

# **THE AMALGAMATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

**A CASE STUDY OF  
AMALGAMATION CULTURE SHOCK  
IN A RURAL NEW ZEALAND  
CATHOLIC COMMUNITY**

**A thesis  
presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Educational Administration at  
Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand**

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**1999**

## CANDIDATES STATEMENT

I certify that the thesis entitled The Amalgamation of Secondary Schools: A Case Study of Amalgamation Culture Shock in a Rural New Zealand Catholic Community and submitted as a part of the degree of Master of Educational Administration at Massey University, Palmerston North, is the result of my own work, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this thesis (or any part of the same), has not been submitted for any other degree to any other university or institution.

Signed

M Claire Hills

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Date

December 12th 1999

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## ABSTRACT

This case study examines the process which led to the formation of Chanel College by the amalgamation of St Bride's and St Joseph's colleges in 1978. From 1970 - 1999 a radical restructuring of Catholic secondary education in New Zealand resulted in the closure of twelve single sex secondary schools for girls and the amalgamation of twenty-six secondary schools. Chanel College was the first New Zealand Catholic secondary school to bypass the co-institutional transitional phase of amalgamation and to be a co-educational college from its beginning. As time passes there is the possibility that important understandings that were part of the history of the merger might be lost and stakeholders in each of the merging organisations might feel that their own roots and mission have not been given enough recognition and respect in the new organisation.

The community which provides the focus of this case study had experienced a long period of stability followed by years of rapid cultural, educational, and leadership change. The tortuous progress of amalgamation for the Catholic community in the Wairarapa provides an ideal opportunity to examine the importance of leadership and process in the management of significant educational change.

The importance of managing the culture shock of amalgamations is often underestimated or overlooked. This form of culture shock involves the confusion, disorientation and severe emotional stress associated with moving from a familiar culture to one most unlike the old environment. If this management issue is not addressed effectively there can be a significant area of 'unfinished business' which leaves a bitter legacy for a new school struggling to create an accepted culture of its own.

The stakeholders also find themselves involved in a situation which is often not of their choosing where they face the often unwelcome task and ongoing process of creating a new culture where the unconscious taken for granted beliefs, thoughts and values which had provided the foundation for the merging schools must be revisited until a new culture develops which is accepted by the new community as appropriate to its needs. In the *Conclusions and Recommendations* section the stakeholder and community management issues often encountered in the amalgamation process are summarised and management recommendations are made and solutions proposed.

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St Bride's and St Joseph's students in 1977 with Sister Barbara who became Assistant Principal of Chanel College in 1978



Signs of the changing times recorded by *Wairarapa Times Age* photographers: Wairarapa Automobile Association staff remove the signpost to St Joseph's College and replace it with the new Chanel College sign. Des McGurn, on the left, was a St Joseph's old boy.

## NOTES ON THE RESEARCHER

There are problems and challenges involved in writing recent history 'from the inside.' I teach at the college which is the focus of the research and I was at various times on the staff of one of the amalgamating colleges. My personal situation however, is somewhat unusual. While it is to be expected that I might experience some tensions in my role, my educational background and the nature of my involvement in Catholic schools can be seen as a positive asset in this instance.

I was educated at state schools, Masterton Central School and Wairarapa College. I became a Catholic in 1965 in my final year at Victoria University. I married Peter in 1966, which was also my first year of full time teaching. Most of our eight children have received both their primary and secondary education at Catholic schools. This has enabled me to appreciate the perspectives of the parents as well as the teachers. Most of my teaching experience since 1967 was part time until my return to full time teaching in 1985. I have taught in secondary schools every year since 1966 except on two occasions when I had three children under the age of five. In the early 1980's I commenced extra mural study at the Advanced Studies For Teachers Unit at the Wellington College of Education and at Massey University to complete my BA and Diploma of Teaching and later decided to study for the Diploma of Second Language Teaching.

Prior to marriage my knowledge and experience of Catholic culture and educational organisations was minimal. I decided to look for opportunities to teach in Catholic schools for three reasons:

- I wanted to find out first hand how they operated
- Having been educated in co-educational schools myself I wanted to have the opportunity to experience single sex education
- Since my own children would probably be educated in Catholic schools with which I was not familiar, I wanted to be assured that they would receive a good education.

My experience in Catholic schools is therefore as teacher and learner, as participant and observer, as parent, archivist and recorder of important aspects of their history. After an initial teaching appointment in 1966 at Sacred Heart College in Island Bay, Wellington, I have been teaching in rural Wairarapa New Zealand since 1967. I have taught in five out of seven of its secondary schools: Solway College, Wairarapa College, St Matthews' College, St Bride's College and Chanel College where I have taught part time and full time since its establishment in 1978. My teaching experience has therefore included single sex and co-educational colleges, state, private and integrated schools.

My first piece of published historical writing was as editor of *Central School 1865 - 1990* written to co-incide with the 125<sup>th</sup> jubilee celebrations. I established the Chanel College Archive, edited of the annual college magazine for ten years, and *The Story of Catholic Education in the Wairarapa 1883 -1995*. I have also contributed essays to the New Zealand Dictionary of Biography Volumes III and IV on three Irish Catholic priests who made outstanding contributions to the development of the Catholic Church and Catholic education in the Wairarapa.

My teaching experience in Catholic schools co-incided with a time of religious and educational ferment within the Catholic Church. Following the Second Vatican Council and the Declaration on Christian Education, lay people and the religious teaching orders entered a period of intense reflection and fundamental change in the culture of Catholic schools. This co-incided with a period when the composition of the Catholic Church in New Zealand was changing. Statistics confirm that until World War, II 95% of European Catholics in New Zealand were either of Irish birth or Irish descent. This was to have a profound effect upon the development of New Zealand Catholic culture and Catholic schools. Unlike the majority of New Zealand Catholics I have no Irish forbears. I am of Scottish descent. I grew up in the Wairarapa where branches of my father's family (the MacKays and the Aysons) had lived for four generations. My mother, Grace Caradus, a secondary teacher before her marriage, is a great granddaughter of suffragist Elizabeth Caradus, who, with her husband James, was a pioneer in adult education in Auckland. The Caradus family tradition in education includes secondary textbook author and Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools in New Zealand, Edward Caradus, his brother William, former Principal of Mt Albert Grammar, and younger brother Charles, secondary inspector of technical subjects in Auckland. My mother's brother John was Deputy Principal of Napier Boys High School. The knowledge of my Scottish heritage, its clan culture and its New Zealand history has been assisted by books produced by enthusiastic family historians: *The Ayson Story- From Glenshee to Otago 1853 - 1990* published by the Clan Ayson of New Zealand Society and *Courage and Perseverance - the Caradus Story* written by Ailsa Caradus.



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Images of life at St Joseph's College taken from the 1997 magazine

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## METHODOLOGY

In the original thesis proposal I intended to gather written evidence derived from the research literature on the amalgamations of educational institutions, documentary material from school archives, newspapers and questionnaires and oral evidence gained from semi-structured interviews and informal interviews. As the research proceeded many very valuable primary source documents became available which contained a large amount of information of direct relevance to the research objectives. This information led me in new directions and resulted in the acquisition of further documents which broadened the scope of the cultural objectives of the research. I became aware that the St Bride's/St Joseph's amalgamation experience occurred within a timeframe in which there was a paradigm shift from single sex to co-educational Catholic secondary education that was particularly noticeable in provincial New Zealand. Many of the questions in the questionnaire were answered in the information to which I gained access and by the people to whom I spoke. I therefore decided to abandon the questionnaire at a relatively early stage in the research..

**The Literature Review and ERIC searches** conducted early in the process revealed that there is very little research literature presently available specifically focusing on the cultural change management issues involved in the merger of educational organisations in general and even less on the amalgamation of secondary schools in New Zealand. Much of the limited range of accessible research material related to Catholic schools available is stored in the archives of the various religious congregations who have been involved in founding and operating Catholic schools. Access to the information and the archivists was very useful in comparing the Chanel College experience with developments in Catholic education elsewhere in New Zealand happening in the same time frame. This information has been organised into tables in the appendix.

Articles carried by educational journals overseas provide a number of valuable insights related to educational mergers in the tertiary sector. Although there is little research

literature on how amalgamation affects the stakeholders, much relevant information can be gained from contemporary media coverage of the people, the places, the schools and the cultural issues. The media sources, theses and research projects which provided useful information are listed separately in the reference section. As this case study has a strong cultural focus I have included a number of significant photographs which illustrate the cultural aspects referred to in the case study. The names of the photographers, where known, are acknowledged in the captions beneath the photographs.

### **Document Searches and Archives**

The documents used in the writing of this thesis are listed in detail in the Reference Section. What follows is a brief description of sources, their location and usefulness. The following archives were used in the search for primary source documents related to the research objectives of this thesis.

<b>Name of Archive</b>	<b>Location</b>
The Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Wellington	Wellington
Chanel College Archive	Masterton
Marist Brothers' Archive	Auckland
Wairarapa Archive	Masterton
Wairarapa Times Age Archive	Masterton

The archivist of the **Catholic Archdiocesan Archive in Wellington**, Sister Martin de Porres RSM, was very supportive. While she could only find one document which was directly relevant to the research objectives her extensive personal knowledge and experience in leadership and management positions in Catholic schools was of great assistance in our telephone interviews and fax communications. Sister De Porres was formerly the Deputy Principal of St Peter's College Palmerston North at the time of its amalgamation and later became Principal of St Mary's College in Wellington.

I established **The Chanel College Archive** in 1990. It has separate sections for all the Catholic parishes and Catholic schools in the Wairarapa. It houses the magazines of St Bride's, St Joseph's and Chanel College, architectural plans, a wide selection of photographs, newspaper cuttings, school rolls, documents and various records,

including the minutes of the meetings of the St Joseph's College Advisory Board and the Integration Agreement and related correspondence.

**The Marist Brothers' Archive** is a purpose built archive in Auckland. It has extensive, very well organised records of the contribution made to Catholic education throughout New Zealand by the Marist Brothers of the Schools. Many of the documents it holds on St Joseph's College and Chanel College are also in the Chanel Archive in original or copied form but the Marist Archive also has other documents I had not previously located, as well as a series of annals of the various schools established by the Brothers.

**The Wairarapa Archive** is another purpose built archive with a small but growing section on education in the Wairarapa. It has an extensive collection of photographs of Wairarapa schools, many of which were contributed by my father, but no documents that might assist the scope of this research apart from the insights about the Masterton Catholic community gained from the minutes of the Masterton Catholic Women's League.

**The Wairarapa Times Age Archive** was used to discover how the local media interpreted, reported and presented the amalgamation of St Bride's and St Joseph's to its Wairarapa readers. I conducted an issue by issue search of Wairarapa Times Age newspapers from 1974 - 78 and also found relevant material in other years related to the scope of the research. The individual reports are listed in detail in the references in the newspaper section.

**Archivists From Various Religious Congregations** made a very valuable contribution by providing information for the tables included in the appendix which illustrate how Chanel College fitted into what was happening elsewhere in Catholic education in New Zealand at the time leading up to and following amalgamation. The members of the various religious congregations who assisted in this process are recognised (with their permission) in the Acknowledgements section. As they are located all over the country I found that phone interviews were much a more satisfactory method of obtaining information than sending letters as the answer to one question would often lead to a

new question I had not anticipated. Each person was a key holder of the 'institutional memory' and therefore able to provide interesting anecdotal evidence. They also had access to literature and information relevant to the thesis which they were willing to make available to me.

Since this thesis has a strong cultural focus and since culture is created by people, **semi-structured interviews and conversations** provided very valuable information related to personal experiences and feelings related to the amalgamation process. The people contacted felt more comfortable 'talking about it' than adopting a formal interview approach. This may well be because many of them have known me for many years. These 'interviews' were often preceded by or followed up by telephone calls. It is understandable that some people's memories were more extensive than others given that it is now over twenty years since the amalgamation process began. Some still had documents in their possession they were willing to share. Nobody who was approached for assistance refused to assist with the research. The information in the documents frequently acted as a very useful memory trigger in bringing to mind the events in the past in which they had been involved. The conversations would sometimes bring to mind a document in their possession or give me the opportunity to cross check and verify information gained from a variety of sources. As the research proceeded a clear pattern developed of **personal anecdotes** relating to the severe cultural stress that is part of educational mergers.

## **Photographs**

In research with a strong cultural focus well chosen photographs can reflect significant aspects of organisational culture. The photographs included have been selected with this factor in mind. The photographers, where known, are acknowledged in the captions.

## **Tables**

As the research progressed many patterns became apparent. The majority of these patterns have been organised into tables as listed on page 3. It also became clear that a core leadership group were members of a number of key decision making structures. The membership and the duration of these groups have also been organised into tables for easy reference



## Triangulation

Once the thesis reached draft status I gave copies to the following people for cross checking and for any comments they might care to make:

- Sister Myra (Tarcisius) Superior of the Brigidine Congregation, member of the St Bride's College Board of Governors and teacher at St Bride's College and Viard College
- Brother Barry Ryan FMS, Marist Brothers' Provincial from 1999
- Brother Henry Spinks FMS, former Principal of Chanel College, former member of the Chanel College Board of Governors and immediate past Provincial of the Marist Brothers
- Ted Paris, former Chairperson of the St Bride's Board of Governors, member of the Co-ordinating Committee, foundation Chairperson of the Chanel College Board of Governors and the first to formally propose amalgamation
- Bill Orange member of the St Bride's Board of Governors, the St Bride's Board of Governors Sub-Committee on Education, the Co-ordinating Committee, St Joseph's Advisory Board, Chanel College Board of Governors
- Murray Hodgins, former member of the St Bride's Board of Governors, foundation pupil of St Joseph's College, member of St Joseph's Old Boys' Association
- Joan Gray, foundation member and President of the St Bride's Old Girls Association and Secretary to the St Bride's Board of Governors
- Gabrielle Rolls, foundation member and Secretary of the St Bride's Old Girls Association and non voting member of the St Bride's Board of Governors and former member of the Chanel College Board of Governors
- Helen Nicholson, Chairperson Chanel College Board of Trustees and former student of St Bride's College
- Peter Tolich, Principal of Chanel College
- Margaret Biggs, Assistant Principal of Chanel College, staff member of Chanel College since 1979
- Father Norman Pettit, parish priest of St Patrick's Church Masterton 1975 - 1978

I thank all those who participated willingly in the triangulation process. I am particularly indebted to those who personally experienced the amalgamation process from its beginning. All of them have been particularly supportive about the accuracy of the content and the fairness of the interpretation.