it turned out, following further discussion with those opposed to the changes, the QCEC recommendations were finally implemented in the 1995 academic year. However, despite the enrolment of day students and the introduction of more flexible arrangements for boarders, there were sufficient indicators to suggest that the pragmatic concerns which had been the initial catalyst for the restructuring at the College belied more serious and weightier concerns.

Three issues made this situation obvious. Firstly, towards the end of 1995, it was predicted that, on the basis of prospective students and departing students, the net increase in students for the 1996 academic year would be only 8–10 students. Secondly, the boarding numbers for Year 7 were set to be the lowest in the school’s history. And thirdly, 60% of the Year 7 intake of 58 students was non-Catholic. Recognising this situation required some response and one of the direction givers commented:

So that I think when Father Ray, you came after Father Bill Ryder, we were in a period where the place was all of a sudden you could look and say, “hang on, the numbers were dwindling!” ... [once] you put all that sort of stuff together and you start to get a culture where people are saying “hang on where’s the future of this place going?” ... I think they were all signs that we had to do something. (Transcription KI 06, pp. 1-2)

7.2.1.1 *Top-down Decision-making*

Though there was a strong sense among the Marist Fathers and the staff at the school that “we had to do something” (Transcription KI 06, pp. 2), the direction givers were quite open in their acknowledgement that they considered it was the responsibility of the provincial leaders and their councils to take the initiative and to make the

decisions. This belief was reinforced by the clear awareness that the school was facing a crisis (cf. Chapter 6). In this context, a number of direction givers felt that at that time there was an urgent need for top-down decision-making and they looked to the provincial administration to take the lead.

Responding to this need in the early 1990s, the provincial administration, while accepting the existence of some school-based opposition to change, was however determined that, in the light of the critical situation facing the school, it was necessary for it to bring about effective change. As one direction giver stated:

I think we'd reached a point where there'd been enough time for issues to emerge and so much talking had been done that this was going to devolve into a slush heap if action wasn't taken. There was going to be a quagmire of inaction, people's morale would drop even more grossly than it did when we made a decision that they didn't like, if this was just to linger on and it was going to be a slow death. If anything positive was to be taken out of this situation then we were at a point where leadership had to step in and make some decisions. I guess if I did anything at that stage, I judged that this was the time to do it, that we couldn't afford for the situation to continue downhill. (Transcription PC 01, p. 12)

This top-down decision-making process did not involve putting pressure on those who were participants in the process of educational restructuring. As will be seen later, there was a genuine commitment on the part of the major decision makers to a process of consultation and collaboration. Even though the provincial and his administration accepted ultimate responsibility, they were always willing to receive advice (cf. 7.2.2.2).

Consultation in fact was a very significant aspect of the approach to the educational restructuring adopted by the provincial administration over the years. For example, the Queensland Catholic Education Commission was engaged in 1993 to give advice to the provincial administration about enrolment patterns. Further, in April 1997, the provincial leader at the time set up a key consultative committee, the Woodlawn College Working Party. The role of this committee was to advise the provincial and council about the restructuring of the College. As part of its work, it realised that it needed to make clear its own understanding of who possessed the ultimate

responsibility for making the decisions concerning the school, and especially who was responsible for resolving the question about boarding. The Working Party acknowledged that “The Marist Fathers will ultimately make the decisions about the future of the College” (Archives Woodlawn: Facsimile from K. Hughes to R. Chapman, June 9, 1997).

7.2.1.2 *Linear Planning*

Notwithstanding the provincial leaders’ determination to act decisively in moving towards a solution to the crisis facing St John’s College, the direction of the educational restructuring at the beginning was “objective, linear [and] long range” (Evans, 1996, p. 7). One of the direction givers made this point during an interview:

I think at that stage the Provincial Council were very much on board with the idea that we had to make some positive plans for Woodlawn. What did we want it to be? At the end of the day we would say “what was the purpose of doing something?” In the minds of the Provincial Council and myself at that stage, was [the intention] to save what had been developed there at Woodlawn as much as we could, but obviously to devolve it to the local education scene so that it could survive into the future and the Marist input wouldn’t be totally lost. (Transcription PC 01, p. 5)

Unaware at that time of where the process of educational restructuring would finally lead, the data indicate that the provincial and council in the pursuit of long-term goals wanted to move towards formulating a clear and precise plan that would incorporate rational, objective decision-making based on accurate measurement (cf. both the Queensland Catholic Education Commission Feasibility Study, April, 1994 and the Queensland Catholic Education Commission Planning Exercise of April 14, 1997).

7.2.2 *Organic Processes*

The election of a new provincial leader in 1995 hastened the development of an organic approach to the educational restructuring. Recognising the seriousness of the problem facing St John’s College, he advocated a ‘mission focus’ with respect to future directions. It is clear that in making this decision, he replaced managerial

decision-making and planning with organic processes. Here there was an understanding of the importance of open and honest processes, consultation and collaboration, as well as the use of professional expertise. Thus the desired outcome of the episode of restructuring was no longer perceived as something that would come as the result of a deliberate plan or a ‘managed’ process. It began to be perceived as something that would evolve or emerge through flexible and adaptable planning.

7.2.2.1 *Open and Honest Process*

The data indicate that the Marist Fathers maintained an attitude of openness and honesty for the full period of the episode of educational restructuring. In the preliminary stages of the restructuring, the Marist provincial at the time wrote to a key staff member concerning the process. His letter contains a clear indication that in considering the future of the school no option would be excluded and the Marist Fathers would be open to whatever comes. In effect, he was saying that all the Marist Fathers’ ‘cards were on the table’. The only condition he placed on any solution was that it must be “realistic” and would not represent “independent” action that would “jeopardise the future of others involved in secondary education in the local area” (Woodlawn Archives: Letter from Tony McCosker to Gordon Green, July 2, 1993 – (1) p. 7).

It is obvious that the intention of the Marist Fathers was to think broadly concerning the future of St John’s College, and to display a willingness to see it linked to the schools in the local area. The provincial leader, encouraged by the positive reports which had come from the informal meetings between the principal and the bishop and between the principal of St John’s College and the principal of Trinity Catholic College at the time, wrote to the members of the Trinity Catholic College Board of Directors in June 1993. In that letter he indicated that the Marist Fathers were interested in opening up discussions concerning “various future possibilities”. Also in the letter, he mentioned the “interlinking of the two schools or possibly amalgamation” (Provincial Archives: Letter from Tony McCosker to Trinity Board of Directors, June 1, 1993). In response, the Chair of the Catholic Secondary School Authority of Lismore wrote and acknowledged the provincial leader’s desire to begin

negotiations with Trinity for the “best provision of Catholic education in the area” (Provincial Archives: Letter from Mary Cannane to Tony McCosker, June 21, 1993).

It is clear from this important correspondence that the provincial leader was making a strong statement of his position concerning the future of St John’s College. He showed that he was honest in his dealings with both staff and the Lismore Catholic Secondary School Authority and was openly convinced that St John’s College could not remain isolated. He felt the Marist Fathers had a moral obligation to respect and to work with those locally involved in Catholic secondary education; and that while he was still motivated “to ensure a future for Woodlawn”, this future could not be pursued independently of the diocesan scene. His view was reinforced when he wrote, “While there is a possibility of dialogue and cooperation, surely it would be better to pursue such rather than step over the top of other situations in order to ensure our own survival” (Provincial Archives: Letter from Tony McCosker to Gordon Green in reply to Gordon Green’s letter, July 2, 1993). However, it is not surprising that this initiative did not receive much sympathy from some of the Trinity Catholic College Board members. At a meeting of the Marist Fathers’ provincial and some of the Trinity Catholic College Board members, it was made clear by one of the latter that amalgamation would mean “the death of Woodlawn” and that “the entire system at Woodlawn would be subsumed by Trinity College” (Provincial Archives: Provincial Council Memo, July 16, 1993, par. 2, p. 1).

One direction giver, a long-serving member of staff who had a wealth of experience concerning the school’s system of operation, confirmed the opinion expressed by many of the direction givers in the research study concerning the Marist Fathers’ openness and honesty. The direction giver stated:

... I think [the Marist Fathers] did it in a business-like way well. They were up-front about what was happening. I don’t think there were any secrets, like deals that were happening that the staff didn’t know about. So I think it was all there for everyone to see. (Transcription KI 11, p. 8)

From the initial consultation with the staff about the difficulties facing the College until the end of the restructuring, the direction givers did not feel that any information had been withheld, or that the provincial administration was being

manipulative, or that there was any hidden agenda. The staff and all the Marist Fathers, both those at St John's College and those involved in secondary education elsewhere, were fully informed of the five options that the Marist Fathers were considering as possibilities for the future of St John's College. In the background was the radical option of closing the school altogether. The five options under consideration early in the process of restructuring and presented to all stakeholders were:

1. Maintain the status quo;
2. Amalgamate with Trinity Catholic College;
3. Make St John's College a boarding hostel only;
4. Introduce Weekly Boarders;
5. Open up the school to female boarders.

As mentioned already, at the end of a very significant and important meeting with key representatives of the local Catholic school community, during which all the options concerning the future of St John's College were tabled and discussed, it was recognised by some of the direction givers that "difficulties could be foreseen which in the end maybe insurmountable" (Report on Discussion between Tony McCosker, Peter McMurrich and Bill Ryder, July 28, 1993, par. 3, p. 2). Even though the Marist Fathers involved in secondary education and the staff at St John's College had indicated that they too were not in favour of many of the options proposed, the provincial remained committed to a process that was both honest and open. In an interview a key direction giver recalled that, following a meeting with the staff in the early 1990s, the provincial administration adopted a clear strategic position. The strategy involved "making the right appointments ... making sure everyone was heard ... communicat[ing] back to staff what we felt about the situation" (Transcription PC 01, p. 9).

This open approach is evident in the way the Marist Fathers placed themselves in a vulnerable position from the outset of the restructuring process and the willingness of the members of the provincial administration to answer all questions from interested parties. One direction giver pointed out that the significance of the school

in the minds and hearts of the members of the province alone demanded this openness. He said, "... we realised that we were dealing with something very close to the heart of the province and something that needed to be approached with a great deal of care and sensitivity" (Transcription PC 03, p. 3). Towards the end of his interview he put the matter even more succinctly:

I think at all times we try to act with absolute fairness and generosity to everybody and I suppose operating in that way you make things, at times, more difficult for yourself in going that extra mile but sometimes too, in doing that, ultimately the outcome is rewarding. (Transcription PC 03, p. 13)

One of the direction givers involved in the research study was a senior consultant with the Queensland Catholic Education Commission. A person with a wealth of experience in educational change, he was instrumental in the two independent surveys conducted during the restructuring period. He drew attention to the availability of the members of the provincial administration during the restructuring process, their willingness to answer questions, and their preparedness to be held accountable. He said, "I think they tried to do all the good things that you do in major change programs. They were high profile themselves, they were there, they were available to people, they answered their questions" (Transcription KI 04, p. 23).

Another direction giver recalled this feature of the provincial administration. During his interview he indicated:

Any dealings I had with the Provincial Council, with the provincial, were nothing but ... open and honest and I didn't walk away from any one of those meetings feeling as though there was an interest they had to protect or in any way that there was an agenda not clear to others around the table. (Transcription KI 05, pp. 9–10)

It needs to be remembered that the Marist Fathers, as a group, did not hold a common position on the question of restructuring of the school with respect to a number of facets. In fact, there were diametrically opposing views on some issues. However, this fact in itself attests to the openness and honesty of the approach taken by the provincial administrations. There is no evidence in the data to suggest that

there were attempts to develop a ‘party line’. And in fact, some of the Marists who held diametrically opposing views were on the staff of the school. They were particularly opposed to any restructuring that might involve the phasing out of boarding. At the same time, there were some who were not in favour of co-education. This divergence of opinion among the Marists was common knowledge among the staff, parents, students, ex-students and members of the local Catholic community.

During an interview in which a discussion took place about the vulnerable position of the Marist Fathers, issues pertaining to school change, and the implications of the public announcement about the challenges facing the Marist Fathers, a senior member of staff referred to the challenge as a twofold ‘struggle’. One part of the struggle referred to the difficulty of making such significant and difficult decisions. The other part was a reference to the fact that the divergence of views among the Marists was known publicly. He commented, “But I think [the Marist Fathers] struggled with having to make such a public proclamation about changing their school and saying that they wanted to change direction. I think they struggled with that in themselves” (Transcription KI 07, p. 15).

As mentioned above, what might appear to some outsiders as a ‘break in the ranks’, paradoxically confirms the fact that the process adopted by the provincial administration was extremely open. As already mentioned, there is no evidence of an attempt to develop or to insist on the adoption of a ‘party line’ or to deny any person, be he/she a Marist, staff member, parent, student or friend of the school, from having a voice in the consultation process and being heard.

These comments indicate clearly that the restructuring of St John’s College was a struggle for the Marist Fathers as well as for all those directly involved in the school. However, it was a price they were willing to pay in order to find the best solution for the school. And further, it shows a genuine commitment on the part of the Marist Fathers to engage in the process in an open and honest way for the common good and to act with moral purpose.

7.2.2.2 Consultation and Collaboration

The research study indicates that the direction givers also recognised that the restructuring process was characterised by wide-ranging and extensive consultation and collaboration. The commitment to use wide-reading consultation indicates that the provincial and council were seeking the kind of information that would help them to arrive at the “best possible solution” (Memo Jim Carty to Provincial Council, June 16, 1997).

Early in the 1990s the provincial administration had made a decision to proceed with significant change. As one direction giver expressed it, the Marist Fathers decided that:

... [they] were not going to sit around to let the school go down the gurgler ... We pointed out that, yes, there was a lot of resistance, that there would be a lot of heartache in any change, but get used to the fact that change is on and that’s what you’re going to have to deal with in the next few years. (Transcription PC 01, p. 9)

Appreciating the magnitude of the change that was ahead, the key direction givers were willing to engage everyone in the process who had an interest in the school and they wanted to “carry as many people with us as we could” (Transcription PC 01, p. 10) through a process of dialogue and consultation.

One direction giver said that he was committed to getting the best advice possible and some “objective assessment”. Part of this commitment involved approaching the Queensland Catholic Education Commission and engaging in consultation with many other bodies. During his interview, the direction giver recalled:

... we took a lot of counsel as to how we should go about facing what we saw was the apparent reality of declining numbers and the impossibility, we thought, of long term survival ... we realised we needed to get an objective assessment from an outside entity that had some credibility. So that is when we engaged the Queensland Catholic Education [Commission] ... it was a critical decision because it gave us some independent information and ammunition for the process of the decision. (Transcription PC 02, pp. 1-2)

He also explains why the Marist Fathers had to “maximise the consultation process”:

... it became very clear to us on the council that because of the significance again of Woodlawn in the life of the province, that we had to maximise the consultation process even though perhaps we could see for ourselves very clearly where it was going. The final decision we were uncertain about but we knew things had to change and if they didn't, it would be the final days of Woodlawn. (Transcription PC 02, p. 13)

The province-wide consultation also included discussion at the Provincial Chapter of 1996. A Provincial Chapter, as the highest decision-making body in a province, has considerable authority. Chapter decisions are of such legal and moral standing that the provincial leader is canonically obliged to implement them. The delegates to the 1996 Chapter were kept well informed of the situation at St John's College. In reference to the second research study, conducted by the QCEC, the official record of the Chapter states:

The Chapter supports the research being currently undertaken by the QCEC into St John's College, and the Provincial Administration is asked to act on the findings of the report when it is handed down in June, 1997. (Provincial Archives: 1996 Provincial Chapter Approved the Following Statements (n.d.) Second Session, September 30 – October 4, 1996)

As well as the Provincial Chapter delegates, the members of the Secondary Education Apostolate group were long-term participants in the consultation process and their advice was highly valued. In addition, “Working Papers” prepared by the provincial council were circulated frequently. These encouraged and sought comments, suggestions, and feedback.

Referring to the consultative approach adopted by the Marist Fathers, one direction giver spoke positively of how the provincial administration implemented the restructuring process and listened to the staff. In his interview he expressed his view in the following manner:

They handled it, I thought, very well. Everything they did they were able to listen to staff, they took those things on board. They went away, developed other ideas, came back and presented them again. They certainly didn't come in and say 'Look, this is it, we're out of here in 2001' or whatever it is and 'Sorry we're just going to make a quick decision as to what we're going to do with the school'. They didn't take that approach. I think they were very conscious of the kids, the parents, and the staff in particular. Even though they probably felt the tension from staff when they were trying to address them and keep things on an even keel. I thought you guys handled it very, very well. (Transcription KI 03, p. 9)

The extensive consultation undertaken by the provincial and the vicar provincial included not only frequent visits to the school and attendance at staff meetings, but also consultation with parents through attendance at Parents and Friends' Meetings, frequent written communication to boarder parents, and more regular contact with the parents of day students. It also involved discussions with the bishop, members of the Diocesan Education Board, the Catholic Education Office, Trinity Catholic College Governing Council, etc. All of this is clear evidence of the commitment made by the Marist Fathers to consult widely in order to ensure that each of the stakeholders had an opportunity to inform and to shape the discussion and to contribute to the decision-making process.

Further evidence of this strong commitment is that during the course of the educational restructuring from 1994 to 2000, nine committees were established to provide interested parties the opportunity to engage fully in the process of consultation and decision-making. Each committee had an important role to play and contributed significantly to the discernment process and reinforced the commitment made by the provincials and their councils to consult widely. A list of the committees, their purpose and tenure, as well as the key people who were involved in them, is included as Appendix 1.

However, it was clear that consultation did not mean decision-making. As early as April 1997, one of the key consultative committees, the Woodlawn College Working Party, had been set up to give advice to the provincial and council about the

restructuring of the College. The Woodlawn College Working Party was composed of the provincial, the vicar-provincial, the College principal, and a professional management consultant. As part of its work, the committee realised that it needed to make clear its own understanding of who possessed the ultimate responsibility for making the decisions concerning the school and particularly who was responsible for resolving the question about boarding. The Working Party was quite clear that “The Marist Fathers will ultimately make the decisions about the future of the College” (Woodlawn Archives: Facsimile from K. Hughes to R. Chapman, June 9, 1997).

When there is extensive consultation and consensus building, it is easy for confusion to arise. The line between consultation and consensus can become blurred. While the provincial administration took advice and counsel from many quarters, it clearly understood that it had the responsibility for making the ultimate decisions, and thus for ensuring that the ‘common good’ was being guarded. No doubt the memory of the attempted amalgamation with the Lismore schools in the mid-1980s, and the subsequent unpleasant feelings arising from the decision of the Marist Fathers to withdraw from the process because of the reaction of staff at the school, was fresh in the minds of the provincial administration. It was with this clearly in mind that one key direction giver described the process this way:

So we were moving I think from a point where the people at the local level were making the total call on this to a point where the provincial council got more and more engaged and proactive in what it was doing about the situation – to one where it was easier to make a decision.
(Transcription PC 01, p. 10)

Some of the direction givers’ comments allude to instances of misunderstanding on the staff with respect to the difference between consultation and decision-making (Transcription KI 06, pp. 7-8; Transcription KI 09, pp. 5-6). Evidence shows that while some staff understood the difference in theory, they struggled to accept the difference in practice. This might be explained by the fact that, according to the principle of subsidiarity, there were different levels of decision-making in operation during the restructuring process, and that some matters, because of their strong emotional association, created confusion about the distinction between consultation

and decision-making. Understanding the difference is important especially since the process of decision-making is problematic.

Another major hallmark of the Marist approach to the restructuring was the extent and the spirit of collaboration. As indicated earlier in this chapter, there were nine separate school and diocesan committees involved in the process of restructuring during the period from 1994 to 2000 and each dealt specifically with the issues that emerged. Even early in the period of educational restructuring, there is clear evidence of a key direction giver's express desire to work collaboratively. He said, "At the end of the day we wanted to carry as many people with us as we could" (Transcription PC 01, p. 10).

This commitment to collaboration and to working together in a spirit of partnership and common interest provided a strong foundation of shared wisdom on which to build the future of the College. It enabled the provincial leadership to take into consideration all the factors that affected the restructuring. Another direction giver shared his experience of meeting a key participant who related their discussion concerning a collaborative approach. As he expressed it:

I can remember saying "Look, what we want is an outcome that progresses the on-going Catholic education within the diocese. It's not that the Marists have to be there as long as somehow or other – this entity which is Woodlawn – with its charism and the good parts of it, can be carried forward without us, if that's necessary." He agreed. He said, "Look I'm sure we can work together for a positive outcome." (Transcription PC 02, p. 7)

A significant indicator of the collaborative approach was the advantage taken by the Marist Fathers of professional expertise to aid in the process of the school's restructuring.

7.2.2.3 Professional Expertise

As mentioned, in September 1993, the provincial administration made an important decision to engage the services of a professional body to undertake an initial feasibility study. This was a crucial part of the administration's plan to address the need to restructure the College.

The use of the highly professional Queensland Catholic Education Commission, with its access to a whole range of expertise in the field of educational research, reinforced the serious commitment of the Marist Fathers to the task of restructuring. It also showed they wanted it clearly noted that there were not going to be any ‘conflicts of interest’. Speaking of the provincial administration’s decision, one direction giver observed:

My recollection is that they realised they needed some expertise from outside the Society and the decision to get some Queenslander from the Catholic Education Office was a good decision because there was no conflict of interest or previous involvement with the history of the place. So I think it was a good move. (Transcription KI 09, p. 1)

Following publication of the full report of Queensland Catholic Education Commission’s first feasibility study, meetings were held and copies of the report were made available to the Lismore Secondary Authority, the bishop, the Diocesan Education Board, the school staff, parents, members of the ex-students’ association, and Marists (Woodlawn Archives: Memo from Tony McCosker to Provincial Councillors, March 28, 1994).

The role of the new provincial in 1995 in the episode of educational restructuring was particularly decisive in terms of professional expertise. He strongly supported the recommendation of the Secondary Education Apostolate meeting of April 9–10, 1994 to engage the services of a professional consultant to work with the provincial in order to “monitor the changes recommended in the 1994 Feasibility Study” (Woodlawn Archives: Minutes of Secondary Education Apostolate Meeting, April 9–10, 1994). The professional consultant was engaged to help the Marist Fathers’ to manage their decision-making processes concerning the restructuring of St John’s College. The consultant worked specifically with the provincial, the vicar provincial and the principal as part of an important committee known as the Woodlawn Working Party.

As mentioned already, the Queensland Catholic Education Commission was asked to undertake a second feasibility study in May, 1996. Though the changes implemented as a result of the recommendations of the first feasibility study brought a slight increase in student numbers, they did not sufficiently address the underlying

problems facing the school and the number of boarders continued to decline (cf. Section 6.2.1). One direction giver, commenting on the role played by the Queensland Catholic Education Commission in this part of the restructuring process, noted that:

... I believe it was an important process. Because you've brought someone in totally disconnected and unconnected, who could then look at what was going on objectively. And it was interesting, because their conclusions, from memory, reinforced what the Marist Fathers had been trying to articulate ... I thought their final paper was excellent, it was detailed, and I don't know what else you could have done!
(Transcription KI 08, p. 8)

The data indicate that the direction givers in this research study recognise the wisdom in engaging the Queensland Catholic Education Commission to undertake the feasibility studies. Such a move provided the necessary information and objective data needed to make the ultimate decisions concerning boarding and mission.

The consultant for the Queensland Catholic Education Commission also spoke highly of the approach adopted by the provincial at the time. He drew attention to the provincial's sincerity in terms of accessing professional expertise and felt that there were no preconceived outcomes:

I must say I'd used the word 'supportive' before [and] at the end of the process. But, even at the beginning of the process, Jim [the provincial leader] in particular was keen that we be as constructive and as open as possible. In other words, he genuinely wanted a solution; he wasn't going through a kind of exercise for the sake of going through an exercise ... But certainly right from the start I would have thought that [the] provincial team was very keen for our research to be positive and constructive. They were also open to the fact that whatever that research told us in the end was what they would have to run with.
(Transcription KI 04, p. 18)

Soon after taking up his role in 1994, the College principal realised that in order to address the financial difficulties the school was experiencing, professional financial advice was also needed. Consequently the researcher, as principal, sought this from the accounting firm Cassidy Hunter and Nutbean with whom he had worked extensively while he was principal of Marist Regional College, Burnie. The firm specialised in providing financial advice to independent secondary schools.

The accounting firm, Cassidy, Hunter and Nutbean, gave sound advice with respect to the financial analysis of boarding costs, an estimation of the costs of redundancies, financial projections for tuition and boarding, etc. They were sober in their assessments and the information they provided gave a solid financial foundation to decisions pertaining to the future of the school. Of particular importance was their advice of January 9, 1998: “On the financial front, it appears that the school can continue in its present format for two years using its own resources and thereafter will need to be heavily subsidised, presumably by the provincial account” (Woodlawn Archives: Letter from Cassidy Hunter and Nutbean to Jim Carty, January 9, 1998, p 1).

It is this kind of professional advice that the direction givers saw as being an invaluable basis for making decisions of great importance concerning the Marist Fathers’ approach to the restructuring of St John’s College. These professional bodies provided data, information, well-considered objective opinions, and material that contributed to the objectivity of the decision-making. And the competence and professionalism of those engaged also reinforced the serious commitment made by the Marist Fathers to lead the process in a professional manner.

When considered together, these organic processes demonstrated a commitment to flexible and adaptable planning, with the direction of this episode of educational restructuring evolving or emerging along the way. As a direction giver commented during his interview:

... I did not have any long term plans of how was the best way to go about it because we had to really feel our way to find out what the clientele could take. You were in the hands of the bishop in a lot of ways. The way the diocese responded was going to be as vital as anything else. (Transcription KI 02, p. 10)

Recognising the need to “feel our way”, the key direction givers allowed the direction of this episode of educational restructuring at St John’s College to evolve or emerge as it went along. This flexible and adaptable approach to ‘emerging issues’ stands in contrast to the earlier attempt to engage top-down decision making and linear, long term planning.

7.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

As discussed previously, in the course of this episode of educational restructuring at St John’s College, the direction givers replaced managerial processes with a more organic approach. In other words, it seems that a “strategic-systemic approach” replaced “rational-structural” (Evans, 1996, p. 7) processes.

As discussed in Chapter Three, researchers (Bolman & Deal, 1997; Bush, 2003; House & McQuillan, 1998) offer different images or metaphors on schools as organisation that, in turn, suggest different educational change processes (cf. Table 3-1). Consistent with the perspective of the school as machine, the process of educational change is delineated as the management of change and there is a focus on “instrumental action” (Blenkin, et al., 1997, p. 217) or the coordination of human, physical, technological and financial resources in order to achieve its organisational goals. In a cultural perspective of the school as organisation, theorists (Fullan, 1998b, 2005b) locate the process of educational change within the socio-cultural environment of educational practice, and advocate stakeholder meaning-making as the way forward. Parallel to this theoretical development, political perspectives of school and educational change assume “that in organizations policy and decisions emerge through a process of negotiation and bargaining” (Bush, 2003, p. 89).

More recently, Senge (2000) and others have described the school as a living system. Here educational change is seen to be an evolutionary process and people participate in this evolutionary process by “constantly exploring theories-in-use of all involved in the education process; and reintegrating education within webs of social relationships that link friends, families and communities” (p. 55). Within this perspective, the literature (B. Davies, 2006; Eacott, 2007; Fullan, 2005a; Senge, 2000) also advances strategic processes that include five core elements of a strategic cycle, namely “envisioning” or thinking about the future, “engaging” people in strategic conversations and decision-making, “articulating” a vision/plan for the

future, “implementing” or acting in line with this vision/plan, and “monitoring” outcomes with the intention of re-envisioning the future (Eacott, 2007, pp. 8 - 11). In fact, Eacott sees strategic leadership as an “imperative” (p. 4) and that “leading strategically is essential for the effective management of educational institutions” (p. 4). Together these elements are said to provide an iterative process for strategic leadership that cannot be confined to a linear approach to educational change.

Moreover, in the educational context, it is noted that strategic processes support “ethically informed decision-making” (Paine, 2006, p. 54). In short,

Formulating a sound strategy requires a careful process of analysis that takes into account a number of potentially competing considerations. Reasonable people can and do disagree; they bring to the process different facts, different interpretations of the facts and different beliefs about the likely future, as well as different aims and priorities. It is by sifting through the relevant considerations, deliberating about the merits of available alternatives and imagining like futures that decision makers arrive at what looks to be the most promising course. (p. 56)

This perspective of the school as a living system, and of educational change understood as a series of strategic processes, represents a significant shift away from the perspective of the school as machine and of educational change as managerial processes. Evans (1996) notes that the perspective of the school as machine offers a “rational-structural” approach to educational change. This approach looks to “product and fixed outcomes”, encourages “objective, linear and long-range” planning, focuses on “structure, function, tasks, roles [and] rules” and, implements change through “almost purely top-down decision-making” (p. 7). In contrast, a living system perspective on the school as organisation offers a “strategic-systemic” approach to educational change. This approach looks for “emerging outcomes”, encourages “pragmatic, adaptable, medium-range” planning, focuses on “people, culture, meaning [and] motivation” and, implements educational change through “top-down and bottom up decision-making [and] commitment building” (p. 7).

Developing this thought, Evans (1996) points to the limits of the rational-structural approach to educational change. He argues that the mechanistic approach encourages “first-order change” or greater “efficiency or effectiveness of what we

are already doing” (p. 5). These outcomes may be appropriate in “stable” and “predictable” (p. 7) times. However, in the “turbulent” and “unpredictable” (p. 7) times, there is a need for deeper “second-order changes” that “modify the very way an organization is put together, altering its assumptions, goals, structures, roles and norms” (p. 5). Where first-order change stops at structural change, second-order change requires “people to not just do old things slightly differently but also to change their beliefs and perceptions” (p. 5).

In light of this literature, it seems that within the episode of educational restructuring at St John’s College, the direction givers, motivated by pragmatic concerns, initially focused on structural changes and accepted a managerial or rational-structural approach to educational change. Top-down decision-making and objective, linear and long-term planning prevailed and the Marist Fathers commissioned the QCEC to undertake a feasibility study (1994). Despite local opposition, the QCEC’s recommendations to enrol day students and to offer more flexible boarding options were implemented. Interestingly, once the direction givers adopted a mission focus in this episode of educational restructuring, there is little evidence of rational-structural approaches to educational change. In fact, the case is the reverse. In choosing organic processes over managerial processes, the direction givers demonstrated a commitment to a “strategic-systemic” (Evans, 1996, p. 7) approach to educational change evidenced by a strong commitment to “pragmatic, adaptable and medium-range” planning as well as implementation of “top-down and bottom up [approach to] commitment building” (p. 7).

This strategic-systemic approach, in turn, allowed for strategic cycles which include processes of “envisioning”, “engaging” people, “articulating a vision”, and, “monitoring outcomes” (Eacott, 2007, pp. 8-11) with the intention of re-envisioning the future. Moreover, the strategic-systemic approach allowed the direction givers to bring a sophisticated cultural awareness to the project of educational restructuring. This cultural awareness situated the school within the “inner boundaries” of school culture as well as the “outer boundaries” (Berg, 2007, p. 592) of the broader educational context. In particular, there is evidence of decision-making, in the light of the cultural characteristics of St John’s College and the Marist Fathers’ philosophy of education, which takes into account the educational opportunities within the diocese of Lismore. Finally, the direction givers brought a moral

sensibility to this episode of educational restructuring with the intention of ensuring “ethically informed decision-making” (Paine, 2006, p. 54) as both individual and collective visions for the future of St John’s College were allowed to come together through processes that were open and honest and which valued consultation and collaboration as well as professional expertise.

Above all, this was an evolutionary approach to educational restructuring that valued “emergent outcomes” over “fixed outcomes” (Evans, 1996, p. 7). Here the direction givers recognised “change as a journey, rather than a blueprint” (p. 15). Their commitment to open and honest processes, consultation and collaboration, as well as to professional expertise, meant that they were aware that change is never:

... a predictable exercise with definite guidelines but a struggle to shape processes that are complex and elusive. Its result is an emerging outcome that will be modified during the process of implementation as internal and external conditions shift, data accumulate, and judgement dictates. (p. 15)

This shift from a managerial, rational-structural process to an organic, strategic-systemic approach was worthwhile as the new approach resulted in “second-order” rather than “first-order change” (p. 5). Initially, as a result of the application of rational-structural processes, there had been structural change or first-order change. However, with the introduction of a strategic-systemic approach, there is evidence of second-order change which served to “modify the very way an organization is put together, altering its assumptions, goals, structures, roles and norms” (p. 5). By the end of this episode of educational restructuring at St John’s College in 2000, the College had undergone fundamental change. Within the period of six years, the College had changed from being a boys-only boarding school, owned and governed by the Marist Fathers, to a co-educational, systemic day school owned by St Carthage’s parish and managed by the Catholic Education Office, Lismore. Those changes were far beyond the initial structural changes that stopped at the enrolment of day students and the offering of flexible boarding options.

7.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter focuses on how the direction givers understood the *process* of educational restructuring at St John's College. As this display and discussion of the findings of the study shows, the direction givers initially implemented managerial or "rational-structural" (Evans, 1996, p. 7) processes to address the crisis at St John's College. As a consequence, top-down decision-making and linear planning were the order the day. However, the structural change that followed did not solve the problem because this "first-order change" (p. 5) did not address what lay behind the crisis at St John's College.

Coinciding with a new appreciation of the mission of the Marist Fathers at St John's College, a more organic, "strategic-systemic" (Evans, 1996, p. 7) approach to educational change was implemented. The initial managerial processes were replaced by more open and honest processes and there was an acceptance of consultation and collaboration as well as professional expertise. By the end of this episode of educational restructuring, St John's College was fundamentally transformed with evident signs of "second-order change" (p. 5), and the crisis was averted. From a theoretical point of view, the organic approach taken to the educational restructuring at St John's College reflects theoretical developments with respect to the school as a living system and educational change as an evolutionary process that is strategic in intent, culturally aware and ethically informed (Ciulla, 2006; B. Davies, 2006; Eacott, 2007; Fullan, 2005a).

In the light of this display and the discussion of these findings, the chapter concludes by offering the following theoretical proposition:

Theoretical Proposition Two: Different processes may support educational restructuring. Educational restructuring may be supported by managerial, rational-structural processes as well as a more organic, strategic-systemic approach. Managerial processes aim to achieve fixed outcomes and involve top-down decision making and linear planning. An organic approach looks to emerging outcomes, relies on more open and honest processes and accepts consultation and collaboration as well as professional expertise. An organic approach is more worthwhile and supports the fundamental transformation of the

school and goes beyond mere structural change. Moreover, this process serves to humanise the process of educational restructuring by placing the person and interpersonal relationships at the centre of the process.

Following on from this theoretical proposition, Chapter Eight presents a display and discussion of the findings of this study in relation to *leadership* of the educational restructuring of St John's College.

Chapter Eight: Display and Discussion of Findings - Leadership

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapters Six and Seven dealt with the direction givers' understandings of the *purpose* and *process* of educational restructuring at St John's College during the period 1994 to 2000. Following on from the discussion in those two chapters, Chapter Eight displays and discusses the findings that address the third research question:

How did the direction givers understand the *leadership* of educational restructuring at St John's College?

The display of findings follows in Section 8.2. In Section 8.3 these findings are then discussed in light of theoretical developments with respect to educational change and leadership. As in the previous two chapters, this chapter concludes with the presentation of a theoretical proposition in Section 8.4 that illumines leadership at St John's College and beyond.

It might be recalled that in Chapter Five, 21 key participants were identified as fulfilling the criteria for the purpose of the research study (Section 5.4.2). Only 15 took the opportunity to participate. Those who did not participate may have presented different perceptions of how leadership was exercised in the educational restructuring at St John's College compared with the understandings that actually emerged from the data and the findings which are presented here.

8.2 DISPLAY OF FINDINGS

At the outset of this Chapter, which addresses the Research Question concerning *leadership*, it is important to outline the decision-making structure of the Australian province of the Marist Fathers and the relationship that existed between the administrative leaders at province and school levels. This will be done prior to the presentation of the key themes and the respective sub-themes which emerged from the data.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the provincial leaders and the provincial councils held ultimate authority in the decision-making structure of the province with respect to the future of St John's College. In April 1997, to assist in this decision-making, the provincial leader at the time established a key consultative committee called the Woodlawn College Working Party. As noted in Chapter Seven, the Woodlawn College Working Party realised that it needed to be clear in its own understanding of the decision-making process and subsequently decided that "The Marist Fathers will ultimately make the decisions about the future of the College" (Woodlawn Archives: Facsimile From K. Hughes to R. Chapman, June 9, 1997).

The decision of the Woodlawn Working Party meant that the final decision concerning the future of St John's College was not to be left in the hands of the school principal and/or the school community and/or other interested parties. It would appear that the memory of the failure of the attempted amalgamation with the Lismore schools in the mid-1980s (cf. Chapter Two) and the subsequent strained relationships arising from the decision of the Marist Fathers to withdraw from the negotiations were fresh in the mind of the provincial administration. As one direction giver described it:

So we were moving I think from a point where the people at the local level were making the total call on this to a point where the provincial council got more and more engaged and proactive in what it was doing about the situation – to one where it was easier to make a decision.
(Transcription PC 01, p. 10)

Further, clarity with respect to the decision-making process was important because of the confusion in the minds of some members of the school community between consultations and decision-making. As noted by some of the direction givers, this confusion remained problematic (Transcription KI 06, pp. 7-8; Transcription KI 09, pp. 5-6).

At the outset of this episode of educational restructuring, the provincial leader and provincial council, in the exercise of their leadership role, adopted a strategy. Part of that strategy was to make "the right appointments" (Transcription PC 01, p. 9). With the provincial offices based in Sydney, they were conscious that for administrative and logistical reasons they could not have immediate oversight of the

implementation of the restructuring at the school. They required someone who was ‘on the ground’ and someone who possessed the expertise and experience (cf. Transcription PC 03, pp. 6-7) necessary to support their vision, to provide them with information and feedback, to highlight the areas of major concern, to bring serious aspects of the restructuring to their attention, and to collaboratively implement their decisions. As one key direction giver expressed it, “the only way [change] was going to happen was from good leadership right from the top, from someone who didn’t have a long history with the situation at Woodlawn” (Transcription PC 01, p. 5) and “a leader who could carry this forward that was competent to do it” (Transcription PC 01, p. 6). To this end, a decision was made in August 1993 to appoint a new principal rather than ask the principal at the time to extend his term of appointment. The new principal, the researcher, took up his role in January 1994. In the thinking of one of the key direction givers, the principal was the “leader who could carry this forward” (Transcription PC 01, p. 6).

In the exercise of leadership, collegiality was a hallmark of the relationships between the provincials and the principal. The data indicate that the parties acted in concert. Draft documents such as letters, reports and press releases pertaining to crucial decisions about the educational restructuring were forwarded to the principal for comment and suggestion prior to dissemination or public release by the provincials and vice versa. As indicated in Chapter Six, one provincial implied that the principal was part of what appeared to be the ultimate decision-making body. Writing to the Marists at St John’s College on January 10, 1996, he included the statement: “... the final responsibility rests with Ray [the principal], the provincial council and me” (Woodlawn Archives: Letter from Jim Carty to Marists at St John’s College, January 10, 1996). This was not correct juridically. However, the data indicate that the direction givers understood the principal’s leadership role as being as pivotal to the educational restructuring of the school as the roles of the provincial leaders and the provincial councils.

As the research study progressed through the iterative process of data collection, analysis and interpretation, a number of key themes and respective sub-themes

emerged around the exercise of leadership.²⁷ The key themes coalesce around the challenge of leadership and the nature of leadership.

Table 8-1 Display of Data on Leadership according to Themes and Sub-themes that Emerged from the Research Study

Research Question 3: Leadership

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Sub-themes</i>
<i>The Challenge of Leadership</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistance • Divergence of Opinion and Emotional Reactions • Uncertainty
<i>The Nature of Leadership</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change Agency • Objectivity • Vision • Courage • Charism

8.2.1 The Challenge of Leadership

It is hardly surprising that this episode of educational restructuring at St. John's College presented a professional and personal challenge for provincials and principal. In this highly complex undertaking, there were many important practical issues that had to be addressed. Some of these included the implementation of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission's recommendations concerning the re-introduction of day students, conducting an extensive review and development of the curriculum, the closure of the boarding section of the school, the introduction of co-education, and the oversight of major physical changes to the school plant. In addition, as the educational restructuring progressed, sensitive negotiations with various stakeholders about the school's future had to continue and preparations had to be made to enable a smooth transition in governance from Marist Fathers' ownership. As noted in Chapter One, up until 2000 St John's College was an independent school under the ownership and control of the Marist Fathers. In 2000 it was sold to the parish and in 2001 it began a new existence as a systemic school in the diocese of Lismore.

²⁷ This significant process of data analysis and interpretation was described in Chapter Five. It is a carefully sequenced method that aims to capture an accurate understanding of collected data.

While these practical issues needed to be attended to assiduously, they proved to be less challenging than dealing with a number of ‘people issues’. These issues included strong resistance to change, clear divergences of opinion, and in addition, much uncertainty about the future of the school and strong emotional reactions. These ‘people issues’ were evident during the negotiation of a new industrial system of Enterprise Bargaining, in the significant tension between the principal and a small group of staff, in the personal and inter-staff conflict, in the writing and application of the school redundancy policy, and in attitudes to a growing school debt and financial problems that required application of an economy of scale so that the school could more effectively regain financial viability.

8.2.1.1 *Resistance*

When asked in this study about the greatest challenge to change during the restructuring St John’s College, one of the direction givers chose to focus attention on the intensity of local resistance to change rather than on the multitude of other issues.

From the beginning of the educational restructuring, the provincial administration anticipated strong resistance on the part of many and an entrenched opposition on the part of some. Speaking of this, one key direction giver indicated:

The whole culture [at the school] was in denial mode ... There was a certain closed environment which basically said ‘we’ll continue what we are doing because we are doing it not because it’s relevant today.’ It may have been relevant twenty years ago. It was that sort of culture. It was a pretty immovable object we had at this time. I think we already had histories of people who had moved in and tried to change things. The resistance was enormous; so it was a culture that was fairly closed, it was resistant and it was in denial. (Transcription PC 01, pp. 6-7)

Like the direction givers who initiated the restructuring process, another direction giver spoke of the difficulties anyone would encounter if someone were to try to introduce radical change at St John’s College. Using various descriptors, he too spoke of the school as “an immovable culture” and suggested that the image of an

“island of isolation” was an appropriate way to describe that the school considered itself impervious to major change (Transcription PC 02, p. 2). The provincial leaders and their councils knew that any attempt to introduce significant change at St John’s College could expect to meet with strong resistance, even entrenched opposition. Explaining this resistance with reference to the writings of Arbuckle (1988), a social anthropologist of some standing who is familiar with social change and culture, one direction giver observed: “Culture, as Gerry Arbuckle would tell us, is of the heart. Heart issues are the hardest to change when they are fixed” (Transcription PC 02, p. 3).²⁸

Speaking later in the interview about what he considered to be some of the most significant issues surrounding the restructuring, he added:

There was no thinking through the hard reality of where we were as highlighted by the research done. So one of the hardest things was convincing [people] at least to the point where you didn’t have real people digging their heels in and making it even harder. That was trying to convince them that the decision had to come and had to be taken. (Transcription PC 02, p. 12)

Supporting this point, one of the direction givers mentioned how difficult it was for the provincial administration to convince people to see what “for outside people seemed reasonably obvious - that if you stayed with the status quo, there was no future ...” (Transcription PC 03, p. 6).

These attitudes are not surprising given the historical development of St. John’s College and the deep feelings and emotional bonds the school generated in those who were involved in it. St John’s College held a very privileged position within the Marist Fathers as a group, within the diocese of Lismore, within dioceses in the north-west of the State, within the local community, and among staff, parents, students and ex-students. It had been a boarding school from the time of its foundation in 1931 and had a well-deserved reputation for being an outstanding school. Many of the priests and brothers of the Marist Fathers’ Australian province

²⁸ “Culture is an historically transmitted pattern of *meanings* embodied in symbols, myths and rituals ... symbols relate primarily to the hearts of people, to their imaginations” (p. 12).

and the priests of the diocese of Lismore had been educated at St John's College. Ex-students were very loyal to the school and proud of their association with it. Even after leaving the school, many still continued to identify strongly with it and to actively participate in what was commonly called the 'Old Boys' Association'.

In addition, because it was essentially a boarders-only school for the major part of its history, the school was strongly influenced by the very close bonds that exist for those who share the boarding experience. This enabled the school to develop a unique culture. In this sense, St John's College was truly and significantly much more than a school. During the academic year, it was the students' home. The relationships that students formed were akin to the relationships that exist among family members. The school was the place where students attended classes together, forged life-time friendships, dined together three times a day, were accommodated according to Year levels and age-groups in large dormitories, spent many after-school hours together in sport activities and leisure pursuits, faced the challenges of adolescence together, and grew into young adulthood together. This intense communal experience played a significant and extremely important formative role in their development as human beings and persons.

This experience of bonding was not limited to the students. Those responsible for the academic education and character formation of their pupils were acutely aware of the crucially important role they played in their students' personal development. Whether it was through the exercise of a pastoral role in a dormitory, as a teacher in the classroom, or as a coach on the sports field, the staff took their responsibilities very seriously. Their influence on the lives of their students was extremely significant: not only by the amount of time that they spent in the students' company but also by the depth of their association. This close contact fostered enduring bonds of friendship and deep emotional ties with those whom they cared for and/or taught.

The strong emotional ties that existed between the staff and the students and the College are reflected in the data collected during this study. During the course of the interviews, the key direction givers tapped into their awareness of the school's importance by means of words, images and phrases. Table 8-2 records some of the strong images and descriptors used to convey this special relationship.

Table 8-2 Descriptors Direction Givers Used to Describe St John's College

Direction giver	Comments
PC 01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “great flagship” • “mother”
PC 02	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “an immoveable object”
PC 03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “iconic” • “etched into the consciousness of the whole province”
PC 03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “a safe environment” • “mother of the province”
PC 03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “an iconic apostolate”
PC 03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “great symbolic significance for our province”
KI 04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “pretty vulnerable”
KI 06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “connectedness”
KI 07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Woodlawn myth”
KI 07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “a closed entity” • “a flagship”
KI 07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “a school with a heart”
KI 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “a comforting place” • “a place of refuge” • “a place of learning” • “... an important part of me, my life ...”
KI 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “you could feel safe” • “my heart was always in it” • “families living there” • “strength of Woodlawn”
KI 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “the people out the road”

Reflecting on these words, images and phrases, it is obvious that the direction givers acknowledged the very powerful influence the school had on them. Most seem to describe St John's College as holding a very privileged place in their lives, in the local civic and diocesan communities, and in the congregation of the Marist Fathers. It is noteworthy that some spoke of the school as a source of personal and emotional support and comfort. Still others attested to the powerful significance of its symbolism.

These perspectives, which are the firmly held beliefs of an important and influential group within the College community, help to explain why there would be strongly held opposition and deep emotional resistance to any attempt at introducing a major episode of educational restructuring of St John's College. Many members of the school community, staff, parents and students, as well as members of wider communities, experienced deep anxiety when it was first mentioned that radical changes to the school were being considered and that this might include the remote possibility that it would cease to exist altogether. Members of the teaching and residential staff found this particularly challenging. This is easily understandable, for not only was the school a place of secure employment, it was also a place in

which many staff members had made a considerable personal, cultural and emotional investment, particularly since the greater participation of lay staff in the life of the school from the mid-1980s when the first major attempt at restructuring took place. The possibility of losing all of these created high levels of anxiety and fear among staff and helps to explain the strength of the emotional reaction to change.

Some of the historical documents used as resource material in this study capture this depth of negative feeling and resistance to change, particularly to the decision to phase out boarding facilities. That was the most emotionally charged of all the decisions taken in relation to the educational restructuring of St John's College. Of special interest here is a letter written to the chairman of the Woodlawn Community Discussion Committee from an ex-staff member on the March 4, 1998. The author of the letter makes strong allegations of incompetence and duplicity against the provincial, the principal, the Queensland Catholic Education Commission, and the College accountants. The accusations against the principal, because of his position of influence, are particularly negative. The author wrote, "He has influenced people with his dictatorial personality, his bullying and the lies that he has told" (Letter to the Chairman of the Woodlawn Community Discussion Committee, March 4, 1998, p. 2).

The sentiments of that letter were supported by the president of the Parents and Friends' Association.²⁹ In a draft copy of a letter which he had intended to circulate to the 'parents and guardians of all pupils' in the school community, the president said he was writing on behalf of the Parents and Friends' Association. In fact, the letter was not authorised by any member of the Executive of this group. Further, the Executive had no knowledge of the letter until a draft copy was presented to them. Nevertheless, in the draft copy the president draws attention to his "strong conviction that Fr. Chapman and Fr. Jim Carty are determined to demolish the unique character of a unique school for an agenda known only to themselves" (Draft letter from the President of the Parents and Friends' Association, March 7, 1998, p. 1). Further, he accuses the principal of "cynicism" (p. 1) and indicates a desire for the Executive of

²⁹ The letter was never posted to the parents and students after its contents were challenged by a member of the Parents and Friends' Executive who disagreed with the sentiments expressed.

the Parents and Friends' Association, among other things, "to meet with the Marist Provincial Council ... requesting the removal of Fr. Chapman" (p. 2).

The treasurer of the Parents and Friends' Executive responded to the president's draft letter on March 7, 1998 and questioned his authority to write the letter on their behalf since it had been neither authorised by the Parents and Friends' Association nor supported by the Executive. Further, the treasurer referred to the letter as "highly emotive and defamatory" (p. 1), indicating that the president would need to substantiate his allegations if the matter were to be discussed by the Parents and Friends' Association. Finally, the treasurer denied any knowledge of the purported "very disturbing and emotive letters and phone calls ... questioning the ability of Fr. Chapman to administer the College" (Letter from the Treasurer of the Woodlawn Parents and Friends' Association to the president, March 7, 1998, p. 1).

The sentiments expressed in the ex-staff member's letter and the draft letter of the president of the Parents and Friends' Association are examples of the depth of feeling generated by the episode of educational restructuring at St John's College. They reveal a clear aspect of the human face of educational change and the fundamental human dimension of change.

8.2.1.2 *Divergence of Opinion and Emotional Reactions*

Even though there was very strong resistance to the changes foreshadowed in the educational restructuring as indicated in the correspondence mentioned, not all members of staff were opposed. Speaking of this divergence of opinion early in the process of restructuring, one of the direction givers said:

Peter McMurrich and I interviewed staff over four days from memory at Woodlawn, meeting the staff individually and receiving any written submissions they wanted to put to us. I think from memory there the staff were very divided. There was a group of hard core supporters of "retain Woodlawn as it is", a group that came through very strongly who also orchestrated old boys' associations, etc. to lobby and to put their case to the provincial. So we approached this meeting with the "you tell us what's happening and we will take it away with the leadership team and we will decide" ... So at the end of those meetings

I think it was clear to all of us that it was very much a divided situation, that the only way this was going to happen was from good leadership right from the top from someone who didn't have a long history with the situation at Woodlawn. (Transcription PC 01, p. 5)

As mentioned previously, this divergence of opinion manifested itself particularly in relation to the very contentious decision of the provincial administration to phase out boarding. In relation to this issue, the QCEC report of 1997 had drawn attention to "... the problem of mix of residential and teaching staff ..." (Queensland Catholic Education Commission Interim Report to Jim Carty, February 19, 1997).

For some staff, especially those not committed to the boarding component of the school, the possible demise of boarding was viewed as a potential blessing. It held out the promise of doing less 'after-hours work' and not having to be involved in so many extra-curricular activities. Such opinions led to the perception among some staff that a number of teachers were concerned more about the industrial issues, their pay and working conditions, than they were about the future of the school. In direct reference to this perception, one direction giver observed that: "At times I used to think it wasn't the school and what the Marists had started that [some staff] were really interested in ... That worried me a bit" (Transcription KI 07, p. 7).

The boarding issue was a lightning rod that seemed to highlight, in a special way, the divisions that existed in the staff. On the other hand, those members of staff who were deeply involved in the boarding side of the school, who drew deep personal and professional satisfaction from their involvement with the students at that level, found it extremely difficult to consider any future for St John's College without boarding students. To them such a thought was almost anathema. As one direction giver suggested, "... I don't think those people could vision any other life for Woodlawn than as a fully boarding male school" (Transcription PC 03, p. 10). And again a senior member of the staff at the school recalled: "For people that were here who actually invested a lot of their soul into it, when they saw what they thought was really valuable changing, that was difficult" (Transcription KI 06, p. 11).

However, after much consultation and discussion with various interested parties, and over a considerable period of time, the provincial administration eventually took the clearly difficult and painful decision to phase out boarding. And even though the

decision was greeted with much sadness on the part of many members of the school community, including the provincial leader and the principal, it seems that it showed that the reality of the need for a new direction had finally sunk in. A significant change in thinking had taken place.

This is one of the important observations arising out of the research study. Some of the key staff, who were strongly opposed to the restructuring of the school initially, and particularly to the phasing out of boarding, looked back on the episode of restructuring and acknowledged that there was a need for the changes that took place. One particular direction giver, who was publicly and vehemently opposed to the phasing out of boarding when the matter was under consideration prior to a decision being taken, looked back and, reflecting on the eventual outcome, commented during his interview: "I accepted there had to be a change ... the reality was we couldn't keep that going" (Transcription KI 09, pp. 11-12). Such a change in attitude to the restructuring from some staff had not appeared even remotely possible during the height of the emotionally tense discussions about the possible phasing out of boarding.

Matters other than the decision to phase out boarding were just as contentious. Many of these pertained to industrial issues. One of the direction givers noted that some members of staff "... were prepared to listen and to adjust their thinking. There were others who [would] take the hard line ... it ends up dividing the staff ... blocking things" (Transcription KI 03, p. 5). The 1997 report of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission had made specific reference to a number of major problems in the school particularly with respect to industrial relations within the school (Woodlawn Archives: QCEC Interim Report to Jim Carty, February 19, 1997). As the consultant for the Queensland Catholic Education Commission pointed out in his interview:

A lot of schooling decisions we found over the years are emotive stuff. They're not entirely rational ... a lot of emotive stuff gets in the road of people but you had to deal with that in the change process. By crikey emotions are really powerful factors and you've got to get them onside somehow. (Transcription KI 04, p. 16)

Finding unanimity about change is always difficult because people's perspectives and understandings differ. However, during the process of educational restructuring at St John's College it became even more difficult because of the many levels of decision-making that were operating, the strong emotional attachment to many issues, and the extensive consultation process. Ultimately, regardless of the levels of support for or resistance to the changes, or lack of unanimity, someone had to take responsibility for the decision.

As the educational restructuring progressed and a sense of direction emerged, staff generally seemed to settle to the task of supporting the changes. One direction giver, responding to the question as to whether or not he could identify changes in the staff during the various moments in the restructuring, expressed the opinion that people's thinking did get broader:

I think so, particularly in staff meetings, I think people started to relax after a while and listen more carefully and be open to what might be happening. There was a whole lot of anxiety in there because they feared for their jobs and they were not too sure which way this was going to go in terms of whether it stays open as a school. If it doesn't: 'What happens to us?' ... even though the CEO would have guaranteed them a job. There's still the anxiety and it means I might have to move or I might have to do this and it takes me out of my comfort zone.
(Transcription KI 03, p. 4)

Many of the anxieties occasioned by the prospect of significant change seemed to lessen as it became obvious to the staff that they had to work together at the restructuring. In addition, the data indicate that once models for the future of the school began to emerge, the anxiety levels began to disappear almost completely and staff fully engaged in the process.

8.2.1.3 *Uncertainty*

Regardless of the politics during this period of educational restructuring, the school community had to endure a long period of uncertainty before the future of the school was clear. During one of the interviews, a senior member of staff alluded to this and made the following observation:

Coping with change! And change in a sense that the Woodlawn story was like a trilogy, we were closing the first book and we were opening the second book. And how do we go about the changes? Who was the instrument of change? ... because that was always difficult. How could we be sure of the future? It was a question that nobody could tell us. (Transcription KI 07, p. 5)

This sums up clearly one of the major challenges for all those who were involved in the restructuring of St John's College. All direction givers, from the ultimate decision-makers to those with less responsibility, had to learn to live with and work in an atmosphere of extreme uncertainty and tension. From the outset, no one knew where the commitment to restructuring would lead. There was no clearly delineated, definite plan for the future. There was no horizon toward which the provincial administration could aim; no destination to which the leaders could point. The administration, principal and other key personnel knew that things simply had to change. The College was in serious difficulty and did not have any prospect of survival if it were to continue with the status quo.

One of the direction givers in the research study, to capture this sense of disorientation and uncertainty, used a powerful analogy: that of a trapeze artist. This analogy seemed to sum up the situation very well. When a trapeze artist flings himself/herself on to a swing, he/she does so confidently aware there is another swing or another trapeze artist to catch him/her. In the case of St John's College, the provincial administration began the process of restructuring even without the certainty of having a swing to catch! As a key direction giver observed:

The difficulty was, up until the final year or two in the process, we weren't able to hold out a final vision, because the whole thing was evolving. We couldn't say to them 'Well, look let go of the swing here because there's another one coming up here, like a trapeze artist, and as soon as you let go of that swing you grab this one and away you go.' We weren't sure there was another swing there. All we knew was that as it was going it was going to die and that was abundantly clear to us as a leadership group. (Transcription PC 03, p. 9)

A senior member of staff summed up his feelings about being uncertain in the face of the “unknown” when he used his own powerfully clear analogy: the experience was like “being in a snowstorm”:

The uncertainty was the worst like being in a snowstorm if you don't know where you are going or whatever. But the minute you can start to see the light or it goes somewhere, you can see where you can get there, even though you're in danger, it's OK. (Transcription KI 06, p. 18)

In this way, this study highlights the challenge of leading educational restructuring in terms of a number of ‘people issues’. As discussed in Chapter Two, there had been a history of local resistance to educational change and this continued to be a feature of the episode of restructuring between 1994 and 2000. Related to this challenge of resistance was also a notable divergence of opinion among the staff with respect to the way forward for St John’s College. Some were aggressively personal in their allegations of incompetence and duplicity on the part of the leadership exercised by the provincials and principal. Others were highly supportive. The data indicate that an uncertain future generated strong emotional reactions within the College community. Ironically, the provincials and the principal were in the same position as the Marists and the whole school community.

8.2.2 The Nature of Leadership

As discussed in section 7.2.2.2, during this episode of educational restructuring, formal leadership authority at province level was vested in provincial and provincial council. At the school level, it was vested in the principal. However, the data indicate that when the direction givers thought of leadership, they thought generally of that exercised by the principal. One possible explanation for this is that the principal was “the front line person, the man on point duty” (Transcription PC 02, p. 2). For the most part, their understanding of leadership derived from their close, daily contact with him who was responsible for implementing the decisions of the provincial and council:

As the person responsible for the implementation of the decision of the provincial and his council, I was frequently approached by staff and

made to be held accountable to explain the reasons for decisions which were considered, by some [staff], as being totally inappropriate. There was a belief amongst the members of staff that, as principal, I had the authority and the power to change the course of history and/or influence the provincial and his council. (Researcher's Journal, p. 8)

One possible explanation for this expectation might be that during this episode of educational restructuring many of the staff had also been at the school during the previous attempt at educational restructuring in the mid-1980s. They were aware that negotiations broke down because of a decision taken at the local level by the principal and two staff members who were Marist and staff representatives on the committee discussing the amalgamation of St John's College with the two Catholic schools in Lismore. Some of the staff might have been hoping that this would be repeated.

The exercise of leadership during the episode of educational restructuring from 1994 to 2000 was to be different. The data indicate clearly that in the context of this episode, the direction givers identified change agency, objectivity, vision, courage, and charism as being significant components of leadership. Each of these played a crucial role in a movement from the status quo to forging a secure, long-term future for the school.

8.2.2.1 *Change Agency*

From the outset of this episode of educational restructuring, the provincial leadership appreciated the need for significant change at St John's College and, during the course of his interview one of the direction givers used the specific phrase "change agent" to describe the mandate and special role which was expected of the in-coming principal in 1994 (Transcription PC 01, p. 14). Given the situation at St John's College and the determination of the provincial and council for change, it was an accurate descriptor of the role. However, change agents are typically unpopular because part of their role is to challenge long-standing thinking and familiar routine and practices by opening them up to critical reflection.

Change agents upset some people by disturbing their comfortable patterns of behaviour. Accordingly, to be a change agent requires many skills, especially

personal and communication skills. In addition, in situations where there is strong resistance to change or where there is unfamiliarity with a change agent, it is important that there be some clarity with respect to expectations. This point had been made earlier at a meeting of the Secondary Education Apostolate in April, 1993 where the researcher suggested to a provincial council member that there was a need to provide the in-coming principal, whoever it might be, with a “clear, publicly-enunciated mandate for change” (Provincial Archives: Provincial Council Report (n.d.), p. 5). As noted in Chapter One, while it was made clear to the in-coming principal that he was being mandated to act as “change agent”, it was never explicitly or formally taken up with the staff and school community.

When the researcher took up the role of principal in January, 1994, he was operating under the assumption that the College community had already been informed that he had been appointed to act in the capacity of a change agent (cf. Chapter One). As a clear signal that his appointment was to usher in a period of significant change, he changed the designation of the leadership position from ‘Rector’, the appellation which had been used since the College’s foundation in 1931, to ‘Principal’. The symbolic significance of that particular change seemed to be lost on all those associated with the school and, in fact, created some confusion. Rather than being understood as a symbol of the beginning of significant change, it was perceived as a personal and unwelcome peculiarity.

With respect to this change in appellation, the researcher recorded the following recollection in his journal:

One of the symbolic decisions I took was to change the name of the position of principal. In the boarding school the person in charge was called “Rector”. I changed it to “Principal”. This change met with some consternation, particularly among the Marists on staff. However, I felt it was a small but powerful way of indicating a change in my role and also a way to prepare the school for a new future. (Researcher’s Journal, p. 3)

One of the direction givers, reflecting on the situation confronting the school early in the episode of educational restructuring, concurred with the view of the provincial and his council and felt that the circumstances warranted the appointment of a person

who could act in the capacity of ‘a change agent’. The direction giver was one who also linked such recognition to the significance of the change in appellation. During the interview the direction giver indicated:

[The principal’s] appointment was I think a recognition that something urgently needed to happen there and we recognised you [the principal] as basically a “change agent person” who would have the vision and the skills to go into that situation and, to assess it and in cooperation with the provincial leadership, to bring it to the best possible outcome for all players there. (Transcription PC 03, p. 6)

At a later stage in the interview, the interviewee came back to the same point and reinforced his comment. Talking of the researcher in the third person the direction giver said, “... he seemed the only person in the province capable of moving this thing forward and he may also have had sufficient objectivity and capacity to see beyond any personal emotional ties with the school” (Transcription PC 03, p. 18).

While the principal was supported in his role as change agent by some of the staff, several staff members felt threatened by the introduction of changes to the school and, in particular, by the role of the principal in introducing those changes. A lot of pressure was placed on the principal to change his mind about the educational restructuring. One key member of staff, the senior residential master who had responsibility for the boarding component of the school at the time, approached the principal and literally begged him to change the course on which the school had embarked. Writing of this exchange, the principal wrote:

I recall quite clearly one occasion when during an appointment the senior residential master, who had been a participant in the 1984 meeting discerning the future of Woodlawn, literally begged me to change my mind. I responded by saying that the decision itself was not mine to make; and further, that I did not believe that such a decision would be the right one to make, given that the evidence and the facts had been put to all the stakeholders and they clearly showed that boarding was not viable. (Researcher’s Journal, p. 8)

Nowhere is the view that the principal was a ‘change agent’ more evident than in the lead up to the reappointment of the principal towards the end of his first term of three years.

The custom in the Australian province of the Marist Fathers is for the provincial, prior to the appointment of a Marist who holds a position of responsibility, to undertake a review of the Marist’s performance by meeting with those working in ministry with him. Towards the end of 1996, with encouragement on the part of the principal, members of the staff were invited to meet with the provincial to discuss the possibility of the principal’s appointment for a further three year term. Writing of the event in the following year, an ex-staff member reported that at the meeting it was “almost unanimous ... that [the principal’s] performance was unacceptable and that his relationship with the teaching and residential staff was appalling,” (Letter of an Ex-staff member to the chairman of the Woodlawn Community Discussion Committee, March 4, 1998, p. 3). Further, the author of the letter felt that “it was with the assurance of change and security of Marist tenure that we left the meeting that afternoon” (p. 3). The ex-staff member’s letter describes the negative feelings and the emotional reaction of a number of staff who attended the meeting with the provincial. They interpreted the provincial’s willingness to listen and his sympathy for their feelings as a sign of his agreement with their negative assessment of the principal’s performance. Their interpretation was inaccurate.

As events transpired, some months later the provincial and his council reappointed the principal for a further three years. For several staff members the decision was difficult to understand and almost impossible to accept. The ex-staff member, writing of the decision, noted: “It was then with great despair that Ray Chapman read to the staff a letter from Jim Carty expressing the Marist support of his work and giving him their full and undivided support. It was at this time that I and many like me lost all hope ... Ray Chapman was not the solution; in fact he was the worst possible alternative” (p. 3).

These comments reflect the existence of strong opposition among some of the school staff to the principal’s leadership in respect to the changes implemented because of the school’s perilous position in the early stages of the educational restructuring. Those changes created enormous tension. In the researcher’s journal, the principal

acknowledged the difficulties of leading change in an atmosphere complicated by industrial negotiations. The researcher wrote:

... a constant source of tension throughout my term as principal was the negotiations with the Independent Teachers' Union. From the outset I had to negotiate an Enterprise Agreement and some aspects of those discussions did not go well. Further, the local union representative was willing to contest most of the changes and process put in place to enhance the future of the school. (Researcher's Journal, p. 4)

The reappointment of the principal to the role of school leader for a further three years as of January, 1997, reinforced the thinking of the provincial and council with respect to the choice of the person who was to assume the principal's position when it was being considered in 1993. The direction giver acknowledged at the time that "Ray Chapman [the researcher and principal] was the only person in our ranks who was capable of giving this school a new lease of life ... We felt the situation needed a certain dynamism and a capacity to drive the process" (Transcription PC 03, pp. 6-7).

Aware that the researcher as principal had expressed clear ambivalence about accepting the appointment (Chapter One, Section 1.2), one of the direction givers acknowledged how difficult the situation would be personally for the principal and suggested there was a need to provide moral support. "We could not just put one person in there to do all the 'firing' here. We needed a couple of support people in there. Now I can't actually remember whether that happened" (Transcription, PC 01, pp. 9-10). The data show that no 'support people' were appointed with the principal. This made the task of school leadership more difficult.

8.2.2.2 Objectivity

The direction givers participating in the research study drew attention to other qualities that were deemed necessary for effective leadership in the school at the time. They recalled that the principal had to be "strong" and had to be "ruthless in some situations" (Transcription KI 07, p. 19); that he had to have "focus" (Transcription KI 10, p. 16); and that he could not be "afraid to make a decision" and therefore had to be willing to make "personal sacrifices" (Transcription KI 12, p. 3).

To support this style of leadership, the direction givers raised the importance of objectivity.

At the beginning of the episode of educational restructuring, being able to distance oneself from the situation at St John's College was considered to be an important skill for the person who was to be entrusted with responsibility for overseeing and leading the restructuring of the school. In his journal the researcher wrote his reflections on the advantages and disadvantages of being a person who had had only a limited association with St John's College prior to his appointment as principal:

For my new role, I also had the advantage of having been an Assistant Principal and Principal in two Day Schools. That enabled me to 'take some distance' from the boarding culture and to look at it more dispassionately. There were two very important disadvantages. The first was that I did not have any student connection with Woodlawn. I was not an ex-student; in fact, because of that, in some circles I was seen as an interloper. The second disadvantage, the one that might be considered the more important, was that I was willing to take responsibility for changing the school culture. It became obvious early on that my request to the provincial to inform the staff of my role as an 'agent of change' had not been implemented. (Researcher's Journal, p. 3)

However, the objectivity and distance had a more positive application. As one key direction giver observed:

... you weren't bringing personal baggage. At the end of it you say, "I will need to hand this over to someone so I'm not creating a framework where I will feel more comfortable in, where this will better suit me as the ... because my time is coming to an end but in terms of where the school has got to go, this is the point that I need to bring it forward to in order to, putting it in a very Marist way, hand it on to the next person to take forward to a new era. In a lot of ways I think that was helpful. I think the change was that big it had to be that way. (Transcription KI 05, p. 12)

A well-experienced direction giver who has exercised leadership roles in a number of Catholic schools spoke positively of the sense of detachment that characterised the principal's leadership: "Imagine if you had an ideologue Marist priest hell-bent on some particular line? It wouldn't have worked!" (Transcription KI 13, p. 4). He later elaborated on the point:

You could have been after your own self-interest in some way or thinking "Well, I've got to get something out of this." But you didn't approach it like that ... You put your ego aside and went into it wholeheartedly. I think that is why it worked. Other people did that in varying degrees but, I mean, you were a huge stakeholder there ... You just said, "No, I just want what's going to be the best" and put yourself right out there. Then you just moved on. Hard to do, isn't it? (Transcription KI 13, p. 12)

Indeed, one direction giver drew attention to the fact that the principal did not get support "... even from the Marist Fathers at Woodlawn" (Transcription KI 10, p. 5). The same person believed that "... if the Marist Fathers, all of them, [were] supportive of the principal, I think the transition would have been easier ..." (Transcription KI 10, p. 6). This opinion was based on the fact that the direction giver thought that some of the Marist Fathers were lacking in objectivity and that they were too "close to the staff" (Transcription KI 10, p. 11). Their lack of objectivity added to the divisions among the staff. The researcher had noted early in the episode of restructuring that there was "clear reluctance on the part of the Senior Residential Master to positively engage with the [Queensland Catholic Education] Commission representatives" (Researcher's Journal, p. 4) and that "there had been some show of disloyalty from one confrere in particular during the whole school review process" (Researcher's Journal, p. 8).

However, the data indicate that there was a certain irony in this measure of 'objectivity'. Some staff members, particularly those who were highly critical of the principal, interpreted 'objectivity' as 'dispassion' or a lack of interest in the school. They interpreted the principal's objectivity and equanimity as a sign of disloyalty to the school or even an antipathy. It seemed to confirm their suspicion that the principal was not genuinely concerned about the interests of the school; and that at

times he acted cynically, that is appearing to promote boarding while working for its demise, and was determined to destroy something they valued highly.

An ex-staff member, who was strongly critical of the provincial, the principal, the College accountant, and the Queensland Catholic Education Commission, questioned their impartiality and objectivity in relation to the second feasibility study and other aspects of school leadership particularly with respect to the discussion about phasing out boarding at the school. Writing to the chairman of the Woodlawn Community Discussion Committee, he stated that the Queensland Catholic Education Commission, because it was located in Queensland, would “benefit from the closure of Woodlawn” and that the provincial and principal had “agendas”. He was very critical of the processes used, claiming that “the decision process has not been open and has not been fully consultative ... but more attuned to fascism” (Letter to Chairman, Woodlawn Community Discussion Committee, March 4, 1998).

Though these views, the opinion of one individual, stand in stark contrast to the clear understandings of the direction givers, they are evidence that not all those who were involved in the educational restructuring of St John’s College saw the decision-making process and the leadership style as characterised by objectivity. In this context, the researcher noted in his journal that “it was evident that there was a genuine cynicism [on the part of some staff] about the process used to choose a future” for the school (Researcher’s’ journal, p. 6). The data indicate clearly that the human dimension, evidenced by the way people responded to change, was never off the agenda in this episode of educational restructuring. Indeed it seems to have occupied centre stage during the entire episode.

8.2.2.3 Vision

In the leadership of educational restructuring at St John’s College, one of the key direction givers, a senior and long-standing member of staff, recognised the important role played by ‘vision’. More specifically, the direction giver was of the opinion that it was crucial for the principal “to be very clear in his vision” (Transcription KI 07, p. 19) and, in fact, even acknowledged ‘vision’ as playing a vitally significant role in the success of the entire episode of the educational restructuring: without it, “we all would have faltered” (Transcription KI 07, p. 19). As the direction giver observed:

The principal had to lead and had to be very clear in his vision because we all would have faltered and many of those [at] the executive meetings, where we discussed things and your leadership in saying to us, “Well, no this is what we’ll do” with confidence, no, with confidence, made us more able to go out there into the lead in that sense. (Transcription KI 07, p. 19)

In addition, the direction giver focused on the effect the principal’s clarity of vision had on the College Executive, a key administrative body in the school. The direction giver believed that this clarity of vision made the College Executive more confident about exercising its own leadership role in the school.

In this context, another direction giver reflected on the difficulties and the challenge that surrounds the notion of ‘vision’ in regard to any form of educational restructuring. The direction giver spoke of people’s difficulty in dealing with vision, that is, “the big picture stuff,” because it “can be so threatening” (Transcription PC 01, p. 15). He commented:

I think the big picture stuff [vision] can be so threatening. I think it needs a bit of internal integrity or something like that, or stability or something to take on the bigger challenges, the big picture ... ‘stickability’ certainly. When you look at it, for the pain that you have to go through some time in change and in change management, it’s not very nice. (Transcription PC 01, p. 15)

Being able to encourage people to engage in systems thinking means that leaders draw strength from their personal vision. It is this which gives leaders ‘internal integrity’ or ‘stability’. It also means that they have to be willing to face personal “pain” (Transcription PC 01, p. 15).

As part of a process aimed at fostering the development of a shared vision, the researcher as principal resurrected various elements of the school culture hoping they would help staff and students connect with the past (a former vision) in order to build a bridge to the future (a future vision). In the researcher’s journal he noted:

From the beginning of my term I made moves to address the poor standard of discipline, to use a prayer that had been traditionally recognised as a summary of the values for which the school stood (“St John’s Man”), and reintroduced the College War Cry, leading the practices myself until the student leaders could lead them. (Researcher’s Journal, p. 3)

These efforts were intended to focus attention on the values that gave meaning to the school community and which helped to hold it together. This was crucially important during a period of major transition. However, while the data from the direction givers indicated that the principal had a clear vision and endeavoured to build a shared vision among members of staff (Transcription KI 07, p. 19), it seemed that there was very little enthusiasm or energy among the staff as a group for choosing a future. Many members of staff seemed to rely on the leaders’ vision: in this case the shared vision of the provincials and school principal.

During the course of the educational restructuring, the provincial leaders fully appreciated the difficult situation of the principal and the enormous challenge it would be for someone to develop a shared vision for those engaged in the educational restructuring at St John’s College. Even they found it be a difficult undertaking with respect to some of the Marists. In this context, one direction giver pointed to the “depth of the conflict” that was evident in the school community and commented that “there were some very hard nuts to crack in [the] group, particularly within the Marist group” (Transcription PC 01, p. 14). The direction giver put it this way:

I think I would have said to the person who had been chosen to take on the position, at that stage that ‘this is not an easy situation. This is a difficult one and you know you’re taking on a big job if you take this on.’ I don’t think the new principal would have come into it blindly. He may not have realised that it was going to be such a big energy draw on his own personal resources as it was. He may not have realised the depth of the conflict and that there were some very hard nuts to crack in this group, particularly within the Marist group. So it was a major task to take on and I think a hell of a challenge. (Transcription PC 01, p. 14)

The principal certainly found the exercise of leadership and his attempts to develop a shared vision “a big energy draw on his personal resources” and had not anticipated the degree of difficulty entailed in leading the school through the episode of educational restructuring. There appear to be a number of reasons for this difficulty.

The major reason was that a “final vision” for the school did not emerge until towards the end of the educational restructuring (Transcription PC 03, p. 9). The major part of the restructuring took place in the shadow of great uncertainty about the future of the school. As one direction giver observed:

The difficulty was, up until the final year or two in the process, we weren't able to hold out a final vision, because the whole thing was evolving ... All we knew was that as it was going, it was going to die and that was abundantly clear to us as a leadership group. (Transcription PC 03, p. 9)

Another reason for the difficulty in developing a shared vision was that the Marist Fathers were inexperienced when it came to “transition issues” (Transcription PC 01, p. 6). They were feeling their way. The provincial leaders and the researcher as principal relied on an intuitive sense of how to go about it. In this respect, all they could draw upon for clarity with respect to their own vision was their spirituality and charism (cf. Chapter Two, Section 2.4). And while they endeavoured to share this vision with all those engaged in the educational restructuring, they were aware of their personal and collective limitations and the constraints the situation placed upon them.

The final reason was that the ‘shared vision’ had to emerge from engagement with various stakeholders. There were many participants in the episode of educational restructuring at St John’s College. These included all Marist Fathers of the Australian province, the staff, students, parents and ex-students of St John’s College, the bishop and diocesan authorities, the board of the local Catholic secondary school, and the Catholic Education Office. Each had a contribution to make to the development of a shared vision.

Notwithstanding these reasons, at school level, every practical effort was made to engage staff in the process of developing a shared vision. All information

concerning the educational restructuring was made available to staff. In this context, staff in-service days were particularly important. A number of staff development days over the years were devoted to developing the school community's deeper understanding of the Marist vision as it manifests itself in Marist spirituality and charism; some focused more directly on developing a more up to date and attractive curriculum as part of a necessary step to attain a viable future of the school. Regular staff meetings dealt with issues pertaining to the educational restructuring and transition issues. And frequent visits to the school by the provincial and meetings with staff kept them engaged in the process of developing a shared vision.

While most of the members of staff engaged positively in the process, there was a small but vocal group who displayed strong opposition to it and compounded the difficulty because they exercised considerable influence over some other staff members. In this context, it was necessary at times for the principal to hold steadfastly to his personal vision and the general vision which he shared with the provincial and his council while continually inviting staff members to engage in the process of developing a commonly held shared vision at school level. It was akin to performing a balancing act.

As the extensive discussions about the educational restructuring progressed with the wide range of stakeholders, greater certainty about the future of the school began to emerge. This enabled the Marist Fathers to engage more fully in the process of developing a vision for the school which they could share with all those engaged in the episode of educational restructuring.

8.2.2.4 *Courage*

This study clearly identifies the professional and personal challenge it was for the provincial, the provincial council and the principal to lead this episode of educational restructuring. One direction giver chose to use the word "courageous" to describe the approach adopted by the provincial and his council:

... I'd probably call it courageous. I think [the provincial and his council] had an issue; they didn't necessarily know the answers because the answers had to lie within that community up there as well as they

existed within the order itself. I think they approached it courageously ... (Transcription KI 05, p. 9)

Such courage was needed in the face of inevitable tension, particularly at school level.

Speaking of the emotional difficulties and challenges of being a principal in a school that is undergoing major restructuring, one direction offered the following perspective:

... you were trying to do a balancing act, trying to run the school as a College, you're trying to handle staff, handling the future or trying to maintain equanimity in the whole process. To make sure that the kids are not disadvantaged in it all but there's a sense of tension between yourself, some of the admin and some in the staff. Because it's your job to move that along and in doing that you would push some people off side and that's inevitable. It's not a criticism it's just something that's going to happen (Transcription KI 03, p. 6)

A senior member of the College staff reinforced this observation. To highlight the level of strong resistance that existed among the staff, he used the analogy of people who refused to get on a horse. He said:

As I said to you, I think it was a really difficult thing to do. You as principal for one - it was a difficult thing for you to have to go through obviously. You're overseeing change and you've got some people who don't want to get on the horse. (Transcription KI 06, pp. 10–11)

Still, another direction giver who was well-versed in the process of educational change and who was used by the Marist Fathers as a consultant, said:

I certainly didn't envy you that job because we knew ourselves what it would be like. Any time change is in the air people get nervous and some run because they think "time to abandon ship, get out of here and go to some other school" and others kind of resisted and said "We don't really need any change." The vast bulk of people remain open, even if

somewhat sceptical at times, not totally committed but they wait until they see. And I think we felt that too. (Transcription KI 04, pp. 11 - 12)

Later in the interview, this consultant added:

... you'd know more about it than I would but it would have been a considerable challenge to you as a principal and the leadership team, like how do you lead that change? How do you deal with the day to day resistance kind of things, the accusations from outsiders, from old boys that you've let the team down, you've sold the farm? There was all that sort of stuff was mentioned which is natural that people would feel that. In leading the College through the change process is pretty demanding. (Transcription KI 04, p. 17)

It certainly was a very difficult and emotional time for the principal. An entry the Researcher's Journal at the beginning of the educational restructuring indicates the principal could foresee difficulties with respect to leading the changes at St John's College. To deal with those difficulties, it was necessary to have courage:

I recall clearly, even at the outset, the clear reluctance on the part of the Senior Residential Master to positively engage with the commission representatives. It became obvious to me that as leader of the school community there would be decisions in the future that would be a source of conflict and which would become a source of tension between the Senior Residential Master, some members of the teaching staff, and myself. Chartering the course for cultural change was going to be very difficult. (Researcher's Journal, p. 4)

In a similar vein, another direction giver observed that:

It's certainly quite a difficult time. I guess you're the only strong person really to do it. I said other people would have buckled under the pressure ... you face and respond to people and receive the flack and criticism in that kind of thing. (Transcription KI 10, p. 17)

The data indicate that the provincials and the principal, as administrative leaders of this episode of educational restructuring, acted courageously. One source from which they drew the strength to act courageously was their spirituality and charism.

8.2.2.5 *Charism*

Religious congregations take their charism seriously because it is a point of reference for all their undertakings (Witwer, 2010). It is a ‘moral compass’ and the external manifestation of their spirituality (cf. Chapter Two, section 2.2.1). The data indicate that the approach adopted by the Marist Fathers’ provincials and the members of the congregation to the process of restructuring at St John’s College reflected their charism and that it was evident in their leadership style. The consultant with the Queensland Catholic Education Commission picked up on this idea and expressed it this way:

I think there is the whole formation of the Marist tradition. Staff relation is different in a religious order school whether that is a Mercy school, a Franciscan, Loreto, Marist – there is that whole approach to the spirituality and the spiritual formation of staff, the traditions, the way things are done, and why they’re done that way. It’s all sort of stuff which in my personal experience is quite different in a religious order school. In a sense, much more able to be focused because of the charism than it is in a diocesan Catholic school which has not adherence to a particular founder or anybody like that ... it’s not just a Catholic College, it’s a Mercy College or it’s a Samaritan College and it’s got a flavour about it, an ethos about it that is really integral to the whole thing and really important. So we’ve got to keep our people formed in that sort of stuff (Transcription KI 04, pp. 21 - 22).

In short, the congregation’s particular spirituality, charism and philosophy of education inform each other and give a school a very distinctive flavour.

The direction givers in this research study spoke highly of the way the Marist charism was evident during this episode of educational restructuring at St John’s College. A significant direction giver, reflecting on the Marist sense of mission,

responded to the question about the charism as being recognisable in the episode of educational restructuring. He expressed his view in the following way:

Absolutely! Yes. I felt so. I felt so. I think they had a genuine capacity to reflect on the extraordinary work they had done and in keeping with their mission, as to where their work was now taking the order ... I think they genuinely considered and reflected on where they were up to and why they had to make this ... and that meant cutting into what some considered was their heartland in order to make it.
(Transcription KI 05, p. 10)

In addition, he believed that the Marist Fathers' showed a willingness to make themselves vulnerable. One direction giver used the term "mendicant position"³⁰ to describe the Marist Fathers' predicament at the beginning of the restructuring (Transcription PC 03, p. 3). He was attempting to describe the proactive approach of the Marist Fathers when they entered into a process of educational restructuring without any predetermined outcome or any idea of where it would lead. They chose to live with uncertainty about the future of the school and even exposed the fragile condition of the school and the congregation to all the relevant stakeholders as a sign of the Marist commitment to openness in the decision-making process.

This willingness to be vulnerable during the process of restructuring stems from the Marist Fathers' charism which speaks of a fundamental aspect of Marist life: a genuine concern for others. This calls them to "live outside the comfort zone." As the direction giver commented,

... I think the whole reality of the Marist Fathers – their life as an order - has come from probably living out of the edge of the comfort zone. I think there are a few who probably live quite within comfort zones as with any order probably. But in terms of direction and willingness, no; they've had to go outside that in extraordinary ways. (Transcription KI 05, p. 10)

³⁰ A mendicant is a beggar.

Others spoke of how the charism of the Marist Fathers manifested itself in very practical ways, ways that reflect its strong personalist dimension. A senior member of staff spoke of Marist spirituality, charism and philosophy in terms of relationships, particularly the human dimension. He said:

It's still what you feel inside and the way you treat people. That's what it comes to, is the way you treat staff, the staff to staff, staff to kids and so on. I believe that the Marist way, Mary, mother, that way of actually dealing with kids is very much alive. (Transcription, KI 06 p. 10)

Another direction giver, a member of staff, acknowledged this aspect and spoke of a personal experience of the Marist Fathers who lived and worked at St John's College. In a way similar to the previous direction giver, this one focused on the importance of personal relationships as a central dimension of the Marist charism. It was put this way:

I think the pastoral care and that caring nature of the family of the Marists was what a lot of people remembered ... working with people and being gentle, like Mary ... [Marists] lead by example, they accept people on all levels ... they are non-judgemental, they're men of the people ... working with people and believing in people and working beside people without fanfare ... (Transcription KI 07, pp. 3 & 16)

In his interview, another staff member who had a wealth of experience in Marist schools spoke of the non-competitive aspect of the Marist charism when he said: "... there wasn't a strong sense that we're just going to go out and win at all costs" (Transcription KI 08, p. 11). He too emphasised the relational, personal aspect of the Marist charism and talked of it in terms of: "... walk with us and we'll lead you through" (p. 12). He also made an interesting observation that some of the Marist Fathers on staff may not have seen the Marist charism in operation during some of the times of restructuring.

This is not surprising. In fact, ironically it would seem quite consistent with the charism of the Marist Fathers, particularly in the way that it calls upon the Marist Fathers to think more of others' interests than their own. This concept is articulated well in the Marist Fathers' Constitutions and tradition. It is summed up in the phrase

“hidden and unknown” (Marist Fathers, 1988, n. 22). As mentioned in Chapter Two, this special phrase describes the way that Marists are called to minister and to work. It challenges them to focus on those to whom they minister and whom they serve rather than on themselves. Thus the charism of the Marist Fathers has a moral character and the data suggest that it was this moral character that was a significant factor in the educational restructuring at St John’s College. The charism of the Marist Fathers enabled them to sit ‘comfortably’ with the challenge of restructuring St John’s College because the provincials, their councils and the principal readily accepted their roles as agents of change in service of the common good.

Though the importance of charism to a religious congregation cannot be overstated, it is not a simple matter. This is because there is always potential for tension between how a religious congregation describes its charism in theory and how it is lived out in practice. This tension emerges from the fact that religious congregations are made up of individuals who endeavour to appropriate the charism of their congregation to their daily lives and their ministerial involvement. Thus the interplay between charism and personality is complex.

As indicated previously in this Chapter, some Marists did not agree with the direction taken by the provincial, his councillors and the principal during the episode of educational restructuring at St John’s College (for example, Section 8.2.2.2). Their interpretation of the reports, findings and recommendations of the various committees engaged in the consultation process differed at times from those who had the responsibility of making the ultimate decisions at provincial level and the decisions at school level. However, while Marists endeavour to bridge the gap that often exists between the charism and their living out of it, there are occasions when the charism has a power to manifest itself unconsciously and unexpectedly.

One direction giver brought this aspect of charism into relief when he observed that the Marist Fathers tend to manifest their charism “intuitively or unconsciously”. Speaking of the part played by the charism in shaping the Marist Fathers’ approach to the restructuring he said:

I suspect it did. I have, I suppose, two difficulties with answering the question. One is I think the Marist Fathers tend to do that intuitively or unconsciously rather than think ‘we are the Marist Fathers, we do it this

way.’ If it happens it just happens. Secondly, just personality wise, I’m not overtly a religious priest, I am not as overtly into that sort of stuff as some other people might be. Yeah, I’m sure it was a factor but I’m not sure I can add much light, certainly I know for myself I didn’t think ‘well I’m a Marist, but we must do it this way’. If it did happen, it happened. (Transcription PC 03, p. 19)

From all that has been presented in his section dealing with the nature of leadership during this episode of educational restructuring, the data indicate that the direction givers identified the notions of change agency, objectivity, vision, courage and charism as being significant components of leadership. The following section will take up the presentation of the data to discuss the findings.

8.3 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

When read together, these findings with respect to leadership suggest that the provincials, their councils, and the principal shared a commitment to strategic and moral leadership within this episode of educational restructuring, possessed a realisation how their leadership would impact personally on those engaged in the educational restructuring, and held a deep concern as to how their decisions would affect the school and extended community engaged in the educational restructuring. However, despite their sensitivity to the human impact of restructuring, they met with significant levels of resistance and divergence of opinion, as well as uncertainty and deep emotional reactions.

A discussion of these tentative findings in the light of the literature further deepens an appreciation of the nature and challenge of leadership in the context of educational restructuring. In particular, this discussion explores the human dimension of educational change, cultural and political transformation in the context of change, the strategic and moral dimension of leadership, the personal qualities of the leader, and the role of spirituality and charism.

8.3.1 The Human Dimension of Educational Change

It was a feature of this study that the ‘challenge’ of educational restructuring at St John’s College was constantly being introduced into conversations between the direction givers and the researcher. As noted previously, the direction givers

referred to the level of resistance, the divergence of opinion, and the uncertainty, as well as the strongly-felt emotional reactions that characterised this episode of educational restructuring at St John's College. They also congratulated the researcher as principal on his vision and courage, suggesting that all was not 'plain sailing' during this event. Leading the episode of educational restructuring was a difficult personal and deeply emotional experience for the principal.

In light of the literature it seems that the challenge of leadership in the context of educational restructuring is due to the fact that educational restructuring represents a deep cultural and political transformation rather than mere structural change (Fullan, 1998b; Smeed, et al., 2009). Such a cultural and political transformation follows a breakdown in cultural meaning that, in turn, elicits uncertainty and emotional reactions, difference of opinion and resistance before a new cultural consensus emerges due to effective leadership (Arbuckle, 1993). Thus, the challenge of leading educational restructuring and other innovations is due to the human dimension of educational change.

Within the literature (Arbuckle, 2005; Duignan, 2006; Evans, 1996), it is generally accepted that major change threatens people's self-esteem and their need to feel effective, valued and in control. Evans (1996) makes this point well:

... when an organization is being restructured, all staff – not only those who preferred the status quo but also those who pressed for change – experience the stress of uncertainty. Even when the elements to be changed are heartily disliked by a majority of staff and are the object of chronic complaints, the change itself commonly provokes more upset and distress than anyone anticipated. (p. 35)

No wonder that such negative experiences are 'the human story of change'. The strong resistance, the divergences of opinion, the uncertainty, and the strong emotional reactions during the episode of educational restructuring at St John's College should be seen as the norm rather than the exception. Recognising these features of educational change, it is important not to lose sight of the individual and the "role of individual identity, emotions and the development of members of the school community" (Louis, et al., 1999, p. 269) in achieving the organisational goals involved in the major changes affecting the school. In this way, it follows that

“resistance needs to be seen as part of the solution, not just part of the problem; it demands the attention and respect of all who seek innovation” (Evans, 1996, p. 38). Moreover, “negotiation and bargaining” should be a feature of educational change and “conflict [should be] viewed as a natural phenomenon and power accrues to dominant coalitions rather than being the preserve of formal leaders” (p. 89). In this sense, Hargreaves’ (1998) observations are relevant:

Some of the most recent writing in educational and organizational change theory urges readers not only to accept the existence of chaos, complexity and paradox in their organizational worlds, but embrace and capitalize on it. (p. 284)

The resistance, divergences of opinion, uncertainty and emotional reactions were symptoms of a deeper reality. They were signs that all involved in the educational restructuring were struggling with an experience of disintegration. This included the provincials, the members of their councils and the principal. The shared patterns of meaning which had held the school community together and which had contributed to the development of powerful bonds of friendship and association were losing their power of cohesiveness. Order and predictability were no longer evident. The school was experiencing rapid, radical and major change. According to Arbuckle (1988) a new culture could emerge only if the participants in the episode of educational restructuring engaged with the disintegration and chaos.

8.3.2 Cultural and Political Transformation

A number of theorists have framed organisational change as deep cultural and political transformation. For example, Raynor (2004) draws attention to what happens to school cultures when organisational leaders raise difficult questions, particularly about the nature and purpose of the school. By their willingness to engage in this process, leaders challenge a school community to approach a “gateway, a field of possibilities of what might emerge” (p. 70). According to Raynor (2004) this “gateway” is effectively about the fragmentation of culture. It is recognised by the existence of “accountability, anxiety, covert politics ... political activity, coalitions, and chance events” (p. 70). The gateway lies between the old order of social cohesion with a strong culture and the ‘new order’ characterised by new relationships, teamwork, school expansion, high morale and success, and the

attribution of leadership. However, the way through it all is via “the edge of chaos” (Haslett & Osborne, 2001) and it is only by taking this “gateway” that the “new order” can emerge (Raynor, 2004, p. 70).

Evans (1996) uses similar language to describe the process of deep cultural change. He alerts leaders to the need for “first-order changes” rather than “second-order changes” (p. 5). He describes the difference between the two by indicating:

... first-order changes try to improve the efficiency or effectiveness of what we are already doing ... [and] second-order changes are systematic in nature and aim to modify the very way an organization is put together, altering its assumptions, goals, structures, roles and norms. (p. 5)

Developing this idea, Arbuckle (1988, 2000, 2004) describes the impetus for organisational change in terms of a breakdown of cultural meaning, and the process of organisational change in terms of cultural transformation leading to a new cultural consensus. Explaining this thought, Arbuckle (1988, 1993) identifies a number of evolutionary stages in a model he devised, and later modified, to describe the process of cultural transformation. In Stage 1 there is cultural consensus and integration. In Stage 2, there is “a break up the group’s mythological consensus” (Arbuckle, 1993, pp. 44 - 45). This leads to Stage 3 which is the stage of “political reactions”. Here there will be attempts to “freeze the changes in legislative action” (p. 45) as well as attempts to “rapidly promote in-depth change” (p. 45) through alternative legislative action. Stage 4 is the stage of “chaos” which emerges as stakeholders experience fear and psychological loss. In Stage 5 there will be a divergence of opinion and conflict as some see chaos as the catalyst for significant cultural and personal growth, while others “remain overwhelmed and paralysed by its confusion” (p. 46). Stage 6 sees a new cultural consensus emerge, and the cultural transformation is evident in the beliefs, assumptions, purposes, policies, programs, and operations of the organisation.

Looking back over the ‘story’ of educational restructuring at St John’s College, all six stages of cultural transformation are evident. Prior to the 1980s St John’s College enjoyed a long period of cultural consensus (Stage 1). However, by the early 1980s feelings of unease and stress began to be evident as the school

experienced identity and security issues (Stage 2). The decision to withdraw from negotiations with the schools in Lismore because of the boarding component and to 'go it alone' and to introduce some structural changes did nothing to change the prevailing attitudes (Stage 3). By the early 1990s, all the cultural and personal disintegration symptoms of chaos developed: anger, a sense of drifting without purpose, depression, paralysis, witch-hunting, etc. (Stage 4). The Marist Fathers, through the leadership of the provincial and council, chose to take decisive steps to address the problems in the school. They realised the school needed significant change and that the ensuing change process would be slow, extremely difficult and, at times, filled with much uncertainty (Stage 5). Eventually, by holding fast to their commitment to the difficult task of cultural change, a new cultural consensus emerged (Stage 6) (pp. 44 - 45).

What seems to have compounded the difficulty of the process of cultural transformation at St John's College was the existence of a significant degree of dysfunctionality. For example, one direction giver described the culture as in "denial mode" (Transcription PC 01, p. 6) and another indicated St John's College was an "immoveable object" (Transcription PC 01, p. 7) where "the resistance [to change] was enormous" (Transcription PC 01, p. 7). Arbuckle (1993) refers to this kind of a situation when he speaks of the possibility of neurotic or sick cultures (p. 43) and Deal and Peterson (2009) draw attention to some of the aspects that characterise "toxic cultures" (p. 180). Schools displaying aspects of a toxic culture become 'focused on the negative' and 'fragmented'. These authors draw attention to how difficult it is to change this situation when they write, "Transforming a toxic culture is a risky and scary undertaking. Many teachers and administrators have tried and failed; still others succeed without ever knowing why" (p. 180).

One of the most significant aspects of this period of cultural and political transformation was the commitment of the leadership at provincial and school levels to remain resolutely committed to the course of action on which they had embarked. They were determined to challenge opponents of change respectfully but firmly. Even in the face of doubt, uncertainty, fierce opposition, difficulties and challenges, strong emotional reactions, and dysfunctionality, the leaders displayed a deep commitment to moral purpose. They also displayed respect for the people engaged

in the process by inviting them to stay in the process, maintained fidelity to their spirituality and charisma, and were willing to make strategically important decisions.

8.3.3 Strategic and Moral Dimensions of Leadership

This research study also highlights the role of strategic and moral leadership in the context of educational restructuring. As noted in Chapter Three, strategic leadership involves strategic thinking:

... a process by which an organization's direction givers can rise above the daily managerial processes and crises to gain different perspectives ... Such perspectives should be both future-oriented and historically understood. Strategic thinkers must have the skills of looking ... forwards ... while knowing where their organization is now, so that wise risks can be taken while avoiding having to repeat the mistakes of the past. (Garratt as cited in B. Davies, 2006, p. 16)

Such strategic leadership presupposes a moral purpose that focuses on student learning, human respect, and social relationships (Fullan, 2005a). The provincial's appointment of the researcher as principal was a decisive and strategic step. As the data show (cf. Chapter Six), the provincial council wanted to address the major crisis facing St John's College. In effect, the direction givers were seeking someone to act as 'a change agent'. This thinking was consistent with the literature of the time that recognised the crucial role played by the administrative leadership in educational change. For example, Evans (1996, 2007), writing about school reform and principalship, recognises that "Principals are widely seen as indispensable for innovation ... He is the leader closest to the action, the operational chief of the unit that must accomplish the change" (p. 202). Furthermore, he notes that:

Research on the principal's role generally finds that schools where innovation succeeds are led by principals who are true Renaissance people: they do everything well. They demonstrate strong knowledge and commitment to the innovation, but they approach faculty in a collaborative spirit, fostering open communication. They demand high standards, but they offer high levels of emotional support. They hold staff accountable, but they provide strong assistance. They run good

meetings, but they reduce the burden of administrative details. The only problem is that there are apparently so few of them. (pp. 202-203)

He also observes that “Most principals are untrained for leading change” (p. 203). This was the case during the episode of restructuring from 1994 to 2000. Even though his experience in co-educational day schools had provided the researcher as principal with a broad perspective on change, he had not studied or been trained in the theoretical foundations of cultural change. His appreciation of strategic leadership and the need to develop strategic thinking was more intuitive than intentional. However, as discussed in 7.2.2, the researcher as principal did demonstrate a commitment to the strategic processes of “envisioning” or thinking about the future, “engaging” people in strategic conversations and decision-making, “articulating” a vision/plan for the future, “implementing” or acting in line with this vision/plan, and “monitoring” outcomes with the intention of re-envisioning the future (Eacott, 2007, pp. 8-11). At the same time, it is fair to say that the application of these processes took place more on an unconscious level rather than as a deliberate plan.

On appointment, the principal accepted the responsibility of being a ‘change agent’ and he came to the role with what B. Davies (2002) would refer to as “strategic intent” (p. 203). This intent was based on a fundamental commitment to “developing a successful and high achievement culture across the whole school community” (p. 203) and it was anticipated that there was a need for “deep-seated cultural change and fundamental re-thinking” (p. 204) of the school as organisation. In addition, there was a sense that being a change agent also meant acting with moral purpose. As Fullan (1993a) argues, “... moral purpose and change agency make perfect partners [because they] quite literally *define* (and redefine) each other as they interact” (p. 18). When moral purpose and change agency are taken seriously, the purpose for and the meaning of educational change is established and there is an enhanced capacity for change because people understand and accept the exercise of leadership.

Although not using these terms, the principal, with the support of the provincial and his council, came to the responsibility of educational restructuring at St John’s College as a change agent with a commitment to both strategic and moral

leadership. As discussed in Section 6.2.2, prior to his appointment at St John's College, the principal had raised the concept of 'mission' and "asked whether at Woodlawn [the Marist Fathers] have completed our original mission" (Provincial Archives: Minutes of Provincial Council meeting, August 12, 1993). Moreover, on his appointment and along with the provincial leaders, he engaged strategic thinking by implementing open and honest processes, encouraging consultation and collaboration, and valuing professional expertise (see Sections 7.2.2.2 and 7.2.2.3). Given this emphasis on the strategic and moral dimension of leadership, it is not surprising that the direction givers were keen to discuss the personal qualities that the administrative leaders brought to this episode of educational restructuring at St John's College.

8.3.4 Personal Qualities of Leaders

As discussed in Section 8.2, the direction givers identified the personal qualities that the principal, in particular, brought to his leadership role in terms of objectivity, vision, and courage. This interest in personal qualities is consistent with the literature (B. Davies, 2006; B. J. Davies & Davies, 2006; Fullan, 2005a) that typically identify that "leadership is rooted in the soil of morality" (Thomas, 2006, p. 11) and "that leadership requires a passion for a great cause and the ability to succeed against all odds" (p. 13). Moreover, these personal qualities of leadership are often linked to the notion of "authentic leadership" with authentic educational leaders helping "to infuse educational practice with higher purpose and meaning" (Duignan, 2006, p. 127). Previously, Evans (1996) described authentic leadership in the context of educational change as an:

... approach to change that emphasises people's means to find meaning in their life and work, and the role for the school in providing that meaning. It endorses a new kind of leadership that emphasizes authenticity, translating integrity, core beliefs and natural strengths of school leaders into practical strategies for problem-solving. (p. xiii)

In thinking about administrative leadership, the direction givers used the word 'objective' to describe one of the personal qualities that the principal brought to his leadership role. In using this descriptor, these key direction givers were referring to the principal's lack of "personal baggage" and obvious commitment to the "Marist

way” (Transcription KI 05, p. 12). In other words, they believed that the principal was lacking in self-interest. This personal quality is explained in terms of “integrity: character in action” (Evans, 1996, p. 185).

At a fundamental level, integrity means displaying consistency between one’s values, goals and actions. This reinforces the necessity of a sound moral dimension of strategic leaders. For Ciulla (2006) this understanding encourages us to move beyond asking “What is leadership?” to asking ‘What is *good* leadership?’ We want leaders who do things right and do the right thing” (p. 30). Here “good leadership” requires “leadership ethics” (p. 30), that is, the ability and willingness to undertake the difficult task without seeking easy solutions and regardless of personal gain or popularity. In other words:

Leadership is morality magnified. Unlike individual morality, the morality of a leader ripples through organizations, communities and societies. We know that leaders have the potential to inflict great harm or bestow great benefits on their constituents. When a leader errs, many people suffer. Leadership is a specific type of human relationship and ethics is about the way we treat each other in various relationships. (p. 17)

Related to this understanding of objectivity, the direction givers also noted that the principal brought a personal vision to the episode of educational restructuring, and this perspective is also supported elsewhere in the data: “Woodlawn [St John’s College] needs to be ‘fired from within’ concerning its vision ... otherwise it will continue to be a ‘languishing dinosaur’” (Provincial Archives: Report from R. Chapman to Provincial Council, June 15, 1995). As discussed above, one direction giver believed that the principal’s personal vision made all the difference: “The principal had to lead and had to be very clear in his vision because we all would have faltered ...” (Transcription KI 07, p. 19).

This understanding is also reflected in the literature as it is argued that strategic leaders develop a personal vision to inspire them and “it is important that the vision is something the leader personally strongly believes in – a merely bureaucratic stance will not be credible and will not inspire trust” (Geijsel, et al., 2007, p. 147). Here it is understood that “new programs grow out of the conviction or interest of an

individual principal or a small group of leaders rather than out of a formed planned change process” (Evans, 1996, p. 201). Evans further observes: “The highly personal nature of vision is central to its success” (p. 201). The value of the vision is to inspire followers. In order “to change, people have to move” (p. 201). In this regard, it is the leader’s task to envision or give shape to a “compelling agenda” (p. 201).

At the same time, the literature alerts researchers to the need for strategic leaders need to move beyond the implementation of a personal vision. As Hargreaves (1991) cautions, “ultimately the responsibility for vision building should be a collective one, not an individual one. Collaboration should mean creating the vision together, not complying with the principal’s own” (p. 13).

The data indicate that the provincials, the provincial councillors and the school principal endeavoured to develop a shared vision with all the stakeholders. They sought to convince those engaged in the process that the approach adopted would produce the best possible solution for all concerned. In this way, their vision gave them confidence to address and to transcend the difficulties they faced.

Notwithstanding their confidence and their determined efforts to share their vision, the task was extremely difficult. The uncertainty about the school’s future until very late in the episode of educational restructuring compounded the difficulty in developing this shared vision with the staff and other stakeholders. In addition, the leadership could have made mistakes. The lack of a theoretical foundation about developing a shared vision may have contributed to the delay in its development.

Finally, the direction givers identified courage as a personal quality that the principal brought to his leadership role. As one direction giver saw it:

I think they were very wise in putting you there because I think it was costly to you, yes, it was probably costly to you, but at the same time the strength that you had to have to promote that, to be able to sell it to the staff, to go over lots and lots of little petty things. Some of those people were there for a long time and still are there and still are struggling the same way ... and if we hadn’t had people like you, [] it

could have gone bottom up. You had to be strong and you had to be ruthless in some situations. (Transcription KI 07, pp. 18–19)

At the same time, the literature also acknowledges the challenge of educational leadership and calls for courageous leadership within this context. For Duignan (2006) "educational leaders are confronted by external and internal challenges in expectations that make considerable demands on their time, expertise, energies and emotional well-being" (p. 1). However, he also argues that, "The 'real challenge' of educational leadership ... are tensions between and among people, especially those based on philosophies, values, interests and preferences" (p. 42). As a consequence, "The key challenges for educational leaders, especially principals ... involve complex and often conflicting human relations and interactions" (p. 43). This clearly highlights the human dimension of leadership. In the light of this claim, he recommends moral courage as a personal capability that allows the leader to "demonstrate strength of character and stand up for his/her values even against the expectations or particular demands of a popular majority" (p. 181).

In a similar vein, Glanz (2006) makes a comment about principal leadership which seems to bring together some of the factors the direction givers alluded to in relation to the principal's role in the restructuring of St John's College. Glanz comments:

Schools will not renew themselves with principals who are cowards, biased, indifferent, poor judges, and arrogant. We need, in contrast, principals who have an awareness of their own ignorance but who at the same time are not afraid to stand behind programs and practices that are controversial; leaders who are committed to treating people (children, parents, and others) fairly and justly; leaders who can appreciate and sense others' hurt and who can weigh complex factors in rendering decisions. (p. 51)

Notwithstanding the fact that many of the descriptors used by the direction givers focus on the principal's leadership role, there is clear evidence that they also understood that the task of administrative leadership was in fact a collegial and shared effort. Throughout the period of educational restructuring, they recognised that the principal was acting on behalf of the provincials, provincial councils and the Woodlawn Working Party. The direction givers spoke of the principal's

“cooperation with the provincial leadership” (Transcription PC 03, p. 6) and recognised that the provincial and council members “were very wise in putting you there...” (Transcription KI 07, p. 18). The provincials, their councils and the principal worked in concert.

In this respect, the direction givers were clearly conscious “of their own ignorance” and were also “not afraid to stand behind programs and practices that are controversial” (Glanz, 2006, p. 51). It has already been mentioned that one direction giver used the term “mendicant position” (Transcription PC 03, p. 3) to describe the position of vulnerability in which the Marist Fathers had placed themselves. Nevertheless, they proactively entered into a process of educational restructuring without any idea of where it would lead and fully aware that it would meet with great opposition and resistance.

8.3.5 The Role of Spirituality and Charism

A very significant aspect of a culture of a school, particularly of Catholic schools with a tradition of religious congregation’s involvement, is spirituality and charism. Though there is some “uneasiness” (Braniff, 2007, p. 23) on the part of some commentators of Catholic education concerning the concept of charism and spirituality in the context of Catholic education, each religious congregation endeavours to draw inspiration from its spirituality, which in turn is expressed in its charism. Every founder of a religious congregation strives to share his or her unique understanding of spirituality and charism with those who are drawn to live and work with him/her.

As part of religious renewal in the Church, the Vatican II document *Perfectae Caritatis* urged religious congregations to “return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original spirit of the institutes” (Trouvé, 1999, p. 312) that is, to the *charism* or spirit of their congregations. Thus spirituality and charism in religious congregations are part of their myth or story “whose symbolisms enable us to define value, judge human striving, and place ourselves in an identifiable order of things” (Starratt, 2003, p. 18). This myth or charism, in the context of a congregational school, is so extensive that it influences the underlying beliefs, assumptions and purposes within the school community and the school’s goals and purposes, as well as its policies, educational programs, organisation, and its daily operations. Charism

is part of the school's cultural identity; it is a key aspect of the cultural consensus which binds individuals together.

In the context of how the direction givers understood the process of the educational restructuring at St John's College, the data indicate that the spirituality and charism of the Marist Fathers as discussed in Chapter Two were clearly appreciated and understood to be operating. These were clearly a significant part of the school's culture, the "basic underlying assumptions" (Schein, 2004, p. 26) of the school, and were "really integral to the whole thing" (Transcription KI 04, pp. 21-22). Accordingly, the emphasis on personal and interpersonal relations, that is the human dimension, which is an identifiable aspect of the spirituality and charism of the Marist Fathers and personalism, was a central feature of the educational restructuring.

As explained in Chapter Two, the Marist Fathers' identification with Mary is about relating to Mary as a *person*. She is not an object; she is a subject! This point was expressed well in the words of a famous Marist historian and an expert in Marist spirituality, Jean Coste, when he said: "Mary remains a person who is not to be readily confused with an idea" (The Marist Project and Insight 1816, 1972-1973, [Provincial Archives: unpublished text] p. 89). The Marist charism and spirituality therefore originate from a deeply personal relationship with Mary. This is reflected and becomes operative, in a real and practical way, in how Marists relate personally with others. The quality of their relationships is intended to be the same as if it were Mary relating to people.

This charism and spirituality were expressed in the philosophy and vision that the Marist Fathers built into St John's College from its foundation. As Schein (2004) has pointed out:

... cultures begin with leaders who impose their own values and assumptions on a group. If that group is successful and the assumptions come to be taken for granted, we then have a culture that will define for later generations of members what kinds of leadership are acceptable. (p. 2)

The leaders of the Marist Fathers, through the development and sharing of their spirituality and charism, made available “their own values and assumptions” (p. 2) to those for whom they had responsibility and with whom they shared their vision and mission. Many found Marist spirituality and Marist charism attractive.

In the case of St John’s College, the distinctive culture it developed was influenced strongly by the values that flow from Marist spirituality. This culture in turn shaped the beliefs, values and behaviours of people who joined the school community. It served to shape the ‘way we do things around here’. At a deeper level, this same Marist spirituality and charism helped to inform the purpose, the process and the leadership of this episode of educational restructuring as the focus shifted from pragmatic concerns to mission (Witwer, 2010).

As mentioned in Chapter Two, one of the strengths of Marist spirituality is that it does not limit Marists to one kind of ministry or work. In fact, history shows that Marists have been and are involved in a wide variety of ministries. What is distinctive about Marist spirituality therefore is not the ministry but the approach adopted. Marist spirituality enables all Marists to approach their ministries and the people with whom they work in a peculiarly *relational* and *personal* manner.

In relation to the educational restructuring at St John’s College, once the Marist Fathers were able to reconnect with their founding myth and this dimension of their spirituality and charism, they were able to look more broadly and to consider a wide range of options for the future of the school. And so, when the Queensland Catholic Education Commission report suggested that “the original mission of the Marist Fathers to conduct a boarding College at St John’s, Woodlawn has come to an end. The Marist Fathers no longer have [neither] the personnel nor the necessary drive to sustain a major educational endeavour in the spirit to which they have been accustomed. An era has been concluded” (St John’s College, Woodlawn: A Planning Exercise – Final Report, April 14, 1997, p. 12), the Marist leaders were able to accept that determination calmly because they were steeped in their spiritual tradition and were operating out of a genuine concern for the common good. Some members of the congregation, particularly those with a deep sense of affection for St John’s College, did not find it as easy to accept.

Notwithstanding all that has been said here about Marist spirituality and charism on a general level, the data indicate that there were some differences, and even tension at times, among the Marists in relation to this episode of educational restructuring. As mentioned, this should not be surprising. There is always potential for tension between the way a religious congregation describes its charism in theory and how it is lived out in practice. The reason for this difference is due to the fact that religious congregations are made up of individuals. The interplay between charism and personality is complex. It is somewhat similar to the relationship between culture and subcultures.

The Marists who did not agree with the direction taken by the provincials, their councillors and the principal during the episode of educational restructuring at St John's College (for example, Section 8.2.2.2), interpreted the reports, findings and recommendations of the various committees in a way that differed from those who had the responsibility to make the ultimate decisions. Their resistance, similar to the resistance displayed by some other staff members, sprang from a desire to "maintain a homeostasis" (Evans, 1996, p. 56). The more dynamic aspect of Marist spirituality and charism, that is its emphasis on mission, presented them with a major challenge. However, the difference in opinion among the Marists did not diminish the influence of Marist spirituality and charism. On the contrary, it supports its resilience. The acceptance of a difference of opinion in a way that respects personal freedom confirms the personalist and respectful dimension of Marist spirituality and charism.

Another significant finding from the data is that the direction givers were able to transcend sectional interests, inevitable in episodes requiring political transformation (Smeed, et al., 2009). Focusing on mission gave them a certain freedom and enabled them to discover an understanding of the purpose of the restructuring that was consistent with their charism and spirituality. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the notion of polity, when identified with the characteristics of a system of government that would help realise the full potential of human happiness, supports the development of a just and fair society and emphasises the "rule of the many in the interest of the whole" (Slater & Boyd, 1999, p. 325). Polity, understood as a system of government, gives emphasis to finding the best form of government so that everyone in society works for the 'interest of the whole' society. This understanding is consistent with working for the "common good" (Alford & Naughton, 2006;

Rourke & Chazarreta Rourke, 2005, p. 54). Moreover, it is in line with the notion of a “politics of transformation” that is not self-interested because its “concern is with the wider issues of equity and social justice. Its focus is on the long rather than the short-term ... The politics of transformation is rooted in everyday life and this is its strength” (Sachs, 2003, p. 146).

Finally, this study has also found that the Marist Fathers’ spirituality and charism clearly played a role in determining the style of leadership at St John’s College. This was appropriate given Arbuckle’s (1988) claim that in instances such as educational restructuring:

When a people’s culture is dramatically undermined, they lose their sense of meaning and belonging and thus experience chaos. The only way out of chaos is for people to enter again into the sacred time of their founding in order to relive their creation mythology. Through this experience they are reinvigorated. But for this to occur, they must want to move out of chaos and they need refounding culture leaders who have the ability to articulate the creation mythology and express it in ways that relate to the changing world around them. (p. 28)

In other words, there is a need for a person who has the capacity to be a pathfinder. Arbuckle (1988) uses the term “intrapreneur” (p. 33) to describe the person whose task is to revitalise an existing culture:

He or she is not just a person with a good idea or invention, but is one who, energized by the creative power of the corporate culture founding myth, sees *how* ideas can be put into practice and *actually* moves to do so ... Identification with the founding myth is not for the intrapreneur and followers a nostalgic escape into the past, but a force propelling them into the future. (p. 33)

For Arbuckle (1988) the “founding myth” (p. 33) of the religious congregation supports the revitalising work of the intrapreneur, and the findings of this study suggest that this was certainly the case as administrative leadership at St John’s College responded to the challenge of educational restructuring.

8.4 CONCLUSION

This study has identified a number of major findings in response to the third research question: How did the direction givers understand the *leadership* of educational restructuring at St John's College?

The chapter shows that the direction-givers understood leadership within this episode of educational change in terms of the administrative leadership of those in authority. In this case the provincial leaders and provincial councils had the ultimate authority for decisions regarding the future of St John's College. One of the provincials set up a key consultative committee in April 1997 called the Woodlawn College Working Party to advise him and his council with respect to the restructuring of the College. The principal was a member of the Woodlawn College Working Party. In other words, the future of St John's College was not to be a decision of the school community. Thus in responding to the third research question the direction givers focused their attention on the leadership of the provincial leader, the principal and the Woodlawn College Working Party.

In reflecting on this leadership, the direction givers identified different approaches to leadership within this episode of educational restructuring. In short, the findings of this study suggest that, over time, strategic and moral leadership prevailed over managerial approaches. However, leading this educational restructuring continued to be challenging because of strong resistance, divergence of opinion, uncertainty, and very strong emotional reactions. Reflecting on this experience the direction givers recognised these elements as evidence of the human dimension of educational change and expressed their belief that personal leadership qualities (e.g. change agency, objectivity, vision, and courage) and a reliance on Marist Fathers' charism and spirituality contributed positively to the success of the educational restructuring at St John's College.

In this way, the findings of this study once again alert us to the human dimension of educational change (Evans, 1996) both from the perspective of those who are charged with leading educational change and those who work collaboratively with them to bring it about. This study also confirms the emergent theories of strategic and moral leadership (B. J. Davies & Davies, 2005; Paine, 2006) and highlights the role of the leader as "intrapreneur" (Arbuckle, 1988, p. 33), a person charged with

the task of revitalising an existing culture. Furthermore, the study shows that in schools such as St John's College, the intrapreneur can find support in the "founding myth" (p. 33) of a religious congregation.

Given this interpretation of the findings of this study, this chapter concludes by offering the following theoretical proposition:

Theoretical Proposition Three: Different understandings of leadership may inform educational restructuring. However, leadership that incorporates a strategic dimension and is exercised with moral purpose is more likely to inspire people to move beyond structural change and engage with the deeper issue of cultural and political transformation. Personal leadership qualities (e.g. change agency, objectivity, vision, and courage) as well as a commitment to a religious congregation's charism and spirituality contribute to the success of educational restructuring. Leaders as intrapreneurs in Marist Fathers' schools will find support in the spirituality and charism or the founding myth of the religious congregation.

In this way, this chapter together with Chapters Six and Seven provides an initial theoretical interpretation of the findings of this study that refers to relevant literature in respect to educational change and leadership. Chapter Nine, the following chapter, offers a deeper appreciation of the theoretical significance of the findings of this study by presenting an additional "philosophical analysis" (Biesta & Miron, 2002, p. 106) with respect to the purpose, process and leadership of this episode of educational change at St John's College. This analysis relies on the philosophical framework of personalism.

Chapter Nine: Philosophical Analysis – Towards a Personalist Account

9.1 Introduction

This study focuses on educational restructuring in Catholic schools. In particular, it is a case study of an episode of educational restructuring that occurred at St John's College, Woodlawn during the years 1994 to 2000. The research problem was framed in terms of a lack of a clear understanding of the purpose, process, and leadership of educational restructuring at St John's College.

The findings and discussion of the data with respect to educational change and leadership which emerged during the study following the application of Neuman's (2006) "iterative process of data analysis" (p. 106) were presented in Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight. Those findings addressed the research problem and revealed how the direction givers understood the purpose, process, and leadership during the episode of educational restructuring at St John's College.

This chapter extends the data analysis by presenting a further third-order interpretation. This second third-interpretation undertakes a philosophical analysis of the findings and discussion already presented. This philosophical analysis is important because as Biesta and Miron (2002) claim, a "philosophical analysis can help those involved in educational leadership to get a better understanding of the situation they are in and, hopefully, a sense of a possible new direction" (p. 106).

The purpose of the philosophical analysis is to extend the findings of research beyond an individual school such as St John's College and into public discussion, experimentation, and application. It can also play an important role in surpassing the normative limitations of the case study approach. In other words, a philosophical analysis provides another conceptual framework for interpreting the findings which emerged from this research study and point to "a possible new direction" for applying them to other episodes of educational restructuring in Catholic schools.

9.2 Philosophical Framework Consistent with the Purpose of the Study

Towards the end of the literature review (cf. Chapter Three), the researcher looked for a philosophical framework that, consistent with the purpose of this study, would

enable a more informed and sophisticated understanding of the episode of educational restructuring at St John's College (1994-2000) in light of the emerging awareness among researchers of the need to humanise educational change. Following a cultural analysis of Marist Fathers' spirituality, charism and philosophy of education (cf. Chapter Two) as well as a review of the literature in respect to educational change and leadership (cf. Chapter Three), the decision was taken to situate this study within a specific philosophical framework. The philosophical framework chosen was personalism.

The cultural analysis confirmed that St John's College represented a unique cultural expression built around Marist identity, particularly with respect to the importance of key aspects of Marist spirituality: personal relationships, the experience of community, and family spirit. Further, it was noted that the Marist philosophy of education gives priority to the formation of the whole person, provides a well-balanced and holistic approach to education, and stresses the importance of the uniquely personal dimension of education. Again, the data indicated that teamwork and shared responsibility are significant characteristics of this Marist approach to education. Finally, it was recognised that the Marist Fathers place the person at the centre of their educational project. These concepts seemed to align themselves closely with the philosophy of personalism.

Likewise, as the researcher undertook a review of the literature dealing with educational change and educational restructuring, he was made aware of the need to humanise the purpose, process and leadership of educational change in order to address the limitations of the dominant image of the school as machine and its rational-structural approach to leadership (Evans, 1996; Giancola & Hutchison, 2005). Here there are strong claims which suggest that when educational restructuring is motivated by a "moral purpose" (Fullan, 2005a, p. 15), privileges "strategic-systemic" approaches over "rational-structural" (Evans, 1996, p. 7) processes, and the leadership "engages in the complexities of continuous improvement consistent with deep values of human purpose" (Fullan, 2005a, p. 9), the human dimension of educational restructuring is addressed and the likelihood of successful reform is increased.

Later, as the initial findings of the study highlighted the challenge of leading educational change in terms of the human dimension of educational change and leadership, the researcher was further encouraged to engage in a philosophical analysis of the data based on the philosophy of personalism. The findings drew attention to the human issues which were part of the educational restructuring, particularly the strong resistance to change, the divergence of opinion, and the emotional reactions and uncertainty (cf. Section 8.2.1). Moreover, it seemed that these human issues were primarily addressed as the purpose of this episode of educational restructuring shifted. This occurred particularly as attention moved away from the pragmatic concerns surrounding organisational and institutional well-being to a focus on an educational mission that emphasised student learning, individual well-being, and social relationships.

This new focus on mission, in turn, encouraged a further shift in the *process* of educational restructuring. The data indicate there was a shift from adopting managerial processes to a more organic approach with respect to this episode of educational restructuring, the latter being characterised by a commitment to change agency, objectivity, vision, and courage. Thus there seemed to be a mutual relationship with educational restructuring and the personalist themes that included the centrality of the person, human dignity, subjectivity and autonomy, community and the common good, as well as solidarity and participation. Finally, as the findings of this study alerted the researcher to the potency of philosophical thinking in challenging change contexts, the researcher was convinced to engage the philosophical framework of personalism.

A significant aspect of engaging the philosophical framework of personalism was due to the fact that the data in this study consistently suggested that the administrative leaders of this episode of educational restructuring were consciously or unconsciously relying on the spirituality and charism of the Marist Fathers to inform their decision-making (cf. 8.2.2.5). In this respect, it seemed that they were seeking to ground their exercise of administrative leadership in basic meanings about human beings, society, knowledge, human development, the natural world, and schooling. In other words, they were informed by the “myth and meanings by which people make sense of their own lives” (Starratt, 2003, p. 18); in this case, the Marist myth. Moreover, they were prepared to take up the role of the “intrapreneur”

(Arbuckle, 1988, p. 33) by facilitating the “identification with the founding myth” (p. 33) in terms of the spirituality, charism and educational philosophy of the Marist Fathers. This identification is evident in the shift in purpose from pragmatic concerns to a focus on mission as well as in the shift from mechanistic processes to more organic approach to educational restructuring.

The potency of this philosophical thinking around the vision, mission, and educational philosophy of the Marist Fathers was clearly evident within this study. Their “educational leadership [enabled them] to get a better understanding of the situation they [we]re in and ... a sense of a possible new direction” (Biesta & Miron, 2002, p. 106). In short, the identification with their founding myth allowed the administrative leaders to look more broadly at the issues, to consider a wide range of options for the future, and to transcend the demands of sectional interests but always with a concern for the people engaged in the episode of educational restructuring.

However, not all schools undergoing educational restructuring are immersed in the Marist tradition. What of Catholic schools without a strong connection to a religious congregation? What of schools where there is no founding myth? Is it appropriate for lay leaders and school communities to adopt the founding myth of a religious congregation? The “uneasiness” (Braniff, 2007, p. 23) on the part of some commentators of Catholic education concerning the application of charism and spirituality in the context of Catholic education suggests that this style of philosophical thinking may not be appropriate.

Given these questions, the researcher was interested in whether the philosophical framework of personalism could provide the myth and meanings for schools without a credible founding myth associated with a religious congregation. Could lay leaders and school communities rely on personalism as a basis for philosophical thinking?

In line with this thought, the researcher extended Neuman’s (2006) “third-order interpretation’ (p. 97) of the data by engaging a philosophical analysis informed by the philosophical framework of personalism. In practical terms, this analysis involved the application of the personalist themes (cf. Table 4.2) to the findings of this study. Here the intention was to move towards a personalist account of the purpose, process and leadership of the episode of educational restructuring at St John’s College that took place from 1994 to 2000.

9.3 A Personalist Account of Educational Restructuring

As discussed in Chapter Four, personalism offers a particular philosophical approach to understanding human nature and human behaviour. It is not a system, but a perspective, a method, an exigency (Mounier, 1951). However, it places the human person at the centre of enquiry and “views persons and personal relationships as the starting point of social theory and practice” (Whetstone, 2002, p. 385). Expressing the same thought, Cowburn (2005), maintains that “ ... Personalism is philosophy done with the belief that people matter ...” (p. 55).

This philosophical approach argues that “persons are singular in an unparalleled fashion” (Spaemann, 1996, p. 35) and that because “there is no graduated transition from ‘something’ to ‘someone’” (p. 242), there is a clear difference between persons and non-persons. In this respect, personalism not only affirms the dignity that is inherent in the nature of each individual person but also acknowledges the uniqueness of each person by affirming that “each person [is] significant and irreplaceable in the position he or she occupies in the world of persons” (Sayre, 1997, p. 130).

Personalism therefore offers a particular philosophical perspective that puts clear and emphatic focus on the centrality of personal relationships and the person in theory and practice. It is a philosophy which gets its name from its principal theme (Cowburn, 2005). It respects people, emphasises relationality, never treats people as a means to an end, acknowledges a person’s right to freedom of choice, and values human experience, emotions and feelings (Williams, 2005). Accordingly, to move towards developing a personalist account of the episode of educational restructuring at St John’s College (1994-2000) would involve finding data that reflects these values and shows clear evidence of a constant emphasis on ‘persons and personal relationships’ and that ‘people matter’. Moreover, in the direction of giving understanding of the purpose, process, and leadership of the educational restructuring one would expect to find evidence of the personalist themes of centrality of the person, subjectivity and autonomy, human dignity, community and the common good, and solidarity and participation (Whetstone, 2002).

The following overview, Figure 9-1, incorporates the fundamental themes of personalism as identified by Whetstone (2002) and the key features identified by

Williams (2005). It provides a summary of the key values of personalism identified previously (cf. Chapter Four) and which have been referred to in this chapter.

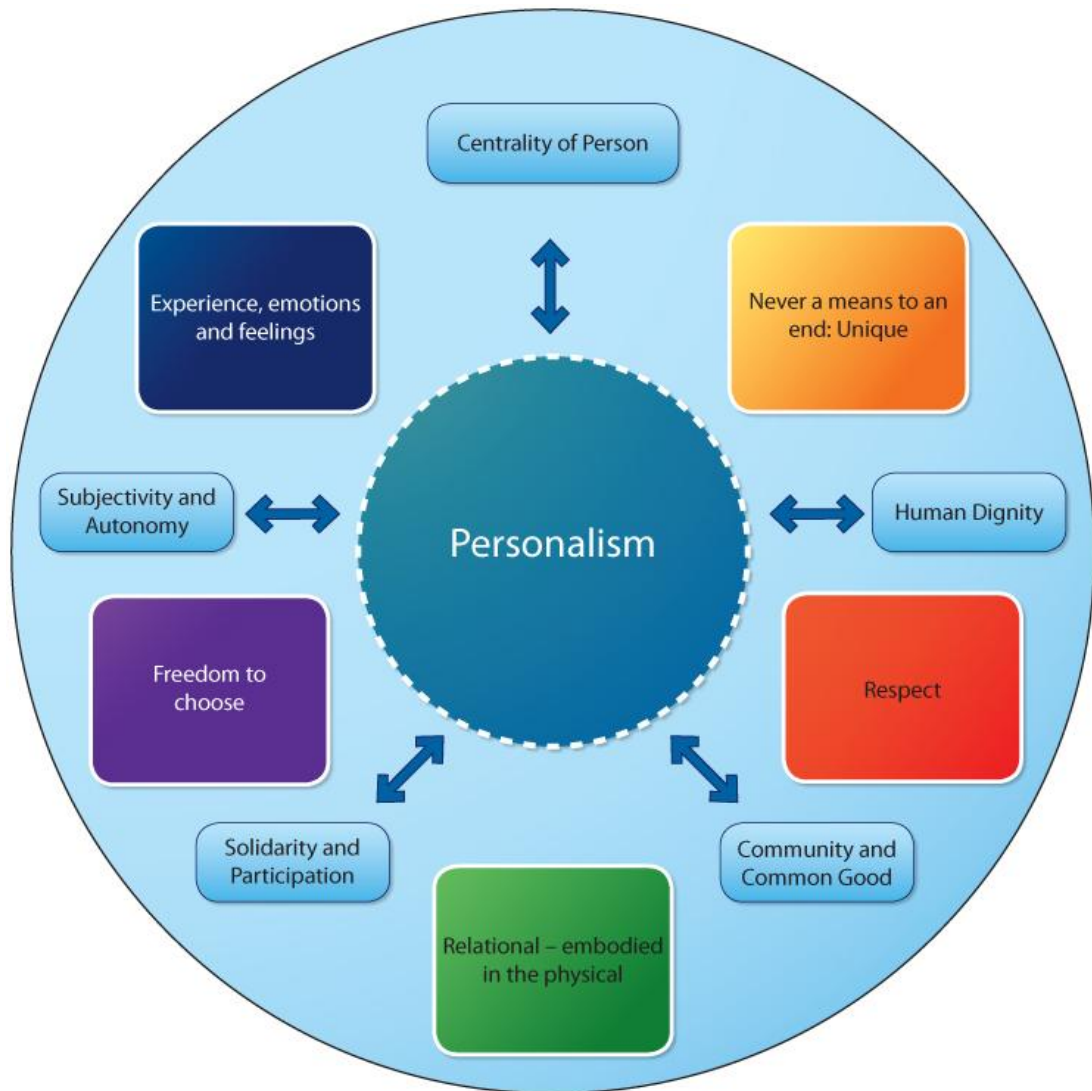


Figure 9-1 Key Themes and Features of Personalism Based on Whetstone (2002, p. 386) and Williams (2005, p. 118).

9.3.1 The Purpose of Educational Restructuring

As mentioned in Chapter Four, personalism associates all human activity, and educational restructuring can be included here, with the “process of becoming a person and hence [] contributing to the process of personalization” (Sayre, 1997, p. 129). This process of personalization is supported through the exercise of a person’s subjectivity in the context of community. In short, subjectivity recognises that each person is an agent, an actor. It is for this reason that personalist writers argue against viewing the person as a mere object. Each individual possesses a

unique ‘subjectivity’ which manifests itself in a person’s “interiority, freedom and personal autonomy” (Whetstone, 2002, p. 336). Each person’s experience of life, and of themselves as individuals and human beings, brings a unique set of feelings, emotions, attitudes, and cognitions to the task of choosing or deciding a course of action. As Sayre (1997) observes, “We become persons through the activities of choosing, and with each choice we transcend and hence sacrifice our former selves”(p. 129).

This understanding of subjectivity means that persons are responsible for their behaviour. They are free to act; they choose. They are not determined by forces beyond themselves. However, in this context, it is helpful to recall that from a personalist perspective people do not possess absolute freedom. Absolute freedom is a “myth”³¹ (Mounier, 1970?, p. 59) because the person always acts within the constraints of his or her community obligations and is “strictly conditioned and delimited by the common laws of our concrete situation” (p. 59).

The personalist perspective of subjectivity posits a clear relationship between the good of the person, as an individual, and the good of the community to which a person belongs (Macmurray, 1961). Personalism gives priority neither to the individual over the community nor to the community over the individual. Rather as a philosophical approach it recognises a mutually beneficial relationship between the two (Rourke & Chazarreta Rourke, 2005). In short, it focuses on the common good, understood as “the good, fully human life of people in communion” (p. 54) which is intended to enrich all members of the community *as persons*. Thus from a personalist perspective, the purpose of educational restructuring is clear. The phenomenon of educational restructuring should be motivated by an interest in both personal and community transformation with a declared intention of making a positive contribution to the “common good”.

Given this personalist account of the *purpose* of educational restructuring, it is significant that within the episode of educational restructuring at St John’s College (1994 to 2000) there was a shift in purpose as the concerns for institutional survival were replaced by a focus on mission and an interest in student learning, individual well-being, and social relationships. In other words, “moral purpose” (Fullan,

³¹ The concept of ‘myth’ here is understood in a colloquial sense.

2005a, p. 15) replaced pragmatic concerns. Here there was intentionality as the administrative leadership deliberately assumed the role of the “intrapreneur” (Arbuckle, 1988, p. 33) by facilitating the “identification with the founding myth”, in this case, the vision, mission and educational philosophy of the Marist Fathers. Although the founding myth had always influenced the ministry of the Marist Fathers at St John’s College, it would be fair to say that it was unconsciously applied by school leadership. In other words, the potency of this founding myth to give direction to the educational restructuring was not fully demonstrated until it was intentionally or consciously applied to the task of educational change.

As noted, the identification with the founding myth allowed the administrative leaders to look more broadly at the issues, to consider a wide range of options for the future, and to transcend the demands of section interests. The fact that the Marist founding myth is comfortably aligned with the personalist concern for the person as an individual and as a member of a community, contributed significantly to the success of the reform efforts.

The charism and spirituality of the Marist Fathers have their origins in a deeply held personal relationship with Mary and, as a consequence, there is a strong emphasis given to personal relationships, the experience of community, and family spirit (Marist Fathers, 1988) within the Marist approach. Moreover, Marist Fathers’ education gives focus and priority to the formation of the whole person and stresses the uniquely personal dimension of education. Finally, teamwork and shared responsibility are significant characteristics of a Marist approach to educational leadership. Here it is evident that there is a concern for both personal and communal development. There is, imbedded in the Marist Fathers’ approach, a genuine and inherent commitment to working for the “common good” (Rourke & Chazarreta Rourke, 2005, p. 54) and the harmonious relationship between the Marist charism and personalism, evident throughout the research study, made a highly significant contribution to the educational restructuring at St John’s College in terms of purpose.

9.3.2 The *Process* of Educational Restructuring

When it comes to the challenge of designing the process of a human activity such as restructuring, personalism argues the person should never be treated impersonally as a means to an end. As Macmurray (1961) explains:

If one person treats another person impersonally, he treats him as if he were an object and not a person. He negates the personal character of the other, then, that is to say, his freedom as an agent; and treats him as one completely conditioned in his behaviour, as if he were not free but determined. (pp. 33-34)

Here there is a warning to those in positions of administrative leadership to recognise the value of each person particularly through respect for human dignity, participation, individual subjectivity and autonomy. However, personalism also accepts that in any society, power belongs to the people as a whole and therefore authority exists for the sole purpose of protecting the “common good” (Alford & Naughton, 2006, p. 200). In a practical sense, this means that there need to be opportunities for “dialogue” (McArdle, 2007, July, p. 9) where individuals should be encouraged to have “input into decisions which impact on their lives” (Alford & Naughton, 2006, p. 200), have input into the ‘content’ of the common good, and to later enjoy the freedom to act in support of the common good. Thus the personalist themes of human dignity, participation, subjectivity and autonomy are balanced by an interest which aims at ensuring solidarity and the common good.

With these personalist themes in mind, it is interesting to recall that during the episode of educational restructuring at St John’s College there was a clear shift in the process during the course of the project. The data confirm that initially, the direction givers relied on managerial processes including top-down decision-making and linear planning. At that stage, there was very little reference to key stakeholders within the school community. However, later as the educational restructuring progressed, there was a move towards a more organic approach that included open and honest communication, consultation and collaboration, as well as the engagement of further professional expertise.

In addition, when mission became the clear focus of the educational restructuring, the processes were re-designed. The vision, mission, and educational philosophy of the Marist Fathers’ philosophy of education, namely, personal relationship, community, and family spirit as well as teamwork and shared responsibility, coalesced around the mission of the school in the service of the needs of the students: “I believe the critical issue is the mission of the school – Christian

education of youth. All other issues are secondary and should serve the primary task” (Provincial Archives: Letter from Jim Carty to John Riley of the Catholic Education Office, Lismore, June 13, 1995). In choosing the process of the educational restructuring, the direction givers believed “that people matter” (Cowburn, 2005, p. 55) or as one direction giver put it, “I think they were very conscious of the kids, the parents, and the staff in particular. Even though they probably felt the tension from staff when they were trying to address them and keep things on an even keel” (Transcription KI 03, p. 9).

As further evidence that the administrative leaders were sensitive to the feelings, emotions, and subjective experience of those affected by the educational restructuring, when the contentious and highly emotional decision about the closure was taken, the administrative leaders indicated to the staff that they were willing to do “everything possible” to assist the members of the school community during the “transitional period”. As one direction giver wrote:

We are very aware of the impact the decision will have on the lives of staff, parents and students ... everything possible will be done by the Marist Fathers to assist all members of the school community during this transitional period in Woodlawn’s history (Woodlawn Archives: Press Release of Jim Carty, April 7, 1998)

This is evidence that the mission focus served to humanise the process of educational restructuring as the “rational-structural” processes were replaced with a “strategic-systemic” (Evans, 1996, p. 7) approach.

What followed was a series of strategic cycles which presented opportunities for “envisioning” the future, “engaging” people, “articulating a vision” and “monitoring outcomes” (Eacott, 2007, pp. 8-11). There was a clear commitment on the part of the administrative leaders to consultation and collaboration (cf. 7.2.2.2), to allowing issues to emerge, to supporting the staff and school community, and to the maintenance of a focus on “people, culture, meaning [and] motivation” (Evans, 1996, p. 7). These strategic cycles are consistent with the data derived from this research study which reflect a personalist approach which incorporates the personalist themes of the centrality of persons, human dignity, community and the common good, subjectivity and autonomy, as well as solidarity and participation.

They were clearly operative in the *process* of educational restructuring at St John's College.

9.3.3 The Leadership of Educational Restructuring

Applying personalist themes to the challenge of leadership, Whetstone (2002) advances the concept of servant leadership as a practical philosophy for leaders who choose to serve first and then lead. This approach is a way of expanding service to individuals and institutions and it reflects key personalist themes (p. 390). However, as noted, in advancing servant leadership, Whetstone (2002) also acknowledges the limitations of other popular leadership styles. For example, "post-industrial leadership" (p. 390) exhibits weaknesses with respect to the key personalist themes of centrality of the person, autonomy, human dignity, and community. At the same time, "transformational leadership" (p. 390) does not necessarily protect human dignity, participation and solidarity.

However, in making this judgement, Whetstone (2002) is also mindful that there are critics of servant leadership who suggest that as a model it is unrealistic because such leaders can be "susceptible to manipulation by less naïve followers" (p. 391). Consequently, he recommends adopting aspects of transformational leadership, such as visioning, planning and reviewing, in order to strengthen the servant leader. Accordingly, he argues that:

A theoretically superior approach is a combination in which a morally tough servant leader adopts certain behaviours of the altruistic transformational leader. To inspire followers with the strength and sensitivity of a transforming vision, the servant leader would use proven transforming techniques such as developing a vision, enlisting others, planning small wins, linking rewards to performance, and celebrating accomplishments. (p. 391)

In other words, servant leadership represents a more altruistic form of transformational leadership that relies on strategic cycles involving moments of "envisioning" the future, "engaging" people, "articulating a vision" and monitoring outcomes" (Eacott, 2007, pp. 8-11).

Reflecting on Whetstone's personalist account of leadership and the spirituality and charisma of the Marist Fathers, it is clear that the administrative leadership adopted

during the episode of educational restructuring, albeit unconsciously, reflected closely the servant leadership style. In the case of the Marist Fathers, they possess a distinctive approach to people which springs from a spirituality and charism that focuses on Mary, the mother of Jesus. She is their ‘point of reference’ for all things ‘Marist’ (cf. Chapter Two). Hence the Marist Fathers unique way of understanding their place in the world and in the Church, and of being present to others in ministry, is identified through their charism (Witwer, 2010).

This charism calls them to service; to reflect the personal and relational character of Mary’s way of being present in the Church. It is a service which finds apostolic impetus in the phrase “hidden and unknown” (cf. Chapter Two). In this respect, the Marist Fathers’ spirituality and charism calls them to put others’ needs before their own and to engage with people on a personal level. In this way, relationality is central to the Marist Fathers’ style of ministry because “people matter” (Cowburn, 2005).

At the same time, after applying Whetsone’s (2002) personalist account of leadership, it is evident that the challenge of leading the episode of educational restructuring at St John’s College was to find the right ‘balance’ with respect to both a servant and transformational leadership. The human dimension of educational change means that leaders who engage in change processes must deal with psychological and emotional issues. They are inevitable. Further, they demand the “attention and respect of all who seek to innovate” (Evans, 1996, p. 38).

In the context of change, particularly educational restructuring, where school cultures can quickly become “toxic cultures”, that is, where the same elements of a positive culture such as the “values, rituals, stories and traditions and a network of cultural players ... take on a negative valence” (Deal & Peterson, 2009, p. 163), acknowledging and dealing with these human issues is even more important. With courage and determination, however, toxic school cultures can be transformed.

Transforming a toxic culture is a risky and scary undertaking. Many teachers and administrators have tried and failed; still others succeed without ever knowing why. It’s not a job for the faint-hearted or for those who need universal approval in the short term. The process is akin to the metamorphosis of a butterfly. The caterpillar enters a

cocoon. We call it the ritual process of liminality, in which an intense experience produces a dramatically different form – one that soars to new places. (p. 180)

At John's College, the human dimension of educational change was clearly evident in the resistance of staff, the divergence of opinion, the emotional reactions, and the uncertainty. A toxic culture developed as elements of a previous positive culture took on negative connotations. For example, the school's motto "Hold fast to the traditions", which had served the school well by stressing the importance of stability, doggedness, and an unchanging tradition was used by some key 'cultural and political players' as a mask in order to resist change, even though the very survival of the college was at stake. However, as the findings of this research study show, the administrative leadership was able to support the school community through the "break up the group's mythological consensus" (Arbuckle, 1993, pp. 44 - 45) and "the ritual process of liminality" (Deal & Peterson, 2009, p. 180). This was possible because there was "passion for a great cause" (Thomas, 2006, p. 11) characterised by change agency, objectivity, vision, and courage. That "passion" was balanced by an appreciation for the 'human' story of change combined with deep respect for people's feelings and emotions.

Even in the face of strong resistance, the evidence shows that there was a commitment to open and honest communication as well as to providing opportunities for developing a shared vision. All the while, the administrative leadership found support in the spirituality and charisma of the Marist Fathers for making value judgements appropriate to the common good. Thus from a personalist perspective, it is evident there was a coalescing of the elements of servant leadership, with its deep respect for people and relationships, and transformational techniques, with its commitment to forge a "new direction" (Biesta & Miron, 2002, p. 106). Moreover, consistent with the spirituality and charisma of the Marist Fathers and, again in line with the philosophy of personalism, during this episode of educational change administrative leadership saw relationality as the central aspect of their role. As one direction giver, focusing on the importance of personal relationships as a central dimension of the Marist charism, expressed it:

I think the pastoral care and that caring nature of the family of the Marists was what a lot of people remembered ... working with people and being gentle, like Mary ... [Marists] lead by example, they accept people on all levels ... they are non-judgemental, they're men of the people ... working with people and believing in people and working beside people without fanfare ... (Transcription KI 07, pp. 3 & 16)

Finally, the data in this research study indicate that the direction givers recognised clearly that "... persons are relational beings and ... any encounter with them must either build up their personhood or reject their personhood" (McArdle, 2007, July, p. 14). During the episode of educational restructuring at St John's College, the *leadership* reflected the harmony that exists between Marist charism and personalism and holds out a clear hope that administrative leaders who do not have access to a congregational charism can draw confidently on the principles of personalism to bring about successful educational restructuring.

9.4 Conclusion

This chapter presents a further third-order interpretation (Neuman, 2006) of the findings of this research study by engaging a philosophical analysis informed by the philosophical framework of personalism. This philosophical analysis has provided a deeper understanding of educational restructuring at St John's College by framing the *purpose* of educational restructuring in terms of outcomes around personal and community development and, making a positive contribution to the process of personalisation or 'becoming a person'.

Following on from this personalist account of purpose, this philosophical analysis identified the *process* of educational restructuring as incorporating the fundamental themes of personalism as identified by Whetstone (2002) and the key features identified by Williams (2005). Accordingly when an approach is based on respect for people, an emphasis on relationality, never treating people as a means to an end, always acknowledging a person's right to freedom of choice, and valuing human experience, emotions and feelings, and also incorporates the key personalist themes put forward by Whetstone (2002), namely the centrality of persons, subjectivity and autonomy, human dignity, community and the common good, and solidarity and

participation, there is an increased likelihood that efforts at educational reform will be successful. People will engage more positively with educational change.

With respect to the *leadership* of educational restructuring at St John's College, this philosophical analysis highlighted a particular style of administrative leadership that brings together the concept of servant leadership that "genuinely puts people first, viewing them as humans worthy of dignity and respect" (Whetstone, 2002, p. 389) and transformational techniques such as "envisioning" the future, "engaging" people, "articulating a vision" and "monitoring outcomes" (Eacott, 2007, pp. 8-11). Finally, this understanding of leadership reframes the challenge of educational restructuring in terms of achieving the 'right' balance between servant leadership and transformational leadership by keeping the fundamental principle of relationality firmly in mind.

Finally, this philosophical analysis has shown that the data concerning the episode of educational restructuring at St John's College clearly reflect personalist values and show clear evidence of a constant emphasis on 'persons and personal relationships' and that 'people matter'. The philosophical perspective of personalism, consistent with the major elements of Marist spirituality, charism and philosophy of education, gives a clear and emphatic focus to the centrality of personal relationships in cases of educational restructuring and a focus on the person, in theory and practice. It further reinforces the commitment of researchers in the field of education to progress further studies in the area of 'humanising' educational change and leadership.

Chapter Ten: Review and Synthesis

10.1 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND PURPOSE

This study focuses on educational restructuring in Catholic schools. In particular, it is a case study of an episode of educational restructuring that occurred at St John's College, Woodlawn during the years 1994 to 2000. From being a small boarding-only boys' school in 1994, the college became a co-educational day school within the short period of six years. At the beginning of 2001, St John's College became a systemic school, fully integrated into the diocese of Lismore, New South Wales.

An initial cultural analysis in Chapter Two confirmed the problematic nature of educational change at St John's College. In addition, the cultural analysis pointed to the need to learn more about the purpose, process and leadership that informed this episode of educational change. It appeared that, for the significant episode of educational change that they led, the Marist Fathers were acting more out of a sense of intuition and common sense than out of a clear theoretical understanding of the theoretical foundations of educational restructuring.

Following this cultural analysis, the research problem was then framed in terms of the lack of a theoretical framework to support educational restructuring of St John's College. Consequently, the purpose of the study was identified in terms of gaining a more informed and sophisticated understanding of educational restructuring in Catholic schools such as St John's College.

10.2 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The review of the literature in Chapter Three further highlighted the complexity of educational restructuring and enabled the identification of the research questions. Initially the review alerted the researcher to the plethora of scholarly writing that has, over time, coalesced around the broad topic of educational change. Interest in educational change emerged in the United States in the late 1950s and since then theorists have advanced various theories and perspectives concerning educational change (Blenkin, et al., 1997; Fullan, 2005b).

In the course of this theoretical development, it seems that researchers (e.g. Bush, 2003; Fullan, 2007; Senge, 2000) have gained a deeper appreciation of the school as an organisation. This, in turn, has resulted in the advancement of different perspectives on educational change. In particular, four of the major perspectives on school as organisation - machine, culture, polity and living systems – have been advanced in the literature. Each of these images is related to a particular understanding of the *purpose*, the *process* and the *leadership* of educational change (cf. Table 3-2). At the same time, the literature suggests that there has been a growing concern that educational change has become “a calculative science” (Hargreaves, 2000 p. 2). This development is of concern because it overlooks the human dimension of educational change. Consequently, in order to address the limitations of the dominant image of school as machine, with its rational-structural approach to educational change and leadership (Evans, 1996; Giancola & Hutchison, 2005), there is a new interest in ‘humanising’ educational change and leadership. This has led to a deeper appreciation of the importance of the other perspectives of the school as organisation: culture, polity and living system.

In the light of these themes within the literature, the following research questions were identified:

Research Question One: How did the direction givers understand the *purpose* of educational restructuring at St John’s College?

Research Question Two: How did the direction givers understand the *process* of educational restructuring at St John’s College?

Research Question Three: How did the direction givers understand the *leadership* of educational restructuring at St John’s College?

These research questions are consistent with Fullan’s (1991) ‘meaning hypothesis’ with respect to the crucial relationship between personal meaning, which is fundamental to human experience, and educational change. Moreover, with respect to educational change and the meaning ascribed to it, these research questions force attention on the people who actually give direction to the phenomenon of educational change. Here it was accepted that “direction givers

can rise above the daily managerial processes and crises to gain different perspectives” (Garratt as cited in B. Davies, 2006, p. 16). Direction givers are people who, while engaged and immersed in the activity and complexity of educational change, still have the ability to find meaning in it. This study was interested in the ‘meaning’ brought to this episode of educational change at St John’s College by the particular direction givers engaged in it.

10.3 PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK

Within this research study, the review of the literature also alerted the researcher to the emergent theories that seek to humanise the purpose, the process and the leadership of educational change. Appreciating this fact, the study turned to the philosophy of personalism with the intention of discovering whether the philosophical framework of personalism offered new possibilities for connecting educational change, leadership and the human dimension. Personalism emphasises the radical difference between persons and non-persons, affirms the dignity of persons, and promotes the subjectivity of the person (Cowburn, 2005). Moreover, this philosophical framework highlights the role of community in the development of persons, expresses a concern for the common good, and challenges those who treat persons as a means rather than an end in themselves (Macmurray, 1961). In addition, a personalist account of leadership (e.g. Sayre, 1997; Whetstone, 2002) advances servant leadership and transformational purposes and processes as the way forward. McArdle (2007, July), exploring the links between theology, relationship and leadership in Catholic education, also notes the power of personalism and supports the recommendation for servant leadership and transformational purposes and processes. As outlined in Table 4-2, personalism suggests a way forward for those seeking to humanise the purpose, processes and leadership of educational change. As a consequence, personalism played a significant role in the interpretation of the research findings within this study.

10.4 RESEARCH PARADIGM AND DESIGN

The various moments of data collection, analysis and interpretation within this research study were guided by the three research questions. Subsequently, constructivism was deemed to be a suitable research paradigm.

Constructivism is an epistemology that explains how human learning is understood as an active attempt by people to construct meaning in the world around them. Constructivists believe that learning is a self-directed activity and that it relies on a “hermeneutic/dialectical methodology”. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) summarise the point by saying: “The constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent co-create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures” (p. 35). Further, as Heck and Hallinger (1999) argue, the strength of the constructivist approach is its ability to illuminate that about which little is known or is hidden from view. The perceptions, meanings and understandings of those intimately associated with an inquiry help to construct new knowledge about the phenomenon and thereby bring greater clarification.

Described in this way, constructivism points to the theoretical perspective of Symbolic Interactionism and to the methodology of case study as appropriate to this type of research. Symbolic Interactionism focuses on “how people define their world and how that definition shapes their action” (Charon, 2007, p. 229). It endeavours to concentrate on how people live and react to each other in order to understand what is going on (Blumer, 1969, p. 40). In addition, case study, as a methodology, investigates real life situations in their contexts and offers the opportunity to connect with the subjects’ meanings (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Merriam, 1998). By limiting or confining the research activity, case study offers a practical means of investigating a complex social unit that consists of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon (Stake, 2000).

Consistent with the theoretical perspective of Symbolic Interactionism and the methodology of case study, this study involved two stages of data collection, analysis and interpretation as well as multiple research methods. The first stage involved an “exploration” (Charon, 2007, p. 194) which involved accessing a large number of historical documents as well as referring to the researcher’s journal in order to gain an initial appreciation of the various elements within the situation. The second stage in the process of inquiry was “inspection” (p. 194). This relied on individual interviews with each of the direction givers in order to gain a deeper appreciation of key elements within the situation. This two-stage

data collection process of “exploration” and “inspection” was supported by a three-step iterative process of data analysing involving a “first, second and third-order interpretation of data” (Neuman, 2007, p. 160). This interpretive process involved moving beyond the display of ‘raw’ data, to identifying key themes before considering the theoretical significance of these findings, and advancing a number of theoretical propositions in response to these findings. The overall design of this study is illustrated in Figure 5-2.

10.5 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research study generated considerable data and, following an extensive analysis and interpretation of the data, a number of findings and theoretical propositions were identified in response to each of the research questions.

Research Question One: How did the direction givers understand the *purpose* of educational restructuring at St John’s College?

As discussed in Chapter Six, the direction givers understood that the purpose of educational restructuring at St John’s College had shifted during the episode of educational restructuring. Initially, the pragmatic concerns around the issues of falling enrolment numbers provided the impetus for a series of structural changes which included the enrolment of day students and the introduction of more flexible boarding options. However, as the educational restructuring progressed, there was a shift in the purpose and a new focus on the ‘mission’ of Marist Fathers’ education at St John’s College began to emerge.

Marist Fathers’ education had historically centred on the formation of the person and, for this reason, in schools such as St John’s College, there was always an emphasis on personal relationships and the development of community and family-spirit (O'Donnell, 2001; T. Ryan, 1971). Thus the shift in purpose from addressing pragmatic concerns to a clear focus on mission enabled the Marist Fathers to return to their ‘founding myth’ and provided them with a new moral purpose for educational restructuring at St John’s College. In other words, while those leading this episode of educational restructuring at St John’s College were initially “preoccupied with effective and efficient means to change schools, teachers and others”, over time they looked to “normative issues, purposes and the

lifeworld consequences of proposed changes” (Sergiovanni, 2000, p. 73). Thus the focus shifted from pragmatic concerns around enrolment and institutional well-being to an interest in student learning, individual well-being, and social relationships.

This shift towards a moral purpose is consistent with contemporary concerns for ensuring organisational sustainability that “meet[s] new challenges and complexity in a way that does not damage individuals or the wider community” (B. J. Davies & Davies, 2006, p. 14). Moreover, this development is also consistent with those researchers in the field of educational change (e.g. Fullan, 2005a) who are interested in supporting student learning in a respectful social environment as well as those who seek to humanise educational change (e.g. Evans, 1996).

In addition, the shift in purpose evident from the data is in harmony with the philosophical framework of personalism that frames the *purpose* of educational restructuring in terms of outcomes around individual and community development and making a positive contribution to the process of personalisation or ‘becoming a person’. In other words, human activities such as educational restructuring are primarily interested in the achievement of personhood through the development of loving relationships and a commitment to living with moral behaviour (Rudman, 1997; Woznicki, 1980).

Given this theoretical and philosophical thought, it is interesting to see that the shift towards a moral purpose breathed new life into this episode of educational restructuring at St John’s College. As one direction giver explained:

I mean with all the goodwill in the world if the thing was a dead duck, the diocese probably wouldn’t have offered us the equation that they did. But it was only because it had been brought progressively from death to new life that that opened up then possibilities for a successful transition equation. (Transcript PC 03 p. 14)

It seems that the initial focus on pragmatic concerns resulted in a moribund condition whereby there appeared to be little hope for the future of the school.

However, this changed and the school was culturally transformed. The focus on mission enabled it to become an attractive option showing signs of ‘new life’.

With this interpretation of the findings of this study in mind, the following proposition is advanced:

Theoretical Proposition One: Different understandings of purpose may inform educational restructuring. Educational restructuring may be motivated by pragmatic concerns as well as moral purposes. It is important to identify the underlying purpose of educational restructuring as different types of purposes elicit different responses. Pragmatic purposes focus on rational-structural change in the interest of efficiency, effectiveness, product and fixed outcomes with the intention of ensuring institutional well-being. Moral purposes focus on the mission of the school and go beyond structural change to focus on student learning, individual well-being and social relationships. Here the intention is to humanise educational change and bring ‘new life’ to the school community.

Research Question Two: How did the direction givers understand the *process* of educational restructuring at St John’s College?

Consistent with the shift in the purpose of the educational restructuring, the direction givers also believed that there was a shift in the processes adopted. Initially, those leading this episode of educational restructuring clearly identified the need for structural change. However, to bring this change about, they subsequently relied on a managerial approach or on “rational-structural” (Evans, 1996, p. 7) processes to educational change. Thus top-down decision-making and objective linear planning prevailed. The Marist Fathers, by commissioning the QCEC to undertake a feasibility study to recommend structural change and, despite local opposition, by implementing the recommendations of the QCEC to enrol day students to offer more flexible boarding options, showed clearly their determination and serious commitment to undertake major structural change. However, these structural changes failed to address the underlying crisis at St John’s College.

Recognising this failure, and with a new focus on mission and moral purpose, those leading this episode of educational restructuring replaced a managerial approach with a more organic approach or “strategic-systemic” (Evans, 1996, p. 7) processes. From then on, there is even more evidence of the commitment to open and honest processes as well as to providing extensive opportunities for stakeholder consultation and collaboration to complement outside professional expertise. Furthermore, while it was clearly recognised and acknowledged that the future was an unknown factor, there was a courageous willingness to allow the future to evolve. In other words there was new understanding and acceptance of “change as a journey, rather than a blueprint” (p. 15).

This shift in processes is consistent with a growing appreciation of the limits of managerial, rational-structural processes in the context of educational change. Within the literature, there has been a strong support for “reculturing” over “restructuring” (Fullan, 1998a, p. 4) and the focus has changed from structural change to deeper cultural change or “changing the norms, values, incentives, skills, and relationships in the organization to foster a different way of working together” (p. 4). At best, managerial, rational-structural processes will encourage the emergence of “first-order change” or even greater “efficiency or effectiveness of what we are already doing” (Evans, 1996, p. 5). However, change at that level is limited. Deeper cultural change requires “second-order changes” that “modify the very way an organization is put together, altering its assumptions, goals, structures, roles and norms” (p. 5). In other words, where first-order change stops at structural change, second-order change requires “people to not just do old things slightly differently but also to change their beliefs and perceptions” (p. 5).

In support of this second-order change, theorists recommend engaging strategic cycles that include processes of “envisioning”, “engaging” people, “articulating a vision”, and, “monitoring outcomes” (Eacott, 2007, pp. 8 - 11). These strategic cycles are said to contribute to the success of educational change by bringing a more sophisticated cultural awareness (Berg, 2007) and a deeper moral sensibility (Paine, 2006). Interestingly, these strategic processes are authentic to the Marist Fathers’ spirituality, charism and philosophy of education which places strong emphasis on teamwork and calls teachers to participate in a “cooperative effort” (Marist Fathers, 2006, p. 14). Furthermore, these strategic processes are

consistent with the key themes of personalism: “the centrality of persons”, “subjectivity and solidarity”, “human dignity”, “the person within community and the common good”, and “participation and solidarity” (Whetstone, 2002, p. 386). With this theoretical and philosophical support it is reasonable to argue that the application of these strategic processes would serve to humanise educational change (Evans, 1996).

With this interpretation of the findings of this study in mind, the following proposition is advanced:

Theoretical Proposition Two: Different processes may support educational restructuring. Educational restructuring may be supported by managerial, rational-structural process as well as a more organic, strategic-systemic approach. Managerial processes aim to achieve fixed outcomes and involve top-down decision making and linear planning. An organic approach looks to emerging outcomes, relies on more open and honest processes and accepts consultation and collaboration as well as professional expertise. An organic approach is more worthwhile and supports the fundamental transformation of the school and goes beyond mere structural change. Moreover, this process serves to humanise the process of educational restructuring by placing the person and interpersonal relationships at the centre of the process.

Research Question Three: How did the direction givers understand the *leadership* of educational restructuring at St John’s College?

Within this study, the direction-givers understood leadership during this episode of educational change in terms of the administrative leadership of those in authority. In this case the provincial leaders and the provincial councils had the ultimate authority for decisions regarding the future of St John’s College. A consultative committee called the Woodlawn College Working Party had been set up to advise the provincial leader and his council at the time with respect to the restructuring of the College. The principal was a member of the Woodlawn College Working Party. Thus the future of St John’s College was not to be a decision just of the school community. Appreciating this point, in speaking of

leadership, the direction givers focused their attention on the administrative leadership of the provincial leader, the provincial council, the principal, and the Woodlawn College Working Party.

Here the direction givers were quick to point to the challenge of leading educational restructuring at St John's College. As one direction giver observed, "Particularly when you are trying to bring about major change ... It's tough when you've got to make major decisions but if the major decisions are about major changes, I think it takes a new dimension" (Transcription KI 05, p. 11).

Highlighting the human dimension of educational change, the literature accepts that major change threatens people's self-esteem and their need to feel effective, valued and in control (Arbuckle, 2005; Duignan, 2006; Evans, 1996). Evans (1996) makes this point well: "... when an organization is being restructured, all staff – not only those who preferred the status quo but also those who pressed for change – experience the stress of uncertainty" (p. 35). Such negative experiences are 'the human story of change'. Every transition begins with an ending. As Arbuckle (1993) explains, a stage of "chaos" (p. 44) will naturally follow the disintegration of a cultural consensus. "In the midst of chaos, people, as individuals and/or groups or cultures, grieve the loss of the familiar" and "cultural shock" will prevail (p. 45). Thus it is not surprising that this study found resistance, divergence of opinion, uncertainty and strong emotional reactions within this episode of educational restructuring at St John's College.

Recognising the challenge of leading educational restructuring at St John's College, the direction givers believed that its success was due in part to the strategic and moral leadership of those in authority. As noted above, initially the administrative leaders relied on managerial processes in response to their pragmatic concerns around the survival of the College. However, over time the managerial approaches were replaced by a more organic approach informed by strategic and moral leadership. And while this strategic and moral leadership was deemed to be more intuitive than deliberate, there was a clear "strategic intent" (B. Davies, 2002, p. 203) with a strong commitment to deep cultural change as well as a commitment to organic and strategic-systemic processes. Moreover, there was moral sensibility as there was a clear commitment to "ethically

informed decision-making” (Paine, 2006, p. 54) since both individual and collective visions for the future of St John’s College were allowed to come together through processes that were open and honest, and which valued consultation and collaboration as well as the employment of professional expertise.

Delving deeper, the direction givers believed that the negative experience of educational restructuring was partially offset by the personal qualities that the administrative leaders brought to their roles. This interest in personal qualities is consistent with the argument that “leadership is rooted in the soil of morality” (Thomas, 2006, p. 11) and “that leadership requires a passion for a great cause and the ability to succeed against all odds” (p. 13). In particular, direction givers valued the principal’s ‘objectivity’ which was devoid of self-interest and able “to infuse educational practice with higher purpose and meaning” (Duignan, 2006, p. 127). They also appreciated the way in which the principal brought personal vision to the situation and demonstrated courage in communicating this vision whilst “inviting others to articulate a communal vision of schooling” (Starratt, 2003, p. 16). At the same time, they supported the claim that an administrative leader needs to “demonstrate strength of character and stand up for his/her values even against the expectations or particular demands of a popular majority” (Duignan, 2006, p. 181). Finally, the direction givers pointed to the contribution of the Marist Fathers’ charism and spirituality to the success of the restructuring. Explaining this point, they commented on how administrative leadership consciously and unconsciously referred to the Marist Fathers’ charism, spirituality and education philosophy as they identified their purpose of this episode of educational restructuring and planned for the future (Witwer, 2010).

From a personalist perspective, this episode of educational restructuring at St John’s College reveals what Whetstone (2002) believes to be “theoretically superior approach to leadership” (p. 391) that brings together servant leadership and transformational techniques:

...a combination in which a morally tough servant leader adopts certain behaviours of the altruistic transformational leader. To inspire followers with the strength and sensitivity of a transforming

vision, the servant leader would use proven transforming techniques such as developing a vision, enlisting others, planning small wins, linking rewards to performance, and celebrating accomplishments. (p. 391)

Within this episode of educational restructuring at St John's College there is evidence of servant leadership which reflects the key personalist themes of the "centrality of the person", "subjectivity and autonomy", "human dignity", "solidarity and participation", and "community and common good" (Whetstone, 2002, p. 390). Moreover, this form of servant leadership is "morally tough" as it is informed by the spirituality and charism of the Marist Fathers whilst relying on strategic cycles involving moments of "envisioning" the future, "engaging" people, "articulating a vision" and "monitoring outcomes" (Eacott, 2007, pp. 8-11). Finally, this understanding of leadership reframes the challenge of educational restructuring in terms of achieving the 'right' balance between servant leadership and transformational leadership by keeping the principle of relationality firmly in mind.

In this way, this study suggests that the administrative leaders, particularly the principal, assumed the role of a special type of change agent, the "intrapreneur" (Arbuckle, 1988, p.33) intent on cultural transformation. Facing the disintegration of the former cultural consensus around St John's College as a boys-only boarding school, and in the midst of chaos, the administrative leaders looked for guidance to the "founding myth" (p. 33) of the religious congregation. As Arbuckle (1993) explains, "chaos provides us with a liminal space in which old familiar securities have gone and we can ask ourselves questions about the meaning of life and the authentic sources of human identity" (p. 45) This interpretation is consistent with the understanding of educational change as a phenomenon "grounded in basic meanings about human persons, society, knowledge, human development, the natural world and schooling" (Starratt, 2003, p. 16). Moreover, this thought reflects a personalist account that links human activities such as educational restructuring to a process of personalisation or 'becoming a person'.

With this interpretation of the findings of this study in mind, the following proposition is advanced:

Theoretical Proposition Three: Different understandings of leadership may inform educational restructuring. However, leadership that incorporates a strategic dimension and is exercised with moral purpose is more likely to inspire people to move beyond structural change and engage with the deeper issue of cultural and political transformation. Personal leadership qualities (e.g. change agency, objectivity, vision, and courage) as well as a commitment to a religious congregation's charism and spirituality contribute to the success of educational restructuring. Leaders, as intrapreneurs in Marist Fathers' schools, will find support in the founding myth of the religious congregation.

Within this study, the answers to the research questions prompted the researcher to develop a model based on a school in the tradition of the Marist Fathers, but a model that is applicable also to other schools contemplating or going through the process of educational restructuring.

10.6 MODEL FOR SUPPORTING EDUCATIONAL RESTRUCTURING

A model representing a positive process of educational restructuring is depicted in Figure 10-1. This model is predicated upon an understanding of the school as a living system that must be continuously life-giving to all who are engaged in it, recognises the inter-connectedness that exists between people, and draws attention to the priority of personal relationships. Acknowledging that schools in the Catholic tradition exist for the formation of the whole person (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, 1982, 1988, 1997), the clear focus of the model is on achieving 'new life' through a clear understanding of the purpose, the processes, and the leadership exercised in a school undergoing educational restructuring.

In short, the model provides direction with respect to the *why*, *what* and *how* of educational restructuring. Firstly, this model identifies the moral purpose of educational restructuring in terms of achievement of 'new life' in terms of individual and community development. This understanding of purpose is

consistent with those who wish to humanise educational change (e.g. Evans, 1996) and reflects a personalist interest in the achievement of personhood through the development of loving relationships and a commitment to living with moral behaviour (Rudman, 1997; Woznicki, 1980). Secondly, the model frames leadership in the context of educational restructuring in terms of intrapreneurial leadership and the commitment to transforming an existing school culture (Arbuckle, 1988, 1993; Fullan, 2006). Thirdly, this model recommends an approach to educational restructuring that supports cultural and political transformation and reflects a synthesis of strategic processes (B. Davies, 2006; Eacott, 2007) and personalist themes (Cowburn, 2005; Whetstone, 2002; Williams, 2005). This synthesis encourages the active engagement of people in the process of educational restructuring, and challenges those who treat persons as a means rather than an end in themselves (Macmurray, 1961).

Finally, the model recognises the value of leaders who draw on a “founding myth” (Arbuckle, 1988, p. 33) and/or “basic meanings about human persons, society, knowledge, human development, the natural world and schooling” (Starratt, 2003, p. 16). The Marist Fathers’ charism, spirituality and educational philosophy supported the work of administrative leadership at St John’s College. It is possible that the philosophical framework of personalism, by placing the human person and interpersonal relationships at the centre of social activity, could inform and provide a similar level of support for those involved in the process of the educational restructuring of Catholic schools (cf. Chapter Nine).

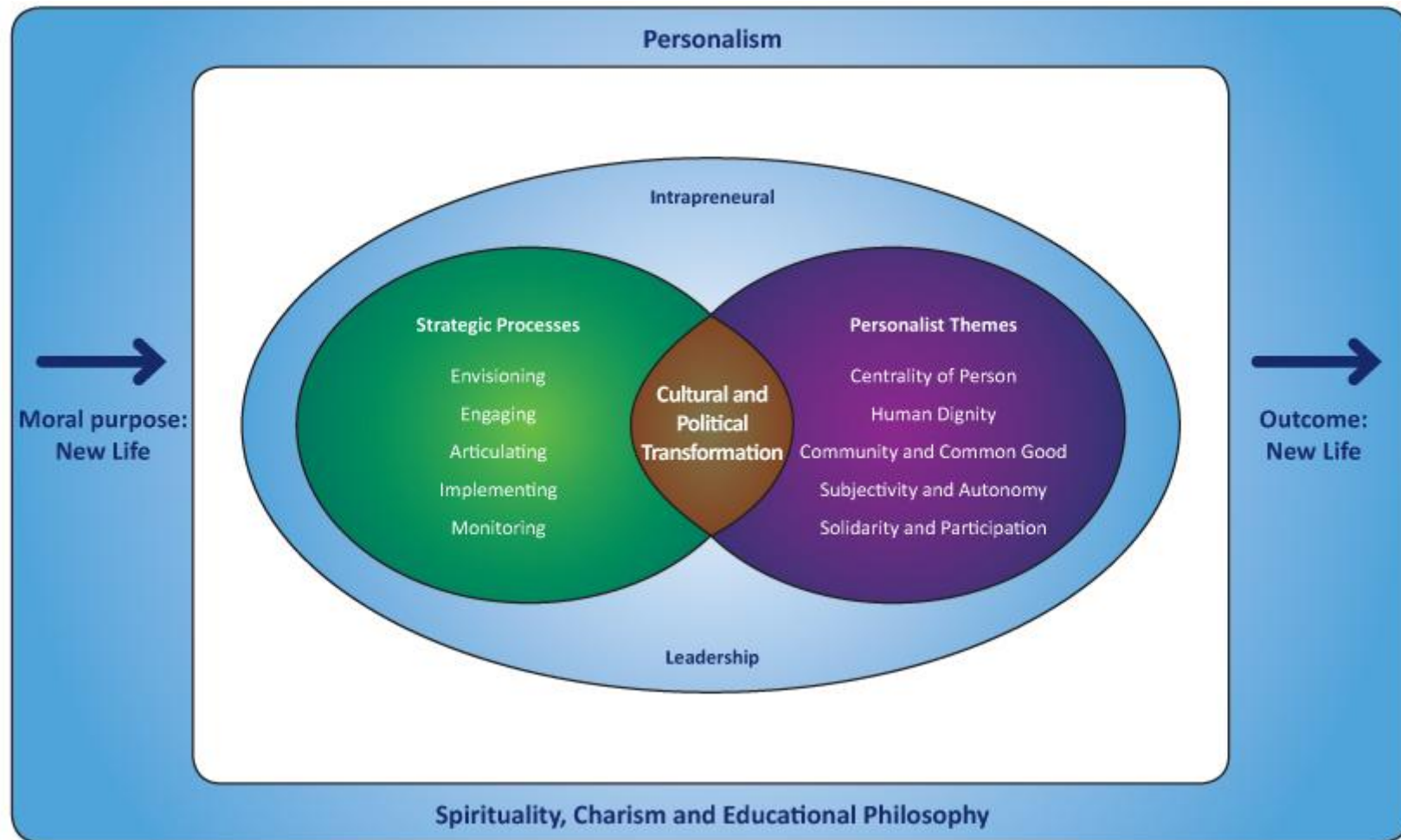


Figure 10-1 A Model for Educational Restructuring in Catholic Schools

10.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

To support future episodes of educational restructuring, this study recommends that those engaged in administrative leadership:

1. Articulate and communicate the moral purpose that underpins educational restructuring;
2. Adopt organic, strategic-systemic processes to educational restructuring that reflect a synthesis of strategic processes and personalist themes;
3. Frame their administrative leadership in educational restructuring in terms of intrapreneurship and the cultural and political transformation of school culture;
4. Consider the charisma, spirituality and educational philosophy of a religious congregation and/or the philosophical framework of personalism as a source of support in the context of educational restructuring.

In making these recommendations the researcher is mindful that the image of the school as machine continues to have hegemonic status in society. This hegemonic status means that we often unthinkingly adopt a mechanistic approach to educational change. As a consequence, motivated by concerns for effectiveness and efficiency, educationalists put their faith in structural change and rational-structural processes, and rely on managerial leadership. However, the recommendations identified above assume that the school is a living system, and point to the need for a moral purpose and organic, strategic-systemic processes. Appreciating the human dimension of educational change, leadership is reframed in terms of intrapreneurship and cultural and political transformation.

These recommendations are consistent with theoretical developments in respect to educational change and leadership. In addition, these recommendations follow the findings of this study that identify the limits of the image of the school as machine and mechanistic approaches as well as the 'power' of viewing the school as a living system and engaging life-giving approaches. Mindful of the chaos that comes with educational restructuring, the final recommendation points to the need for administrative leaders to look for support of a philosophical and theological nature as they seek answers to questions about human existence and cultural identity.

10.8 LIMITATIONS

This study acknowledges the limitations of the selected epistemology and the theoretical perspective utilised in this research: both the constructivist research paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Sarantakos, 2005) and the theoretical perspective of Symbolic Interactionism (Charon, 2004; Stryker, 2002). Although there is strong support in the literature for the use of Symbolic Interactionism in research design, the literature also alerts the researcher to its limitations in terms of ill-defined concepts and its failure to focus critically on the affective domain and social structures (Charon, 2004; Stryker, 2002). Beyond these conceptual concerns, critics also point to methodological problems that reject scientific explanation and result in few testable propositions (Ritzer, 2004). However, this research study sought to understand the direction givers' perspectives on the purpose, the process and the leadership within this episode of educational restructuring at St John's College. Therefore, this study makes no claims to objective knowledge, verified hypotheses or established facts. Nor are the positivist canons of validity and reliability invoked.

There are a number of limitations concerning the use of case study as a methodology in this research. A case study such as this, which deliberately focuses on a single episode of educational restructuring in one school, will be inherently limited. In addition, this research study was limited by the number of direction givers who participated. It was not feasible to interview the very large number of people who have been involved in one way or another in this episode of educational change at St John's College (staff, students, parents, Marist Fathers, ex-students, the bishop of the diocese, diocesan leaders, Catholic Education Office staff, local community representatives, etc.). Overall, 21 key participants were invited to be available for interviews, but only 15 took the opportunity to participate. Thus it must be acknowledged that the data collected in this study represent only one piece of the puzzle of educational restructuring at St John's College. The perceptions of other key stakeholders including staff, students and parents as well as Catholic Education Office personnel, may well offer a divergent understanding of this episode of educational restructuring. Consequently, at the end of this study, there is no claim with respect to presenting the whole picture of this episode of educational restructuring at St John's College. It is focused on "circumstantial uniqueness and not on the obscurities of mass representation" (Burns, 2000, p. 474). Thus the

findings of this study are specific to this episode of educational restructuring at St John's College and to the perspectives and understandings of the direction givers who participated in the research.

Other limitations inherent in this research are related to the role of the researcher. Researcher bias, competence and subjectivity are significant factors in any research process. While every effort was made to ensure that "equivocal evidence or personal views do not influence the direction of the findings" (Burns, 2000), it has to be remembered that "since the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection, data have been filtered through his or her particular theoretical position and biases" (Merriam, 1998, p. 216). Research bias is also a real possibility in this study given the researcher's former position of principal at St John's College. The study attended to this issue by relying on a number of verification strategies including triangulation, negative or discrepant information, and researcher reflectivity through journaling as well as ensuring a clear data trail.

Finally, the amount of time that has passed since the conclusion of this episode of educational restructuring at St John's College may be seen as a limitation in this study. At the time of writing, ten years have passed and the recollections of the direction givers and the researcher may not be as sharp as they were had the research study been undertaken closer in time to the episode. However, the reliance on a substantial amount of historical, documentary evidence and the fact that the participants seem to have clear recollections of the educational restructuring and their understanding of it have lessened the potential for this concern to limit the study markedly.

10.9 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study, albeit in a small way, contributes to the theoretical development in respect to educational change. While most current theories concerning educational change acknowledge that "radical change is both crucial and possible" (Evans, 1996, p. 3) and highlight the fact that "it is a vastly more difficult, lengthy undertaking than most people imagine" (p. 49), some hold that rapid cultural change is a "quick cultural fix" (p. 49) and that it is not possible over a short period of time. On the other hand, Vail (1989) holds firmly to the view that organisational culture cannot be changed. It would appear therefore that what in this study is referred to as a 'seismic

shift' (Researcher's Journal, p. 1), namely a deep and major cultural change, would have very little probability of success. Yet, St John's College successfully engaged with significant cultural changes over a short period of six years from 1994 to 2000. This, however, is only one school's experience and, consequently, this study recommends:

- That further research be undertaken with respect to educational restructuring in order to gain further insight into the purpose, process, and leadership of this phenomenon.

This study also found a strong commitment to processes of consultation and collaboration throughout the episode of educational restructuring at St John's College. However, despite this commitment, the direction givers in the study clearly framed leadership as administrative leadership and the prerogative of those in authority. Given the emerging emphasis on teacher leadership in the context of significant educational change (e.g. Sachs, 2003), it would be appropriate to investigate the role of the teacher in the context of educational restructuring. Is there a place here for a "generative politics" (p. 144) that calls for administrative leadership to provide the "material conditions and organisational frameworks for people [including teachers] to take collective charge of their own destiny and life-political decisions" (p. 144)? At the same time, are teachers ready and able to assume the role of the activist professional, to engage "active trust" (p. 144) and to work with the authorities for the common good? This study therefore recommends:

- That further research be undertaken in respect to teacher leadership and activist professionalism in the context of educational restructuring.

This study highlights the support that the Marist Fathers' spirituality, charism and education philosophy provided to administrative leadership in this episode of educational restructuring at St John's College. This finding raises questions regarding the sources of support for leaders in schools other than those established by the Marist Fathers. Would a spirituality, charism and education philosophy of another religious congregation provide the same level of support? Moreover, is it possible or even appropriate for lay leaders in Catholic schools to rely on the spirituality and charism of a religious congregation? There have been calls for a

greater scrutiny of a lay transmission of charism in Catholic schools (e.g. Braniff, 2007). This study would therefore recommend:

- That further research be undertaken in respect to the support that is provided by any spirituality, charism and philosophy of education in episodes of educational restructuring in Catholic schools.

Finally, this study also hinted at leaders finding support for their intrapreneural leadership in the philosophical framework of personalism. Given the recommendation in the literature (e.g. Evans, 1996) regarding humanising educational change, personalism appears to offer a relevant set of “basic meanings about human persons, society, knowledge, human development, the natural world and schooling” (Starratt, 2003, p. 16). This study would therefore recommend:

- That further research be undertaken with respect to the philosophical framework of personalism as a source of support for those leading educational restructuring.

10.10 CONCLUSION

This thesis tells the story of an episode of educational restructuring at St John’s College. Within a very brief period of six years the school was radically transformed from being a boys’ school with boarders only to a co-educational day school. Moreover, it experienced a complete change in governance from a congregationally-owned school to a parish school, integrated fully into the diocesan school system. All this was achieved while dealing with the inevitable chaos that comes with the disintegration of a cultural consensus. Yet, a cultural and political transformation eventually followed. To achieve this outcome, the administrative leaders had to engage in the process of choosing new life which is consistent with the literature. As Arbuckle (1988) suggests, a culture cannot remain in chaos indefinitely: “it either dies or is led to a new stage of adjustment to a world of change” (p. 15)

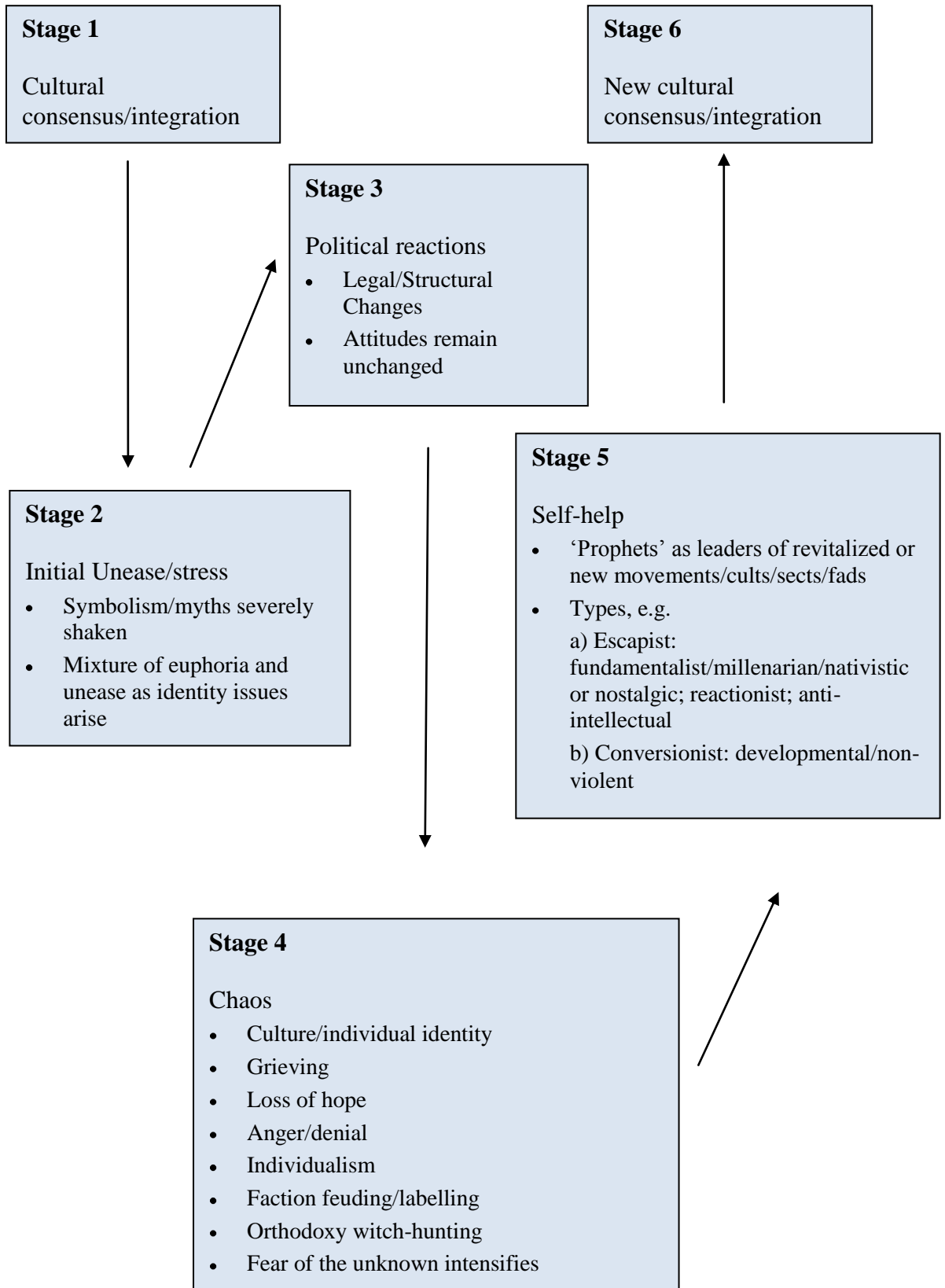
In leading St John’s College to a new stage of adjustment, administrative leadership both consciously and unconsciously re-imagined the school as a living system rather than a machine. Energised by a new moral purpose and mindful of the human dimension of educational change, the administrative leaders put aside pragmatic concerns, mechanistic processes, and managerial leadership and relied, instead, on

organic processes and strategic-moral leadership. The support for this shift in the purpose, the process and the leadership came from the Marist Fathers' spirituality, charism and education philosophy. It is clear that their philosophical and theological framework provided basic meanings with respect to the human person, society, knowledge and human development. These meanings, in turn, supported those in administrative leadership as they chose new life and designed a life-giving approach to educational restructuring. Given the similarities between the Marist Fathers' spirituality, charism and education philosophy and the philosophical framework of personalism, this study suggests that the latter could offer a similar support for other school communities and education systems intent on educational restructuring.

Appendix 1 - Consultation Committees and Key Persons

Name	Dates	Membership
Provincial Council	Throughout restructuring	Provincial(s), Vicar Provincial, members of the provincial councils
Secondary Education Apostolate Group	Continuous	All Marists involved in secondary education
Queensland Catholic Education Commission	September, 1993 – April, 1994; and May, 1996 – February, 1997	Deputy Director QCEC, secondary consultants, etc.
Woodlawn Working Party	April 14, 1997 – February 12, 1998	Provincial, Vicar Provincial, Principal, K. Hughes (Management Consultant)
Woodlawn College Development Committee	August 12, 1997 – January 6, 1998	Representatives of Marist Fathers, staff, parents, students, ex-students
Diocesan Interest Discussion Committee	June 1997 – February 1998	Frs. L. Donnelly, P. Slack, Sr. M. Cannane, R. Tarlinton
Staff Committee Formed (staff initiative)	Began May 5, 1998	K. Bell (Chair)
Diocesan Steering Committee	April 9, 1998 – June 1998	Vicar for Catholic Education, Parish Priest, Catholic Education Office, Trinity Board, Presentation Sisters, Marist Brothers, Marist Fathers, Principal of Saint John's College, Woodlawn, Principal of Trinity Catholic College, Lismore.
Woodlawn Development Committee	May 27, 1998 – August, 1999	Br J. Mullins (Executive Officer), Director of Catholic Education, Fr. P. McMurrich, Fr. P. Slack, Br. N. Solomon, Sr. M. Cannane, R. Tarlinton, G. Isaac, Fr. R. Chapman
Diocesan Woodlawn Working Committee	April 1999 – December 2000	P. Ryan (CEO) (chair), G. Isaac, Fr. L. Donnelly, Fr P. Slack, F Hannigan
Development Committee	June 15, 1998 – August 30, 1999	Trinity Catholic College Ltd and Marist Fathers
Management Team	June 22, 1998 – August 25, 1999	Br. J Mullins (chair), Fr. R Chapman, D Santosa, H Breen (parent) K Evans, A Jones, P McAnelly (parent), D Page, L Rogers
Joint Management Committee	August 30, 1999 – November 15, 2000	R Tarlinton (chair), Fr. J Reilly, Rev. W Jacobsen, D Santosa, Fr. R Chapman, P O'Brien

Appendix 2 - Arbuckle's Model of Cultural Breakdown and Transformation (1993, p. 44)



Appendix 3 - Human Research Ethics Committee Approval Form

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne



Human Research Ethics Committee

Committee Approval Form

Principal Investigator/Supervisor: Dr Gayle Spry Brisbane Campus
Co-Investigators: Dr Jan Grajczonek Brisbane Campus
Student Researcher: Rev Fr Raymond Chapman SM Brisbane Campus

Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:
Educational Restructuring in Catholic Schools: A Case Study of St John's College, Woodlawn - Towards a Personalist Account of Educational Restructuring. (A Case Study of Educational Restructuring).

for the period: 12 September 2008 to 30 September 2009

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number: Q200708 39

The following standard conditions as stipulated in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans (2007)* apply:

- (i) that Principal Investigators / Supervisors provide, on the form supplied by the Human Research Ethics Committee, annual reports on matters such as:
 - security of records
 - compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation
 - compliance with special conditions, and
- (ii) that researchers report to the HREC immediately any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol, such as:
 - proposed changes to the protocol
 - unforeseen circumstances or events
 - adverse effects on participants

The HREC will conduct an audit each year of all projects deemed to be of more than low risk. There will also be random audits of a sample of projects considered to be of negligible risk and low risk on all campuses each year.

Within one month of the conclusion of the project, researchers are required to complete a *Final Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer.

If the project continues for more than one year, researchers are required to complete an *Annual Progress Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer within one month of the anniversary date of the ethics approval.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K. Pashley".

Signed: _____ Date: 12 September 2008
(Research Services Officer, McAuley Campus)

(Committee Approval.dot @21/11/2007)

Page 1 of 1

Appendix 4 - Catholic Education Office, Lismore – Letter of Approval

DIOCESE OF LISMORE

CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE



PT;jw E.2.8.4

9 September 2008

Fr Ray Chapman SM
PO Box 408
THE GAP QLD 4061

Dear Fr Ray,

Thank you for your Approval Application to approach schools in the Diocese of Lismore in order to conduct a research study entitled "Educational Restructuring in Catholic Schools".

As the information supplied appears to have covered all the criteria for a research project required by this Office I am happy to formally give approval for your research as detailed. However, the principal of each school has the responsibility to give approval to proceed at the local school level.

I confirm that research approval specifies agreement to:

- provide the Catholic Education Office Lismore with a copy of the research findings;
- provide participating schools with a summary of the research findings;
- permit following consultation, wider dissemination of the research findings by the Catholic Education Office, Lismore.

I look forward to hearing the outcomes of this important work.

With my best wishes for the success of your study.

Yours sincerely,

Dr P J Thornton
*Assistant Director
Education Services*

CNR KEEN AND ORION STREETS, LISMORE 2480 (PO BOX 158)
TEL: (02) 6622 0422 FAX: (02) 6622 0990 EMAIL: director@lism.catholic.edu.au
WEB: www.lism.catholic.edu.au
ABN: 31 854 438 325

Appendix 5 - Letter Sent to Participants



Brisbane Campus (McAuley at Banyo)
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PO Box 456 Virginia Qld 4014 Australia
Telephone: (07) 3623 7301
Facsimile: (07) 3623 7247
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6TH OCTOBER, 2008

INFORMATION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

TITLE OF PROJECT: Educational Restructuring in Catholic Schools: A Case Study of St John's College, Woodlawn – Towards a Personalist Account of Educational Restructuring

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Dr Gayle Spry

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Ray Chapman SM

PROGRAMME IN WHICH ENROLLED: PhD

Dear,

As you were a key participant in the educational restructuring that took place at St John's College, Woodlawn from 1994 to 2000, and your views are important, I would like to invite you to participate in this case study. The case study is aimed at researching how the purpose of the educational restructuring and the processes that were used were understood. Your views and the information towards this research project will be gathered by means of an interview.

Any inconvenience your participation in this case study may cause will be kept to a minimum and I will endeavour to ensure that it will not demand too much of you.

Your participation will consist of the completion of a Consent Form and an interview which I estimate will take an hour. The interview will be conducted at your place of employment or at a location that is convenient to you. The interview will be audio taped.

The case study will provide you with an opportunity to shape our understanding of the educational restructuring that took place at St John's College. As a key participant in that process, your views and opinions are important. By participating in the research project you will be able to make a contribution to our understanding of that significant event in the life of the school and also to help other teachers and school personnel who engage in a similar process. The research results will be published as a thesis and other researchers may wish to take up the results of the research in order to develop further our understanding of purpose and process in educational restructuring in Catholic schools.

Your participation in this case study is totally voluntary. Your right to refuse your consent without having to justify that decision or to withdraw consent and to discontinue participation in the study at any time without giving a reason, is fully respected. Your withdrawal from the research will not prejudice your employment or relationship with the researcher or the school.

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During and after the conduct of the research, confidentiality will be ensured. Every effort will be made to ensure that your identity is non-identifiable. Due to the small number of participants comments may be attributed to certain people, but measures will be taken to limit this.

If you have any questions or queries concerning the procedures being used for conducting this research, please feel free to contact:

Dr Gayle Spry, State Co-ordinator
School of Educational Leadership
(07) 3623 7301
ACU Banyo Campus
PO Box 456, Virginia Qld 4014

Fr Ray Chapman, SM
Research Student
(07) 3300 8300 or 0414 609 699
ACU Banyo Campus
PO Box 456, Virginia Qld 4014

I am more than happy to provide you with appropriate feedback following the conclusion of this research project and once the results of the project are known.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University.

In the event that you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during the study, or if you have any query that the Supervisor and Student Researcher have not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the nearest branch of the Research Services Unit.

QLD: Chair, HREC
C/o Research Services
Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Campus
PO Box 456
VIRGINIA QLD 4014
Tel: 07 3623 7429
Fax: 07 3623 7328

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this project, please sign both copies of the Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the Principal Investigator or Student Researcher by 15th October, 2008.

Many thanks,

.....
Principal Supervisor

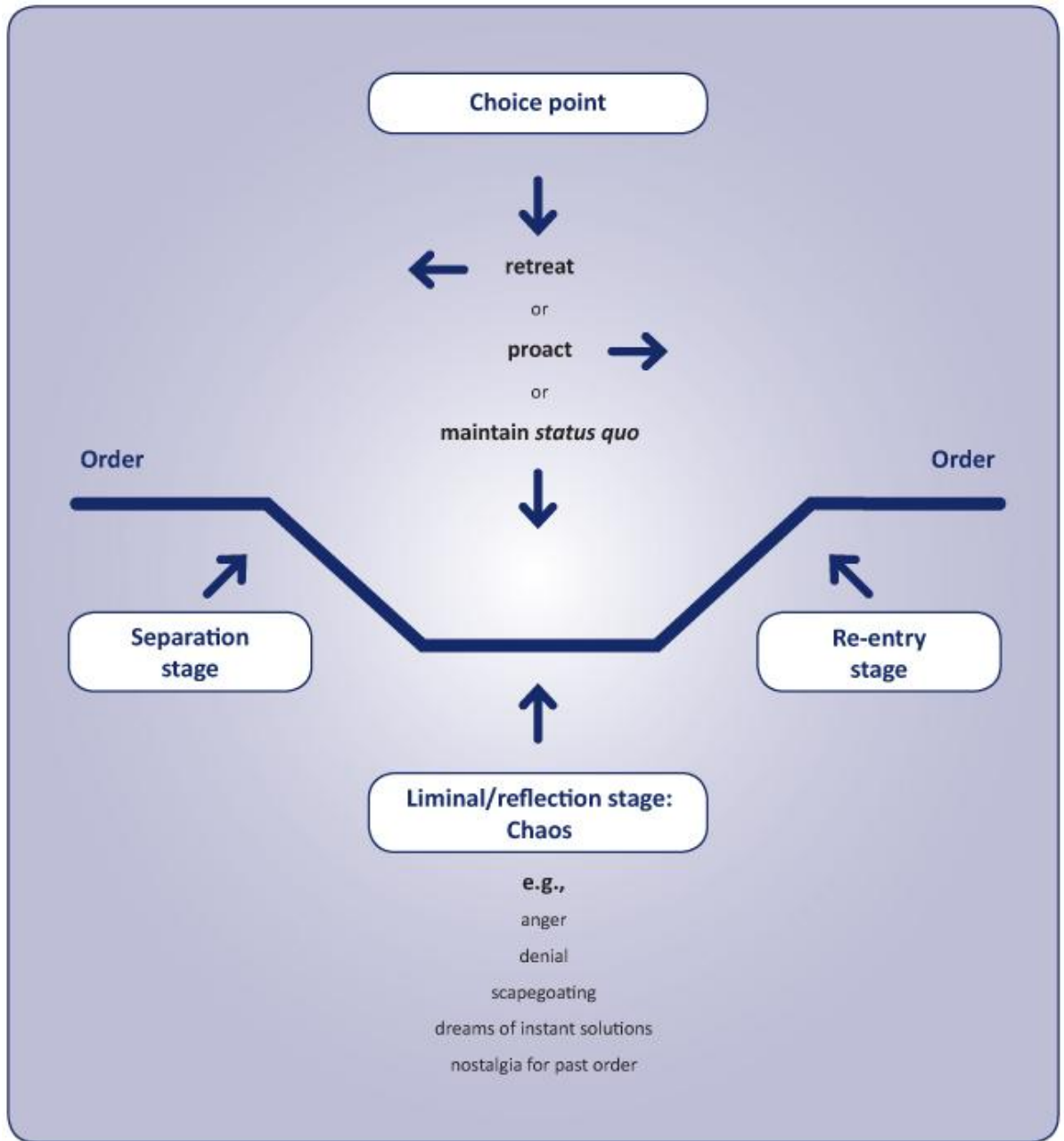
.....
Student Researcher

Appendix 6 - Interview Guide

Interview Guide: Basic Questions Posed During Interviews

1. What are your overall memories of the restructuring at St John's College from 1994 to 2000?
2. What were the significant issues? Major challenges?
3. How did the Marist Fathers approach their task?
4. What was your personal contribution?
5. With hindsight, could the Marist Fathers have undertaken the task in a better fashion? Could it have been improved?
6. How did the Marist style/approach fit the charism?
7. How would you describe the Marist Fathers' philosophy of education?
8. Has the restructuring brought good outcomes?

Appendix 7 - Arbuckle's updated Model of Cultural Transformation
 (2000, p. 132) - "Culture as a Process"



Glossary

Charism	“The word comes from the Greek, <i>charis</i> - grace; the divine influence on the receiver's heart, and its reflection in his or her life. Literally it means ‘gift’. It is used to refer to the particular gift or grace which a spiritual tradition embodies. The retrieval of the original charism of a particular spirituality brings into focus the particular manifestation of truth which is embodied in that particular tradition, while at the same time providing a vehicle for discerning the conditions and practices which will keep that truth a “living truth” in this time and place.” (McCarthy, 2003, p. 199)
College Executive	The College Executive consisted of the school principal, the assistant principal(s), the Religious Education Coordinator, the Curriculum Coordinator, and the College Business Manager.
Marist	A word used to describe a person who ‘bears the name Mary’. In a religious sense, it refers to men and women who are connected to the branches of the Marist family: Marist Sisters, Marist Missionary Sisters, Marist Brothers, Marist Laity, and Marist Fathers (priests and brothers).
Marist Fathers	A religious, clerical congregation of priests and brothers in the Catholic Church. The congregation received approbation on 29 th April, 1836. It is also known by its formal name, the Society of Mary (cf. below)
Provincial	A provincial is a major superior. He has responsibility for the leadership and governance of religious within a certain geographical area called a province.

Provincial Administration	The provincial administration consists of the provincial, his assistants (called councillors), and others who help them e.g. clerical secretaries, business managers, etc.
Provincial Council	Consists of the provincial and his immediate assistants (called provincial councillors).
QCEC	Queensland Catholic Education Commission
St John's College	A school owned by the parish of St Carthage, Lismore and operated by the Catholic Education Office, Lismore. It is situated in a rural area known unofficially as 'Woodlawn', 5 km north of Lismore. Hence, the school is often referred to as "Woodlawn"
Society of Mary	cf. 'Marist Fathers' above.
Spirituality	"The term spirituality is used in a great variety of ways and with varying degrees of specificity. Spirituality is a fundamental component of human experience. It is concerned with the deepest desires of the human heart for meaning, purpose, and connection, with the deep life lived intentionally in reference to something larger than oneself." (McCarthy, 2003, p. 196)
Woodlawn	The name of the area in which St John's College is located. Often used as a shorthand descriptor for St John's College.

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