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4

Effectiveness in Changing a Primary School's
Culture: A Case Study

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of:

Master of Educational Administration
at Massey University

Andrea (Maxwell) Joyce
2000

I certify that this thesis entitled

Effectiveness in Changing a Primary School's
Culture: A Case Study

and submitted as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Educational Administration, is the result of my own work, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this research paper (or any part of the same) has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

Signed: A. Joyeux

Dated: 16 November 2000

"Inability of those in power
to still the voices of their own consciences
is the great force leading to desired
changes"

(President Kaunda of Zambia, 1975, "A Dictionary of Modern Quotations", p.120)

Abstract

Change has been a constant feature of contemporary educational organisations since 1989 and the instituting of *Tomorrow's Schools*. However, knowing that change is required is one thing, achieving 'real change' is quite another. Contemporary educational writers and researchers strongly suggest that an organisation's culture, effectiveness, improvements and leadership are the major, interconnected, concepts that enable an organisation - whether it be educational or a corporate business - to initiate, manage, maintain and monitor real change. This research study, using ethnographic approaches of participant observation, interviews and document collection, attempted to view an educational organisation in the throes of re-establishing itself from an 'historical culture', to a more 'contemporary culture'. The research indicated, by comparing historical and present ways of doing things, that organisational concepts - culture, effectiveness, improvement and leadership - were interpreted in different ways to produce quite contrasting sets of beliefs and assumptions, norms and expectations. The research also highlighted the fact that leadership was at the 'heart' in influencing the way/s in which - both historically and in the present - culture, effectiveness and improvements were to be implemented and shaped. This research concluded that the concept of *organisational culture* (as an umbrella for defining how things are done, effectiveness, improvements and leadership) was useful in developing an understanding of what creates real change in an organisation. This research study, in adding to current debate and research, implies that, in identifying beliefs and assumptions, norms and expectations, an environment could be prudently positioned to design and change systems, rather than merely to identify systems that are possibly inadequate to meet contemporary educational (or other) challenges.

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Contents

<u>Chapter</u>		<u>Page</u>
	Abstract	iii
	Acknowledgements	iv
	Table of Contents	v
1.	<u>Introduction to the Thesis</u>	1.
	1.1 Thesis Background - Justification	
	1.2 Thesis Questions	
	1.3 Thesis Aims and Objectives	
	1.4 Summary	
2.	<u>Literature Review</u>	9.
	2.1 Introduction	
	2.2 Definitions and Functions:	
	2.2.1 Change	
	2.2.2 Culture	
	2.2.3 Educational Effectiveness and Improvement	
	2.2.4 Leadership	
	2.3 The Entanglement of Change	
	2.4 The Alignment between the Corporate and Education's Concept of Organisational Culture	
	2.5 Channelling the Research Questions	
	2.6 Summary	

<u>Chapter</u>		<u>Page</u>
3.	<u>Methodology</u>	40.
	3.1 Introduction	
	3.2 Research Site Approval	
	3.3 Research Design - A 'Case Study'	
	3.4 Research Methods	
	3.4.1 Theoretical Approach Underpinning the Methodology	
	3.4.2 Research Techniques	
	3.4.3 Time Line - Research Implementation	
	3.5 Ethical Considerations/Procedures	
	3.6 Summary	
4.	<u>"Thick Description" - The Portrayal of the Cultural Situation</u>	71.
	4.1 Introduction	
	4.2 The Setting - Background and Structure	
	4.3 Data Presentation - Past to Present	
	4.3.1 Culture - Visuals, Verbals, Rituals, Climate	
	4.3.2 Educational Effectiveness and Improvement	
	4.3.3 Leadership	
	4.4 Emerging Themes	
	4.5 Summary	

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
5.	114
<u>Discussion</u>	
5.1 Introduction	
5.2 Emerging Themes	
5.2.1 Change	
5.2.2 Vision and Focusing	
5.2.3 Leadership	
5.3 The Entanglement of Change	
5.4 Research Questions Answered	
5.5 Thesis Aims and Objectives Addressed	
5.6 Summary	
6.	147
<u>Conclusion</u>	
6.1 Introduction	
6.2 Methodology Reviewed	
6.3 Full Circle	
6.4 Further Research	
6.5 Summary	
	160
Bibliography	
	170
Appendices	
	76
<u>List of Diagrams:</u>	
Figure One: School's Administration Structure	
	77
Figure Two: Organisational Structure and Relationships in Cultural Context	
	153
Figure Three: Interlocking of Identified Entities	