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School-Based Decision Making Teams: Are Schools Ready?

by

Marietta Portigal

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "School-Based Decision Making Teams: Are Schools Ready?" submitted by Marietta Portigal in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Supervisor, Dr. V. E. Bohac Clarke
Department of Educational Policy
and Administrative Studies

Dr. C. F. Webber
Department of Educational Policy
and Administrative Studies

Dr. K. G. Skau
Department of Teacher Education and Supervision

July 26, 1995
Date

ABSTRACT

School-based management, which has been mandated in Alberta, must be implemented in conjunction with school-based decision making teams to be effective in improving student performance. This study questioned whether there were barriers in schools that could prevent the successful implementation of school-based decision making teams. Using a qualitative case study design in two elementary schools, selected because the principals were already attempting to increase teacher involvement, teachers and administrators were asked whether they felt the conditions necessary for the successful implementation of teams existed in their schools. The findings, based on the results of a questionnaire and interviews with all the teachers and administrators in both schools, identified barriers to the implementation of teams in the existing conditions of teacher isolation, conflict, lack of trust, resistance to change, lack of communication, poorly understood vision, and teachers' lack of knowledge and skills necessary to work effectively on teams.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins by providing background to the research problem and explaining the purpose and significance of the research. The next section outlines the assumptions underlying the research and identifies the limitations and delimitations of the study. The last section defines significant terminology used in the study and outlines the organization of the thesis.

Background to the Study

In response to the perceived public dissatisfaction with the educational achievement of Alberta students, the Alberta Government released a three-year business plan for education in February 1994. While this plan called for reduced government funding for education, it also expressed the expectation that schools would increase efficiencies and effectiveness to bring about improved student learning outcomes, improved teaching strategies, greater accountability, evidence that money spent was producing the desired benefits, and increased involvement by parents and the community in education. To effect these improvements to the educational system in the province, the government included in the three-year educational plan, the goal of establishing school-based management in all Alberta schools by the 1996-97 school year. The intent of this goal, according to the Alberta Department of Education publication *in-focus* (Winter, 1994) was "...to decentralize decision-making regarding budget and programs in order to increase local authority and responsibility for education." (p. 1). In adopting school-based management as the vehicle for the decentralization of public school districts in the province, the Alberta Government was following the example set by politicians in many

states and countries throughout North America, Europe and Australasia (Dimmock, 1993).

Decentralization has also been the strategy employed by many successful businesses in their attempts to compete in today's difficult environment. Bailey (1991) indicates that most of the recent changes in business and industry have also been a result of efficiency and effectiveness moves, and "...most of the changes have involved *thinking smaller* – smaller in scope, governance, management and size" (p.24). While a highly centralized, bureaucratic management model enabled many North American organizations to maintain world dominance in a stable environment, in today's world of rapid change, this model is proving to be their downfall because of it's inability to respond quickly and effectively to the changing demands of the market place. The move to decentralization indicates that businesses have discovered that to gain the competitive advantage in today's global economy, they must replace their centralized, control-oriented, bureaucratic management practices with more effective, high-involvement approaches to management – approaches which incorporate total quality management and employee involvement (Lawler, 1992). High involvement management is grounded in the belief that if organizations are to be successful, then planning and decision making must occur at the lowest possible level of the organization.

There are various strategies for increasing employee involvement in an organization, and one that is increasingly being adopted by many successful organizations is the empowered work team. When successful, empowered work teams have the effect of combining the benefits of employee involvement with the synergy that can result from collaboration. Research indicates that when empowered work teams are effective, the benefits to the organization include improved quality in products and services, increased productivity, reduced operating costs, greater flexibility, more innovation, and faster

response to change (see Hicks & Bone, 1990; Katzenbach & Smith,1993; Lawler, 1992; Orsburn et al., 1990; Quick, 1992; Torres & Spiegel, 1990; Wellins et al., 1991). These are all elements that are critical to an organization in maintaining a competitive advantage. At the same time employees who participate in successful empowered work teams report higher motivation, an increased sense of self-worth, and greater pride in their work (see Hicks & Bone, 1990; Katzenbach & Smith, 1993; Lawler, 1992; Orsburn et al., 1990; Quick, 1992; Torres & Spiegel, 1990; Wellins et al., 1991).

In spite of the apparent advantages of teams in organizations, Booth (1994), in a survey of 109 Canadian companies, discovered that even very progressive companies, recognized as leaders in organizational change, are facing major impediments in actually changing from hierarchical, individual-centered organizations to team-centered environments. She identifies two major impediments that stand in the path of this change: "first, organizational culture appears to be the blocking mechanism in the change process; and second, the absence of a *state of readiness* may negate all efforts to introduce change in an integrated fashion" (p.3). According to some of the participants in Booth's survey, "the key factor in orchestrating a successful transition from an individual-focused to a team-focused environment is the organization's ability to meet *readiness* criteria" (p. 3).

As with private sector organizations, public school systems throughout the world are finding that they too must operate in a complex and dynamic environment. Schools are being challenged to respond to multiple and often conflicting demands for services as well as demands for improved student outcomes, flexibility in the delivery of services and greater operational efficiencies. Although schools have operated successfully for many years as bureaucratic systems, this high degree of centralization has resulted in school systems that are unable to respond to the rapidly changing environment in which schools must now operate. If public school systems are to survive, then like businesses, they must

explore models of decentralization that will enable them to become more flexible and productive and provide improved quality.

The model of decentralization that has been mandated for schools by the Alberta Government is school-based management. However, just as organizations in the private sector have discovered, if improvements in effectiveness and efficiency (resulting in improved teaching and learning) are to occur in education, this decentralization of authority must be accompanied by a move to a high-involvement approach to management at the school level (Conley & Bacharach, 1990; Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1993). This implies that significant changes must be made to the current organizational and governance structure of schools, so that teachers and school administrators can play a much greater role in the planning and decision making relating to school improvement initiatives. Just as in business, teamwork must replace teachers working in isolation if shared decision making and improved problem solving are to occur (Bailey, 1992; Brigham, 1993; Crawford et al., 1993; Futrell, 1988 ; Sallis, 1993; Schmoker, 1993). As Sallis indicates, "..the synergy required to make quality improvements comes from people working in harmony. Quality improvement is hard work, and this is best approached with the support of others" (p.92).

The research that is currently available on school-based management suggests that so far, the implementation of school-based management has not resulted in significant reforms to the teaching and learning process (Malen, Ogawa & Kranz, 1990; Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1993; Wohlstetter & Odden, 1992) . Dimmock (1993) suggests that one reason why school-based management has not had a major effect on student achievement is because schools have been focusing on the structures and processes of management, as if they were ends in themselves, rather than on how school-based management can maximize student learning. Other studies point out the failure of schools to establish

certain readiness criteria before embarking on school-based management (Clark, 1990) In her analysis of the results to date Priscilla Wohlstetter, director of the school-based management research project at the University of Southern California (cited in O'Neil, 1994) notes that in most cases there was only partial implementation of the practices needed to make school-based management effective. Some of the key elements that she identifies as being significantly absent in many of the locations where school-based management has been instituted are the lack of access to knowledge and information to guide decisions, and the failure to train and implement school-based teams.

Unlike many of the private sector organizations in Booth's (1994) study, most schools do not have a history of successful change and innovation, nor do they have extensive experience with collaboration. It would seem then, that schools are even less likely than the organizations in Booth's study to be successful in their attempts to introduce a team-centered environment. Since school-based decision making has been identified as a critical element in the success of school-based management, assessing a school's readiness for teams becomes an important first step in the implementation of school-based management.

Statement of Problem

Given that increased teacher and school administrator involvement in planning and decision making has been identified as a critical element in school improvement efforts associated with school-based management and that teams represent an effective organizational structure for implementing this involvement, this study focuses on the following problems:

What barriers exist that could hinder or prevent schools from changing to team-centered organizations?

How do these barriers impact on the readiness of schools to implement school-based decision making teams?

Purpose

This research will examine the attitudes of teachers and administrators in several Alberta schools towards the concept of empowered work teams and their perceptions regarding their school's readiness to change to a team-centered environment. The purpose of this research is to identify any impediments that might hinder or prevent these schools from effectively implementing school-based decision making teams. In addressing this purpose, the research will be guided by the following questions:

1. How are empowered work teams relevant to schools?

    *   What are empowered work teams?

    *   Why have empowered work teams been introduced into many organizations?

    *   What factors support the appropriateness of empowered work teams in schools?

2. What conditions need to be in place for an organization to effectively implement empowered work teams?

    *   What areas of the organization need to be congruent with employee involvement?

    *   What are the characteristics of employees on empowered work teams?

3. What are the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding the readiness of their particular school to change to a team-focused environment?

- Do administrators and teachers in Alberta schools identify the existence of any of barriers to the implementation of teams in their schools?

- Do individual teachers and administrators in Alberta schools support the concept of teams?

Significance of Study

In their educational reform package, the Alberta Government has mandated that school-based management be implemented in Alberta schools by 1996. School-based management must be combined with some form of employee involvement/team structure if it to be effective in bringing about improved educational outcomes for students. Since this move to a team-focused environment represents a major change to the way schools are currently organized, and since "the absence of a *state of readiness* can negate all efforts to introduce change in an integrated fashion" (Booth, 1994, p.3), it is important to determine if schools in Alberta are ready to move to this type of organizational structure.

Methodology

An examination of the literature in the areas of work groups, participative decision-making and school restructuring, with particular emphasis on school-based management, was conducted to determine the advantages of empowered work teams in organizations, the relevance of work teams to education, and the relationship of teams to other current school reforms, particularly school-based management. The results of this research were also used to identify barriers or obstacles to the successful implementation of empowered work teams in organizations, and the characteristics of successful employees in team-focused environments. Two schools, City School and Town School,

were selected to participate in the study based on their expressed interest in implementing school-based management. Both schools agreed that the acceptance and willingness of teachers to participate on teams was a necessary first step in moving towards school-based management.

A qualitative case study design was used since the intent of the research was to provide the participants with an in-depth description of their school to enable them to make informed decisions about the best strategies to use in introducing school-based decision making teams into the school.

A questionnaire was developed and administered to all the teachers and administrators in the two schools. The questionnaire examined the respondents attitudes towards teacher teams and teamwork and also their perceptions regarding the readiness of the school as a whole to adopt a team structure for addressing school improvement.

Following the questionnaire, all teachers and administrators were interviewed individually to enable them to clarify or expand on their own responses to the questionnaire as well as on the overall findings of the questionnaire, to determine what they felt was an appropriate level of team empowerment in their particular school, and to suggest strategies for eliminating any barriers to teams that had been identified.

A group session of all participants was held at each school to present the findings of the questionnaire and interviews, and to identify any barriers that would prevent the effective implementation of teacher teams in the school. Participants were encouraged to discuss the findings and the implications of the findings for their school.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations: The study was delimited to include two schools selected on the basis of their expressed interest in the area of research and their willingness to participate. It was

also delimited to examine only those barriers existing at the school level and over which the school staff has some control, and which were identified by the staff based on their perceptions in response to the questions asked of them.

Limitations: The study was limited by (a) the time in the schools which extended over the second half of the school year, (b) respondents who may have provided socially acceptable answers, tried to hide or color important information, lacked the knowledge or training to respond accurately, or derived different meanings than the interviewer from the questions, (c) the assistant principal who opted not to participate because he was new to the school, (d) the researcher's interpretation, and (e) the temporal instability of the data.

Assumptions

1. That empowered work teams are good for organizational effectiveness and health.

2. That the research findings based on empowered work teams in business organizations are transferable to an educational setting.

3. That the limitations to team empowerment and team effectiveness identified in the literature would actually prevent successful implementation of empowered work teams in schools.

4. That the questionnaire and interview questions were sufficiently valid and reliable to generate the data needed for this qualitative study.

5. That the interviewees were sufficiently accurate and frank.

Definitions

School-based decision making: Also referred to in the literature as shared decision making or participatory decision making. Mutchler and Duttweiler (1990) cite Wood (1984) for the definition of shared or participatory decision making as "a collaborative

approach in which 'superordinate' and 'subordinates' work together as equals to 'share and analyze problems together, generate and evaluate alternatives, and attempt to reach agreement (consensus) on decisions.'" (p.2) For the purpose of this research, this definition will also be used for school-based decision making.

Team: Katzenback and Smith (1993) provide this useful definition as a way to distinguish a team from a mere group of people with a common assignment: "A team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable" (p.45).

Empowerment: Wellins et al. (1991) define empowerment in this way:

> Power means "control, authority, dominion." The prefix "em" means "to put on to," or "to cover ·with." Empowerment then means to pass on the control, authority, dominion to employees. Empowerment occurs when power goes to employees giving them a sense of ownership and control over their jobs. (p.22)

Herman (1993) would add to this definition that in addition to the power, accountability is also passed on.

Empowered Work Team: Bringing the above two definitions together, an empowered work team is a "team" that has been given some degree of power or control over their own work processes and is accountable for their results.

Self-Managing/Self-Directed Work Team: Hicks and Bone (1990) define self-managing or self-directed work teams as "...small autonomous work groups that contract with higher management to take complete responsibility for a product, project or service... Self -managing work teams also take on varying degrees of management responsibility" (p.i).

Employee Involvement: Employees have some role in problem-solving and decision-making. Mohrman et al. (1992) provide this definition: "When information, rewards,

knowledge and power are concentrated at the top, traditional control-oriented management exists; when they are moved downward, employee involvement is being practiced" (p.347).

High-Involvement Organization: Used by Lawler (1992) to relate to companies that "employ a total organizational approach to employee involvement" (p.xii).

High-Involvement Management: The management approach employed by high-involvement organizations which Lawler(1992) describes as emphasizing "few levels in the hierarchy, seamless organizations, quick adaptation and change, lateral work relationships, and the responsibility of organizations to create meaningful and satisfying work" (p.xiii). Mohrman et al. (1992) expand on this to explain that it

> builds upon what has been learned from the suggestion-involvement and job-involvement approaches. It structures an organization so that people at the lowest level will have a sense of involvement, not just in how they do their jobs or how effectively their group performs but in the performance of the whole organization. It goes considerable further than either of the other two approaches toward moving power, information, knowledge, and rewards to the lowest level. It creates an organization in which individuals care about the performance of the organization because they know about it, are able to influence it, are rewarded for it, and have the knowledge and skills to contribute to it. (p.351)

School/Site-based management: Defined by Clark (1990) as "a process of decentralization in which the school becomes the primary unit of management and educational improvement. This generally occurs through the redistribution of decision-making authority within the district and the school" (p.1).

Organization of Thesis

The intent of this chapter has been to provide a brief introduction to the research problem, and to explain its purpose and significance. The underlying assumptions,

limitations and delimitations of the study have been identified, and significant terminology introduced.

Chapter two reviews the literature related to this study from the field of business and management and from the field of education, looking specifically at the areas of work groups, participative decision making and school restructuring. The purpose of this review is to address the question of how empowered work teams are relevant to schools and to identify the conditions that need to be in place for an organization to effectively implement empowered work teams.

Chapter three outlines the theoretical orientation and the research approach selected for the study, clarifies the role of the researcher and describes the procedures used for the collection and analysis of the data.

Chapter four describes the two schools that participated in this study, focusing on the structural elements in each school that could potentially impact on the implementation of school-based decision making teams.

Chapter five provides an outline of the questionnaire that was administered to the staffs at City School and Town School, and presents the findings from the questionnaires for each of the schools.

Chapters six and seven identify the major themes that arise from an analysis of the data from the interviews and researcher observations at each of the schools.

Chapter eight discusses the supporting conditions and potential barriers to school-based decision making teams that exist in each school, identifying factors for staff members to consider as they determine how to address any barriers. Implications of the research findings for theory, research and practice are suggested.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature related to this study is derived both from the field of business and management, and from the field of education. Within these two fields the following specific areas were explored:

- *Work groups* to gain an understanding of what empowered work teams are, why they have been introduced into many organizations, how they might be appropriate in the field of education, and to identify barriers to the introduction of empowered work teams into an organization.

- *Participative decision making* which represents the first stage in the evolution of empowered work teams, and which, in the field of education, incorporates concepts such as teams, teacher empowerment, collaboration, and shared decision making.

- *School restructuring* for an understanding of how teams are incorporated into successful restructuring efforts that are resulting in improved student learning outcomes. The major topics explored in this area include school-based management and Total Quality Management.

Within the business literature, several strong prescriptive works, based on current research studies and advocating the adoption of empowered work teams by organizations, have served as sources of information for this study. Lawler (1992), who is referred to in numerous other sources as "the father of high involvement management" bases his advocacy on the findings of a study of the 1000 largest service and manufacturing firms in the United States, as well as on an extensive review of any relevant research to date in the area of work teams. Wellins, Byham and Wilson (1991) base their strong advocacy on the results of a survey they conducted of 500 U.S. companies that use self-directed teams, as

well as on interviews with 28 of these organizations. Katzenbach and Smith (1993) base their advocacy on knowledge gained from research and from conversations with hundreds of people in dozens of organizations. They focus their work on lessons that actual teams and nonteams have learned and are willing to share for the benefit of others who may choose to follow down the same path. Orsburn, Moran, Musselwhite and Zenger (1990) base their work on their own experiences and the experiences of other associates in the Zenger-Miller company who have worked with many of the company's 2000 client organizations in the area of self-directed work teams. An important Canadian study on the use of teams in business organizations was carried out by Booth (1994) who surveyed 109 Canadian Conference Board Associate organizations and conducted in-depth interviews in more than 25 companies. Other works referred to in this study are based on the premise that organizations will benefit from the introduction of empowered work teams, and focus on clarifying the role of work teams and providing strategies for implementing them (Hicks & Bone, 1990; Kayser, 1994; Moran & Musselwhite, 1989; Quick, 1992; Scholtes, 1988). Some works, while simply devising new or unique ways to present the same information, are nonetheless successful in increasing an overall understanding of the concept of work teams (Holpp, 1992; Torres & Spiegel, 1990).

The concept of teachers working together in teams is still rather elusive in the literature on education. The major justification for considering the application of work teams to schools is found in the work of Mohrman, Lawler and Mohrman (1992) who take the research on employee involvement from the field of business, with particular emphasis on the work of Lawler, and convincingly demonstrate how this research is relevant to schools. These ideas are supported and expanded upon in Wohlstetter and Odden (1992), Wohlstetter and Mohrman (1993) and Mohrman and Wohlstetter (1994). Mohrman's ideas are given credibility by her extensive background and experience in the

area of organizational design and her work with Lawler on the Fortune 1000 companies. Wohlstetter has done extensive research in the area of school-based management and has recently conducted several national studies on the politics and fiscal policies of school-based management. Scarr (1992) provides a brief, preliminary analysis of the actual implementation of work teams in a small school district. Maeroff (1993) provides an extremely detailed and well-researched description of the summer programs provided by team building academies in the United States, and realistically points out the problems that leadership teams have encountered both during their training and when they return to their schools. Lieberman (1991) and Little and Bird (1984) provide limited, but significant research studies which demonstrate a relationship between identifiable school teams and improved teaching and learning.

Related to the literature on teams is the literature on participative or shared decision making, since teams essentially represent the most effective structure to enable this collaboration to occur. Conley (1991) reviews the extensive body of research that exists on teacher participation in decision making. Significant research studies supporting a relationship between student learning and teacher collaboration have been done by Rosenholtz (1989) and by Nias, Southworth and Yeomans (1989). Studies on factors affecting teacher participation include a major study by White (1992), and three interesting but somewhat limited studies by Smylie (1992), Mutchler and Duttweiler (1990) and Frase and Sorenson (1992). This research, and in a few cases personal experience (Donaldson, 1993; Mitchell, 1990), provides the basis for numerous works identifying obstacles and offering strategies for increasing school-level collaboration and teacher participation to bring about school improvements (Collins & Fisher, 1991; David, 1991; DuFour & Eaker, 1991; Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991; Glickman, Hayes, & Hensley, 1992; Little, 1990a; Smith & Scott, 1989). Fullan (1993) provides an extremely well-

researched, but conjectural theory regarding collaboration and change, and suggests some interesting strategies for implementing change collaboratively that contradict much of the current literature in this area.

Numerous accounts specify the need for teams in schools as a necessary component of TQM as envisaged by Deming's work (Brigham, 1993; Kaufman & Zahn, 1993; Rhodes, 1992; Schmoker and Wilson, 1993). Conjectural accounts, based on the research on school-based management and effective schools also identify a need for teams in schools (Bailey, 1991, 1992; Clark, 1990; Conley & Bacharach, 1990; Dimmock, 1993; Levine & Eubanks, 1992; Midgley & Wood, 1993; Mojkowski & Fleming, 1988; Monson & Monson, 1993).

Together, this literature has been used to provide background and the theoretical basis for this work.

How Are Empowered Work Teams Relevant To Education?

Since their inception in the 1930s, empowered work teams have been used primarily in a business context (Mohrman, Wohlstetter & Associates, 1994). It is for this reason that they will first be examined within the field of business. This will be followed by an examination of their potential applicability to the field of education.

What are Empowered Work Teams?

Teams are a familiar concept to everyone, particularly in a sports context. However, even within the realm of sports the concept of what constitutes a team can mean a variety of different things. Torres and Spiegel (1990) illustrate some of these differences in the comparisons they draw between a baseball team, where players interact minimally, and coordination of players is achieved through the design of the game; a football team,

which requires organized, systematic teamwork and where player cooperation and collaboration are achieved through careful planning; and a basketball team where players are required to achieve spontaneous teamwork, with players mutually and simultaneously adjusting to the changing circumstances of the game. Similarly, in an organizational or work context, the term has been used to describe a variety of structures ranging from a mere group of people with a common assignment to the description provided by Katzenbach and Smith (1993) who define a team as "a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable" (p.45).

When a team is empowered, the team members are given some level of authority to make decisions in areas relating to the achievement of their purpose. The existence of empowered work teams in an organization implies that management is making certain basic assumptions about employees, and Lawler (1992) identifies three such assumptions:

- if individuals are given challenging work that gives them a customer to serve and a business to operate they can and will control their own behavior
- individuals can exercise considerable amounts of self-control. They may need supervision initially to organize, train and lead employees and at times to deal with coordination, conflict and some customer interface issues.
- individuals can add value to a product by being asked to use their minds as well as their hands. (p.29)

Weisborg (1987, cited in Scarr, 1992) suggests that empowered work teams are a reaction to bureaucracy with its authoritarian management style and fragmented work, and he compares them to bureaucracies in this way:

> ...work team organizations broaden and integrate responsibilities. While bureaucracies focus on inputs and processes, work teams emphasize outcomes. While bureaucracies define the process for employees, work team members create their own process. Members of work groups possess numerous skills and have relative autonomy and adequate information to make decisions for various tasks or services. They focus on what needs to be done as well as how they'll work together to get it done. (p.68)

The degree to which teams are empowered to carry out their functions can vary widely within an organization and between organizations. Different team structures reflecting different levels of empowerment are appropriate under different circumstances but Lawler (1992) warns that "for teams to feel responsibility for the work, they must make important decisions about how the work is done and they must feel in control of the work process" (p.92). Further, as Wellins et al. (1991) state: "In many professional and managerial positions there is no limit to the amount of empowerment that is possible through increases in job responsibility"(p.22).

There is general agreement in the literature that for an organization to really benefit from employee involvement, teams must be empowered to the extent that they have the authority to make all the decisions regarding the production of a defined product or the delivery of a defined service (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993; Lawler, 1992; Moran & Musselwhite, 1988; Orsburn et al, 1990; Quick, 1992; Torres, 1990; Wellins et al, 1991). This is well illustrated by the results of a major study carried out by Levine and Tyson in 1990 (cited in Lawler) which show that employee participation is more likely to produce a significant, long-lasting increase in productivity "when it involves decision-making processes of substantial influence rather than simply consultative arrangements" (p.47).

Torres (1990), Wellins et al (1991), Orsburn et al (1990), and Hicks and Bone (1990) do not consider a team to be really empowered until it reaches the stage of self-management or self-direction. With only minor variations, these authors would agree with Hicks and Bone that self-managing or self-directed work teams are "...small autonomous work groups that contract with higher management to take complete responsibility for a product, project or service. ...Self -managing work teams also take on varying degrees of

management responsibility" (p.i).   Wellins et al. provide a good summary of the distinguishing characteristics of self-directed work teams:

- They are empowered to share various management and leadership functions.
- They plan, control and improve their own work processes.
- They set their own goals and inspect their own work.
- They often create their own schedules and review their performance as a group.
- They may prepare their own budgets and coordinate their work with other departments.
- They usually order materials, keep inventories, and deal with suppliers.
- They frequently are responsible for acquiring any new training they might need.
- They may hire their own replacements or assume responsibility for disciplining their own members.
- They – not others outside the team – take responsibility for the quality of their products or services. (pp.4-5)

Lawler (1992) identifies four elements that he feels must be decentralized throughout the organization if teams are to be able to function effectively as self-managing units. Wohlstetter and Mohrman (1993) summarize these four requisite conditions in this way:

- power to make decisions that influence organizational practices, policies and directions:
- knowledge that enables employees to understand and contribute to organizational performance including technical knowledge to do the job or provide the service, interpersonal skills, and managerial knowledge and expertise;
- information about the performance of the organization, including revenues, expenditures, unit performance, and strategic information on the broader policy and economic environment; and
- rewards that are based on the performance of the organization and the contributions of individuals. (p.1)

Further, Lawler suggests that these elements are interdependent.   He provides the following formula for determining the level of involvement that exists in an organization:

Involvement = Information x Knowledge x Power x Rewards

He uses multiplication in the formula because he believes that if one element is missing, the presence of the other three will have little or no value in terms of employee

,involvement, and consequently in terms of increasing organizational effectiveness. In concrete terms, giving employees the power to make decisions without also providing them with the information and knowledge they need to make effective decisions, will not result in improved company performance.

Lawler (1992) refers to the use of self-managed work teams in an organization as a high involvement approach to management – an approach which focuses on teams and ensures that team members have adequate amounts of power, knowledge, information and rewards. The phrase "high involvement management" will be used throughout this paper to refer to management practices which facilitate the collaborative involvement of employees through their participation on self-managed work teams.

Why Have Empowered Work Teams Been Introduced Into Many Organizations?

Bureaucratic, control-oriented management structures and practices are no longer effective in today's turbulent, customer oriented environment. If organizations are to compete effectively in this new environment they must find new organizational structures that will not only enable them to respond quickly and effectively to changes in the environment, but that will actually enable them to capitalize on these changes (see Kayser, 1994; Katzenbach & Smith, 1993; Lawler, 1992; Moran & Musselwhite, 1989; Wellins et al., 1991). No longer can companies afford to leave the decision making to just a few people, for as Scholtes (1988) states, "rarely does a single person have enough knowledge or experience to understand everything that goes on in a process" (p.2-7). To succeed today, organizations will have to make more effective use of their people resources as indicated by Blanchard (cited in Kayser) when he says: "Companies need those employees who are closest to the action to be fully engaged in striving to bring their best thinking to

the organization's most pressing needs" (p.vii), and by Katzenbach and Smith who remark that: "Most leaders today cannot succeed without the participation and insights of people across the broad base of the organization" (p.17).

Organizations that are succeeding in today's competitive environment not only understand the benefits that can result from employee involvement, but also that these benefits can be greatly increased through the collaborative efforts of these individuals. Kayser (1994) suggests this when he says, "individuals must interact to develop even better decisions than any one employee could achieve on his or her own" (p.vii). The performance challenges that face large companies in every industry – customer service, technological change, competitive threats, and environmental constraints – demand the kind of responsiveness, speed, on-line customization, and quality that is beyond the reach of individual performance (Katzenbach & Smith,1993; Lawler, 1992; Wellins et al., 1991). Moran and Musselwhite (1988) and Quick (1992) would agree with Kayser when he states: "The pathway to competitive success is flatter, flexible, empowered organizations emphasizing teamwork and collaboration" (p.4). Katzenbach and Smith firmly believe that teams outperform individuals acting alone or in larger organizational groupings. Wellins et al. provide the following explanation for this:

> Teams can communicate better, tackle more opportunities, find better solutions, and implement actions more quickly. ...Members are often more engaged, alert, proactive, knowledgeable, and generally better able to respond to varying conditions than traditionally organized work forces. (p.11)

Evidence that many companies are moving in the direction of teams is provided by a study of 109 Canadian Conference Board Associate organizations, carried out by Booth (1994), who discovered that "in an era of stiff competition involving well-organized players, team-based work and team contribution figure prominently among organizations' strategies to improve their performance" (p.1).

To companies considering changing to a team-centered environment a word of caution is provided by many authors and clearly stated by Katzenbach and Smith (1993) who remind organizations that teams are not an end in themselves; performance "is the primary objective *while a team remains the means, not the end*" (p.12).

Advantages of Empowered Work Teams

Collaboration, and the synergy that results from this collaboration, is the primary benefit of empowered work teams (Johnson, Snyder & Anderson, 1992; Kayser, 1994; Maeroff, 1993; Quick, 1992). Schneider (1994) defines synergy in this way:

> *Synergy* means the simultaneous action of separate agencies, a combined or cooperative action of force–to work together. Together they have a greater total effect than the sum of their individual effects. Simply expressed, synergy occurs when 2 + 2 = 5. (p.45)

Other major benefits relate to the ability of empowered teams to address the four areas of performance identified by Wellins et al. (1991) and Lawler (1992) as critical to the organization's success in competing with other companies – cost, high-quality products and services, innovation, and speed. In reviewing the literature in this area, the following benefits are mentioned consistently:

1. *Reduced costs.* Hicks and Bone (1990), Torres and Spiegel (1990) and Lawler (1992) all suggest that lower costs can result when empowered teams take on many of the tasks previously performed by management, enabling organizations to eliminate some layers of management. However, Wellins et al. (1992) warn that employees cannot take on additional management tasks while maintaining all of their current duties. They emphasize that while the number of managers may be reduced, the number of team members may have to be increased to maintain the workflow. On the other hand, Katzenbach and Smith (1993) do not view empowerment as a way to reduce management and suggest that "those who see teams as a replacement for hierarchy are

missing the true potential of teams" (p.5). Lawler suggests that an alternate way of

looking at the issue of cost is through a value-added framework which he explains in

this way: "when costs are high and competition is global, then employees must think,

solve problems, and control themselves, so they can add value to the product to

compete with low-wage employees elsewhere in the world" (p.34).

2. *Greater productivity.* Moran and Musselwhite (1988) suggest that this probably

results from the increased sense of job ownership that accompanies membership on an

empowered team, as Wellins et al. (1991)explain:

> Workers recognize that in an empowered team environment they have the
> opportunity to participate, to learn different job skills and to feel like a valuable
> part of their organization. The sense of job ownership resulting from the team
> concept has led to an emphasis on continuous improvement, which in turn has led
> to amazing leaps in quality, productivity, and service. (pp.10-11)

Increased productivity also occurs because empowerment addresses the needs of

intelligent workers for psychological enrichment and control in their lives, and results

in workers who are more motivated, have higher self-esteem, and who take greater

pride in their work. (Hicks and Bone, 1990; Lawler, 1992; Wellins et al., 1991)

3. *Increased customer satisfaction.* This results because team members have a high

concern for quality. Not only do team members have as Lawler (1992) suggests

"increased opportunities to solve problems concerning quality" (p.98), they also have

greater authority and control over their own work processes and the people closest to

the customer are in the best position to know the customer's needs and wants (Torres

& Spiegel, 1990). Katzenbach and Smith (1993) suggest increased quality is an

inevitable result because team members "bring together complementary skills and

experiences that, by definition, exceed those of any individual on the team" (p.18).

4. *Innovation.* Lawler (1992) points out that while control-oriented organizations may make decisions faster, they seldom get the decision implemented effectively because the employees have no input into the decision, and consequently they have no commitment to implement it or see that it operates effectively. He lists the following reasons, based on his own research, for believing that employee involvement will generally produce more and better changes:

- It encourages innovation, change, and problem-solving activity to take place throughout the organization. It simply involves more people in the process, thus creating more opportunity for innovations to be developed.
- In many cases the people who actually work with the customers and products know more about the way the organization operates than individuals in staff and senior management roles and therefore, are in a better position to make suggestions and develop innovations regarding modifications to products and services than others are.
- Research shows that innovation is most common when successful innovation is rewarded and good risk taking is not punished. (p.40)

5. *Speed.* Lawler (1992) points out that since employees at all levels of the organization are empowered to respond directly and immediately to ongoing events, they can quickly respond to problems that arise, or as Hicks and Bone (1990) would say, teams "self-correct quickly". Katzenbach and Smith (1993) also suggest that in jointly developing clear goals and approaches, teams establish communications that enable them to be "flexible and responsive to changing events and demands...teams can adjust their approach to new information and challenges with greater speed, accuracy and effectiveness than can individuals caught in the web of larger organizational connections" (p18)

Two additional benefits resulting from empowered work teams are identified as:

1. *Improved employee relations.* Katzenbach and Smith (1993) and Hicks and Bone (1990) acknowledge that employees experience higher job satisfaction in a team environment because as Lawler (1992) states "teams can satisfy individuals' needs for

social interaction and belonging as well as their needs for challenging work" (p.99). Improved employee relations also result from the fact that teams are congruent with democratic values about decision making and respect for individual rights (Lawler, 1992). One other important factor relating to job satisfaction is emphasized by Katzenbach and Smith (1993) when they point out that "teams have more fun" (p.18).

2. *Willingness to change.* Individual behavioral change occurs more readily in the team context. Katzenbach and Smith (1993) report that "the same team dynamics that promote performance also support learning· and behavioral change and do so more effectively than larger organizational units or individuals left to their own devices" (p.16). They suggest the following reasons why behavioral change occurs more readily in the team context:

- because of their collective commitment, teams are not as threatened by change as are individuals left to fend for themselves.
- because of their flexibility and willingness to enlarge their solution space, teams offer people more room for growth and change than do groups with more narrowly defined task assignments associated with hierarchical job assignments
- because of their focus on performance, teams motivate, challenge, reward, and support individuals who are trying to change the way they do things. (p.19)

TQM and Teamwork

Many organizations are now moving towards or have embraced the concepts of Total Quality Management (TQM) because they have found out that as Lawler (1992) indicates "traditional management has trouble producing both the kind of continuous improvement that is required for an organization to remain competitive and the high-quality, low cost, quick responses to technology and customers that are increasingly important" (p.xiii). Based on her study of 109 Canadian organizations, Booth (1994) reports: "Focus on customer satisfaction has also led to a dramatic shift away from traditional management styles towards the concepts enshrined in total quality management.

...96% of companies indicated that a learning-work system that represents a continuous effort to improve products, services and processes was mandatory" (p.1).

A basic component of TQM is teamwork. Schmoker and Wilson (1993) explain that "Deming's work emphasizes the advantages of teamwork, of investing in ongoing training for all employees to increase their value to the company, of an insistence that research and employee-gathered data guide and inform every decision and every improvement effort" (p.390). As for companies that have adopted the TQM philosophy, but not experienced success, Schmoker and Wilson attribute their failure to the fact that "management has adopted the trappings of Deming's work without being willing to redistribute power and place unprecedented levels of trust in employees" (p.390).

Lawler (1992) believes that many of the principles and statistical controls of TQM fit well with a high involvement management approach and can help improve a team's ability to understand and improve their work processes and become more self-managing. He feels that while total quality programs represent a step towards high involvement they "do not generally lead to a sufficiently radical restructuring of the entire organization to produce all the competitive advantages that result when employees have more information, knowledge, power, and rewards" (p. xii). As Holpp (1992) explains: "You cannot have self-directed teams without an obsession with quality, but you can throw your resources into the quality ring without swearing allegiance to self-directed teams" (p.73). Holpp would agree with Lawler in his identification of the following key differences between TQM and a high involvement approach to management.

- TQM limits employee involvement to making suggestions and controlling certain elements of the production process and the quality-control process. It does not suggest like a high involvement approach that the organization be restructured and redesigned to emphasize employees having the information, knowledge, power and rewards that will give them a business experience.

- TQM is more comfortable for management because it does not push so much power to employees.
- TQM can be a first step towards high involvement, or it may be as far as an organization wants to go. However, if an organization does complex work, faces a turbulent environment, has to react quickly and must continuously improve its costs and quality, then high involvement seems the best approach.
- TQM fits well with Japanese culture. High involvement represents a way of achieving competitive advantage that is Western in origin and values. (p.328)

Lawler would support Holpp's suggestion that the best possible situation would be an organization where empowered work teams and TQM work in harmony, "where everyone speaks the common language of quality, and communication is enhanced by small, interdependent work units that are close to one another, their process and their customers" (p.75).

What Factors Support The Appropriateness Of Empowered Work Teams In Schools?

Educational researchers are pointing to the fact that schools, like private sector organizations, are finding themselves in a changing environment, with increased demands, critical economic challenges, new and widely available technology, and a more experienced and more highly educated teaching work force (Futrell, 1988). As with other organizations, a primary challenge facing schools is the need to show greatly improved outcomes for the resources expended. To assist schools in addressing these increased expectations, Mohrman et al. (1992) make the following suggestion to educators:

A lesson from the private sector is that such a noncontinous improvement in performance levels can be attained only by making fundamental changes in the architecture and software of the firm. Levels must be reduced, processes must be streamlined, a greater percentage of the firm's resources must be applied to the fundamental transformation process of the firm, and less to the control of its participants. Employees must be able to contribute a much wider range of skills and must be empowered and motivated to do so (p.358).

These suggested changes, which have already been implemented by many successful private-sector organizations, have been referred to as high involvement management, a practice that decreases centralized control to encourage self-management by teams of employees (Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1993). Rhodes (1992) and Bailey (1992) also support the notion of decentralization and employee involvement in schools, and would agree with Mutchler and Duttweiler (1990) who note that "some researchers and practitioners see the emergence of teams as a means for providing maximum opportunity for teachers to participate in and work harmoniously in planning, performing, controlling, and improving the instructional program" (p.14). Scarr (1992) concurs: "If corporate America can use teams to break down the functional barriers that limit participation, stifle productivity, and complicate communication," then we should be able to use them "to crack the walls that segment education." (p.68). At the same time, while Dufour and Eaker (1991), Mohrman et al. (1992) and Maeroff (1993) would all agree that the business model of team building is relevant to schools, they warn against using it as a template, and encourage instead the development of a new approach that recognizes the uniqueness of school teaching and of conditions in schools. As Maeroff points out, "the mission of changing children's lives cannot possible be equated to the goal of accumulating larger profits" (p.xvii). In addition, as Mohrman et al. explain:

> There are several aspects of educational organizations that are not analogous to the private-sector organizations in which high-involvement approaches have been most widely practiced. The political nature of education and schools, the diversity of stakeholders, the lack of consensus about measures to be optimized, and the fact that historically schools have not seen themselves as optimizing resources all must be taken into account. (p.359).

Research shows that empowered work teams are not appropriate in every organization or in every situation within an organization (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993; Lawler, 1992; Moran & Musselwhite,1989; Orsburn et al, 1990). Studies of

decentralization in the private sector suggest that a high involvement approach based on teams is most appropriate in organizations where the nature of the work involves (1) a high degree of interdependence between areas, (2) complex knowledge, (3) uncertainty in day-to-day tasks, and (4) a rapidly changing environment (Conley & Bacharach, 1990; Lawler, 1992; Mohrman et al., 1992; Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1993). To decide whether or not this approach is suited to educational organizations, it is necessary to determine if these conditions are present in schools. Scarr (1992) and Conley and Bacharach would agree with the results of an assessment carried out by Mohrman et al. (1992) which shows that there is a great deal of interdependence inherent in the task of educating in that "various educators deal with the same raw material (the student), and their actions, standards, assignments, and instructional approaches have at least a cumulative and probably an interactive effect on the student's education" (p.353). This assessment also shows that educational jobs involve complex knowledge and skills in that "teachers are required to simultaneously focus on the characteristics of the content that is being taught, diverse materials that are being used, the varying characteristics of the individual learners, the instructional processes, and the group processes that are established in the classroom" (p.354). Finally, it shows that the task of education requires a great deal of on-line uncertainty reduction and they list a number of indicators of this including figuring out each student's different set of capabilities and cognitive style, daily determining each student's emotional and energy state, and ascertaining which educational technology (pedagogy) might be most effective with each individual student.

At the present time, research that directly supports the use of teams in schools is somewhat limited. On the other hand, there is a relatively large body of research identifying the need for more collaboration or teacher participation in decision making in education (Conley, 1991; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991). Since one of the primary benefits

resulting from an empowered work team structure is collaboration, I have incorporated the results of this research into a justification for the appropriateness of empowered work teams in schools. This position can be supported by Mutchler and Duttweiler (1990) who indicate that in order to implement shared decision making, schools need to find new ways of organizing "to create an open, collaborative mode of work that replaces that of isolation and powerlessness" (p.16). This notion is reiterated by Scarr (1992) and Bailey (1991) who suggest that teams would have the effect of breaking down the customary isolation that most teaching positions inculcate and creating a new structure for participation and involvement.

While researchers report that schools that have actually implemented collaboration, shared decision making, participatory management or teamwork are the exception rather than the rule (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991: Rosenholtz, 1989), studies of these schools have demonstrated the following benefits:

- Collaboration eliminates teacher isolation, a factor that creates job dissatisfaction in many teachers (Frase & Sorenson, 1992; White, 1992).

- By empowering teachers and reducing the uncertainties of a job that must otherwise be faced in isolation, collaborative cultures and team building create better learning environments and result in improved student achievement (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Lieberman, 1991; Nias et al., 1989; Rosenholtz, 1989; Little, 1990; White,1992).

- Teachers in schools with collaborative cultures become much better, while teachers in schools without collaborative cultures fail to grow or become worse (Rosenholtz, 1989; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991).

- In schools where teachers work together, teachers understand that teaching is inherently difficult, that teachers never stop learning to teach, that receiving and giving help is not a sign of incompetence, that improvement in teaching is a collective rather

than an individual enterprise, and that analysis, evaluation, and experimentation in concert with colleagues are conditions under which teachers improve (Lieberman, 1991; Nias et al., 1989; Rosenholtz, 1989).

- When teachers experience working together, they begin to see how other adults can be important to them (Lieberman quoted in Brandt, 1989).

- Team building increases teachers respect for colleagues as individuals and as professionals (Lieberman, 1991).

- Shared decision making mobilizes a group of talented people whose contributions have previously been limited by the traditional structure (Lieberman, 1991).

- Teacher participation in decision making gives administration access to critical information closest to the source of many problems of schooling, resulting in better quality decisions. (Smylie, 1992).

- Collaborative cultures facilitate a commitment to change and improvement (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Lieberman, 1991).

- Participation on a team can result in an increased sense of self-efficacy or self-esteem in teachers.(Dimmock, 1993; Lieberman, 1991; White, 1992).

- Participation in decision making promotes a commitment to the decisions that are made and increases the motivation to carry them out (Dufour & Eaker, 1991; Smylie, 1992).

- Collaborative cultures create an environment of continuous improvement where teachers are always searching out ways to improve their practice (Bailey, 1991; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Maeroff, 1993; Rhodes, 1992).

- Being on a team increases the recognition among teachers that their responsibility extends beyond their own classrooms (Maeroff, 1993).

- Increased decision making authority increases teachers enthusiasm for teaching (Little, 1990a; White, 1992).

- Being on a team encourages teachers to take a broader focus and to stop looking at isolated parts of a student or process (Scarr 1992).

- The creation of teams forces schools to look at their goals, the particular needs of that school and figure out what they are really trying to accomplish (Bailey, 1992).

- The peer group pressure that exists in teams has been found to be one of the strongest motivators for individuals (Dufour & Eaker, 1991).

- Teams encourage the development of the leadership potential of a large number of teachers (Dufour & Eaker, 1991).

School-Based Management and Empowered Work Teams

While the nature of teaching supports empowered work teams, the current organizational structure does not. Mohrman et al. (1992) explain:

> High involvement is made possible when units at different levels of aggregation (classroom, teams, schools) have clear outcome responsibility for delivering a defined set of services to a defined population. This logic may call for a fundamental restructuring of education. (p.355)

School-based management is the structural reform mandated by the Alberta Government to decentralize school governance in the province, with the goal of improving the quality of education. School-based management is based on the educational philosophy that local control of the schools improves educational quality. It is generally defined as a process of decentralization in which the school becomes the primary unit of management and educational improvement and relies on the redistribution of decision making authority as the primary means through which improvements might be stimulated and sustained (Clark, 1990; Malen et al., 1990; Mutchler & Duttweiler, 1990). School-based management is understood to be a process with a variety of components including

involvement, through the establishment of school advisory councils and teacher involvement in decision making, empowerment, restructuring and accountability (Clark, 1990; Mojkowski & Fleming, 1988). The intent of school-based management is that decisions should be made by the individuals closest to the effects of the decision (Clark, 1990; O'Neil, 1994).

In assessing the effectiveness of school-based management, Malen et al.(1990), Wohlstetter and Mohrman (1993) and Wohlstetter and Odden (1992) all report that for the most part, the anticipated school improvements have not materialized. In analyzing the reasons for the failure of school-based management to result in significant school improvements Malen et al. (1990) would agree with the following assessment by Wohlstetter and Mohrman:

> In the educational arena, school-based management has been viewed largely as a political reform that transfers power (authority) over budget, personnel and curriculum to individual schools. Little attention has been given to empowering school sites with control over information, professional development (knowledge) or compensation systems (rewards). Furthermore, when SBM programs are analyzed, the general conclusion is that the extent of decision-making responsibility transferred to site teachers and administrators is limited. (p.2)

The problem seems to be then, that most efforts to implement school-based management are focusing on issues of power and control rather than focusing on the critical components of teacher decision making and empowerment, and the issues that really affect teaching and learning (Clark, 1990; Conley & Bacharach, 1990; Johnson, Snyder & Anderson, 1992; Midgely and Wood, 1993; Mohrman & Wohlstetter, 1994; Mutchler & Duttweiler, 1990). Levine and Eubanks (1992) and Lane and Epps (1992) add that it is this focus on faculty participation in decision making, which has frequently been cited in the effective schools literature as an important consideration in school improvement efforts, that gives school-based management its potential to bring about school

improvement. Research by Wohlstetter (cited in O'Neil, 1994) indicates that effective school-based management sites "tend to make wide use of committees and work groups. This ensures that many faculty members have a voice, and their expertise makes the decisions more informed ones" (p.8). In her study of the "Schools for Tomorrow...Today" project in New York City, Lieberman (1991) reports that the success of the project demonstrates that "shared governance, based on authentic communication and genuine collaboration, can be the engine that creates the kinds of learner-centered schools that school people want and children need" (p.xi). These results clearly demonstrate that while school-based management provides a decentralized structure, unless it is accompanied by a high-involvement approach to management, the likelihood that school improvement will result is minimal.

One major factor that has been identified in the successful implementation of school-based management has been the school's readiness. Clark (1990) suggests that "the success of the implementation of site-based management will be dependent upon the internal context of a school" (p.7). She suggests that before designing a school-based management program it is advisable to establish which school factors are conducive to change and innovation, and then assess the degree to which these factors exist in the school. Along with Collins and Fisher (1991) and Malen et al. (1990) she suggests that evidence of readiness might include previous successful experience with participative decision making; a positive school climate, marked by high staff morale, job satisfaction, and mutual trust and respect; the availability of resources; and, strong, supportive leadership. This suggests that establishing empowered teams in schools might be a good first step in the transition to effective school-based management.

What Conditions Need To Be In Place For An Organization To Effectively Implement Empowered Work Teams?

What Areas of the Organization Need to be Congruent With Employee Involvement?

Organizations that are considering implementing teams are encouraged to conduct a feasibility study to determine whether the conditions in the organization favor empowerment, and to focus efforts on changing the conditions that do not (Booth, 1994; Lawler, 1992; Orsburn et al., 1990). As Wohlstetter and Mohrman (1993) warn, the transformation to a high involvement organization "eventually involves all organizational components, including strategy, structure, technology, processes, rewards and other human resources systems. All of these components need to fit with the new way of managing and with each other" (p.6). Wellins et al.(1991) add that "in almost all cases in-place organizational systems will work counter to team implementation....these systems must be identified and modified" (p.116). The following list identifies some of the more important organizational areas that should be examined to ensure that they are congruent with employee involvement:

1. Vision

The organization's vision must be conducive to having empowered teams and it must be clearly understood by everyone in the organization. Booth (1994) believes that this is an essential first step in a successful transition to teams because as Wellins et al. (1991) explain: "The *vision* of the organization tells the team in which direction the organization is going and what it plans to accomplish" (p.86).

The change to empowered teams is such a disruption of the status quo in an organization, it will not be successful unless a compelling case is made for it (Mutchler &

Duttweiler, 1990). Unlike the private sector where the need for this change is clearly indicated by the need to compete and to satisfy customers, the need for schools to change is not so clearly indicated by the marketplace. It is for this reason that Wohlstetter and Mohrman (1993) would argue that in schools, "understanding the need for change is the first step in a transition. Having a vision of what the change entails and what it is trying to accomplish is the next" (p.6).

Nevertheless, developing a shared vision is a particularly important step in schools because as Lieberman (1991) points out, "in normal school practice there are neither the structures nor the expectations that teachers and principals will decide upon common goals" (p.13). A vision is needed to pull people together. A vision also provides direction and ties decisions together, and in this way helps to prevent disjointed and piecemeal decision making which can result in the implementation of incompatible reforms (Midgely & Wood, 1993).

2. Cultural readiness

Teams work only when an organization's culture is ready for them (Booth,1994; Hicks & Bone, 1990; Katzenbach & Smith, 1993; Lawler, 1992; Wellins et al., 1991). Readiness in schools would be indicated by a willingness to support norms of collegiality and collaboration.

Moran and Musselwhite (1988) indicate that the presence of management-employee trust is a critical element, and Lieberman (1991) would add that trust among employees themselves is equally critical for as Bailey (1991) points out, "without trust, respect and cooperation, all forms and structures designed to increase involvement will be for naught" (p.92).

Most research on school culture would indicate that at the present time the culture in most schools does not support norms of collegiality and collaboration (Mutchler &

Duttweiler, 1990; Rhodes, 1992). Current norms, that would work against teamwork include:

- teacher isolation, individualism and self-reliance (Conley, 1991; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Lieberman, 1991; Nias et al., 1989; Rhodes, 1992; Rosenholtz, 1989);

- classroom privacy and autonomy (Frase & Sorenson, 1992; Smylie, 1992);

- opposition to peer evaluation (Smylie, 1992);

- no tradition of public argument as a means of resolving differences and arriving at decisions (Lieberman, 1991);

- highly hierarchical structure with clear lines of authority which are seldom challenged (Lane & Epps, 1992; Lieberman, 1991; Ogawa & Malen, 1989);

- individual classroom rather than school-wide focus, with the result that teachers often lack a schoolwide perspective on many problems and awareness of possibilities for change (Lane & Epps, 1992; Lieberman, 1991); and,

- individual classroom rather than school-wide sense of responsibility (Lane & Epps, 1992; Mutchler & Duttweiler, 1990).

3. Management support

Management support is critical to the implementation of empowered work teams (Moran & Musselwhite, 1988; Orsburn et al., 1990; Torres, 1990). Hicks and Bone (1990) define support as meaning, "management recognizes the need for self-managing teams and values their contribution...is willing to sponsor self-managing teams (without interfering) and is committed to helping them succeed" (p.13). Lieberman (1991) also points out the need for a significant degree of continuity in administrative leadership throughout the transition period.

Katzenbach and Smith (1993), Booth (1994) and Mohrman et al. (1992) identify a new role for managers in high involvement organizations, which Lawler (1992) explains is

"to provide the leadership that replaces the bureaucratic controls and structures of a traditional organization" (p.xiv). That is, managers must be prepared to lead the transformation by sharing their power and authority and by supporting the movement of information, knowledge, power and rewards to their employees (Booth, 1994; Hicks & Bone, 1990; Katzenback & Smith, 1993; Lawler, 1992; Wellins et al, 1991). As Booth (1994) succinctly states: "managers must learn to communicate, coach and nurture" (p.3).

Wellins et al. (1991) and Orsburn et al. (1990) suggest that if the shift to empowered teams is to be successful, it is important for leaders to have clearly defined roles relative to those of the team. They also indicate that it is important for leaders to recognize that their roles will continue to change as the team moves along the continuum towards empowerment. To be successful in today's high involvement organization, managers will need to see their leadership role in much the same way as Lao-Tzu (cited in Wellins et al., 1991), a sixth century BC Chinese philosopher, describes it: "A leader is best when people barely know he exists, not so good when people obey and acclaim him, worse when they despise him...But of a good leader, who talks little, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: We did this ourselves" (p.114).

If participatory structures are to be set up in schools, school principals will need to recognize the need for teacher participation in decision making and value their contributions (Conley & Bacharach, 1990). They will need to have enough confidence to accept the idea of a team of teachers exercising greater authority and they will need to recognize that in sharing the power to make decisions, they actually gain power for the implementation of the decision (Dufour & Eaker, 1991; Maeroff, 1993; Mutchler & Duttweiler, 1990). Once the decision has been made to move to a structure that encourages more teacher involvement, principals will have to provide leadership for the

organizational transition, and provide support to the school teams in exercising their expanded decision making authority and responsibilities (Mojkowski and Fleming, 1988). Principals will have to develop the skills that are essential to successful empowerment: delegating, stretching the abilities of others, and encouraging educated risk taking (Dufour and Eaker, 1991; Maeroff, 1993) In addition, they will have to learn to exert their leadership through their influence as a group member rather than through their position (Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1993). However, Dufour and Eaker (1991) also point out that even in empowering teachers, the principal must maintain responsibility for ensuring that the values of the school are observed and that progress is being made towards the school's vision. In defining the importance of the principal's role in a high involvement organization Dufour and Eaker(1991) cite Rosabeth Moss Kanter's important message: "Freedom is not the absence of structure – letting employees go off and do whatever they want – but rather a clear structure which enables people to work within established boundaries in a creative and autonomous way" (p.52).

Orsburn et al. (1990) warn that if managers actively oppose employee involvement, work teams should not be introduced. In their review of the literature on problems and obstacles to empowerment in schools, Lane and Epps (1992) found that the reluctance of administrators at all levels to give up their traditional prerogatives was one of the most frequently cited problems.

4. Time and resources.

These represent two of the most important elements in enabling the transition to teams. It will usually take three to five years for a team to become fully functional (Moran & Musselwhite,1988; Orsburn et al., 1990; Wellins et al, 1991; Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1993). New team members need time to scan and collect ideas regarding new ways of doing things, time for training in new skills, time to meet, and time to "play out

the group dynamic" that is necessary to ensure that sound consensus decision making takes place (Lieberman, 1991; Mutchler & Duttweiler, 1990). This all represents time for activities that are not currently considered part of the job of teachers or administrators (David, 1991). The time required to develop a fully functional team is also an important consideration because it means there must be a great deal of stability in the organization, for as Holpp (1992) points out "the synergy that develops between members does not transfer easily to new recruits" (p.75). This need for continuity will certainly be an issue in schools where teachers tend to be quite transient.

Other resources that have been identified as being important in the successful transition to teams include:

- Physical facilities: The physical layout of the facility needs to be designed to facilitate the team's ability to work together. Lawler (1992) recommends that "walls and other blocks to communication need to be minimized or eliminated as do symbols that indicate differences in power and status" (p.315). In schools, just locating available space for teams to work together can be an issue (Lieberman, 1991)

- Funding: The experience in industry has been that organizations need to make major investments to provide managers and team members with the necessary time and training to enable them to function effectively in a team environment (Hicks & Bone, 1990; Lane & Epps, 1992; Lawler, 1992; Lieberman, 1991; Wellins et al, 1991). Malen and Ogawa (1992) clearly express the need for funding when they say:

> Without sizable and stable financial investments, site participants cannot purchase the time, technical assistance, instructional materials, or other forms of support they need to make major changes in schools. Site participants end up trying to transform schools on overtime, tired time, or "spare" time. They end up trying to engender improvement without the resources needed to realize improvements in schools. This won't hold out in the long run. (pp.203-204)

,• Facilitators: The advantages of having an outside facilitator to guide the process of team building are outlined by Moran and Musselwhite (1988), Lieberman (1991), and Glickman et al. (1992) and encouraged by Orsburn et al. (1990) when they suggest "organizations going to self-directed work teams will need experienced help throughout the transition.... This is a journey that benefits from guides who know the territory" (p.25) However, because every organization is different, Wellins et al. (1991) advise that facilitators should be used only as process facilitators, not as experts.

5. Training.

Inadequate training was identified as one of the biggest hindrances to team performance. Team members need intensive, long-term training in interpersonal and team skills, leadership and management skills, technical skills, and measurement and statistical process control (Booth, 1994; Hicks & Bone, 1990; Holpp, 1992; Katzenbach, 1993; Lawler, 1992; Orsburn et al., 1990; Wellins et al., 1991). Moran and Musselwhite (1988) also suggest that training must be provided to help counteract old habits and attitudes, because now "members must be oriented to helping each other get the job done, rather than to individual power and privilege" (p.9). Booth (1994) nicely summarizes the need for training when she says, "Employees must learn a new approach to problem solving, managers must learn to communicate, coach and nurture, and executives must learn a new leadership style" (p.3).

Inadequate training is cited by Lane and Epps (1992) as one of the major obstacles schools have encountered in their efforts to bring about reforms through empowerment. They report that teachers often lack an adequate knowledge base of relevant research to inform decision making. David (1991) also points out that teachers cannot change what they do, unless they are provided with opportunities to increase their technical knowledge

of teaching for as she explains, the biggest barrier to change "is the absence of knowledge and skills needed to do one's job differently" (p.13).

In addition to technical knowledge, adequate attention to training in schools is critical to enable teachers to accept as well as to participate in changing traditional roles, relationships, and behavior (Mutchler & Duttweiler, 1990). Some of the major behavioral changes that must occur in schools if teams are to be effective are identified by Lieberman (1991) and include: "building communication and trust , enabling leadership and initiative to emerge, and learning techniques of communication, collaboration, and conflict resolution" (p.ix). Lieberman identifies conflict resolution skills as being of critical importance because conflict is inevitable in any change process and her research indicates that conflict is one of the most difficult challenges for schools to deal with for two reasons: "(1) Teaching is not simply a craft, but flows from deeply held personal beliefs, and (2) Schools have no tradition of public argument as a means of resolving differences and arriving at decisions. (p.15) Maeroff (1993) underscores the need for sustained professional development for building-based educators because experience has shown him that "for all the promising experimentation and enlightened regulation, we simply cannot get from here to there without those who are responsible for teaching the children" (p.xiii).

6. Information Processes

Booth (1994), Orsburn et al. (1990), and Moran and Musselwhite (1988) all identify the need for a good flow of communication at and to all levels, because as Lawler (1992) explains, "An information system that provides employees with ongoing business information and a sense of the organization's long-term direction is critical to employees' exercising greater self-management and coordinating their work laterally with other employees" (p.xiv). In applying this principle to schools Mohrman et al. (1992) indicate:

...units can be empowered to determine objectives and strategies for achieving them only if they are very well informed about legal and societal requirements and about how they are performing in contrast to other units. Thus, the information-dissemination capabilities of school systems, including the feedback and interpretation of performance results, are critical. (p.358)

7. Performance Management and Reward System

Performance management and reward systems are recognized as being of critical importance in motivating effective team performance. As Schlechty (1990) points out, people know what is important in an organization by what is measured and what is rewarded. Booth (1994) supports Lawler's (1992) position that in an employee involvement environment it is important to base rewards for individuals on skill development and organizational performance, and that the best reward systems operate on "skill-based pay and pay-for-performance approaches that emphasize teamwork and collective responsibility for performance" (p.xiv). Odden and Wohlstetter (1995) indicate that the assumption that intrinsic rewards are all that is needed in education needs to be called into question.

8. Union Participation

Lawler (1992) and Orsburn et al. (1990) suggest along with Moran and Musselwhite (1988) the union leaders "need to be brought into the planning from the very start and kept involved as active partners throughout the process" (p.9).

What are the Characteristics of Employees on Empowered Work Teams?

Selecting members for a team requires the use of different criteria than may be appropriate for selecting individual workers. Orsburn et al (1990) and Wellins et al (1991) indicate that team members need to be selected based on their capabilities, skills, and motivation to work in a team environment. They issue a strong warning that dysfunctional

members can destroy the cohesiveness of a group. Lawler (1992) suggests that individuals that are most likely to function effectively on empowered work teams tend to display the following characteristics:

- They are motivated by intrinsic rewards such as challenging work, feelings of accomplishment, and personal growth.
- They have relatively strong social needs.
- They are capable of self-management and have relatively high levels of self-discipline.
- They are able to solve problems, contribute to group discussions, and perform a wide array of technical work-related activities that contribute to the organization's effectiveness
- They are willing to continue to learn and develop. (pp.53-54)

On a more inspirational level, Fullan (1993) would add to this list of characteristics that the individual should have strong skills in change agentry. By this he means the individual will have a strong sense of personal purpose or vision (shared vision can only occur if you have something to share), inquiry (reflective practice), personal mastery (continual learning) and collaborative skills (ceiling effect on how much you can learn alone).

While teachers may demonstrate many or all of the characteristics listed above, they may still experience great difficulty in working successfully in a team environment. This is probably due to the fact that historically teaching has been a solitary activity, carried out by individuals within a hierarchical structure. This has led to the development of certain attitudes, understandings and beliefs about their own ability and about schools and teaching. To determine whether an individual will function effectively as a team member it will be necessary to determine their willingness to rise above the norms that currently govern most schools. I would suggest that other characteristics that would be needed by team members in a school include:

- a belief in their own capacity to contribute something worthwhile to a team (Fullan, 1993; Smylie, 1992);

- a willingness to challenge traditional patterns of principal authority (Maeroff, 1993; Malen et al., 1990; Smylie, 1992);

- a willingness to judge the work of others and to be judged (Smylie, 1992);

- a willingness to assume responsibilities different from those they traditionally have held (Malen et al., 1990; Mutchler & Duttweiler, 1990);

- openness to change (Maeroff, 1993);

- a willingness to take risks (Maeroff, 1993; Mutchler & Duttweiler, 1992);

- a willingness to accept that conflict is a necessary part of change (Lieberman, 1991);

- high levels of energy, persistence and patience (Maeroff, 1993).

Results of Feasibility Study

Based on the results of the assessment of the current conditions in the organization, the decision to go or not to go ahead with the introduction of empowered work teams needs to be made. If the assessment shows alarmingly low levels of existing employee involvement, or the existence of significant barriers in the current organizational structure, the decision should probably be to take steps to address these issues, either directly or through the introduction of more moderate measures of employee involvement to prepare people for deeper involvement later (Orsburn et al., 1990).

Summary

The research shows that many private sector organizations have successfully implemented empowered work teams and are benefiting from a management approach that fits well with the principles and statistical controls of TQM and results in reduced costs, greater productivity, increased customer satisfaction, greater innovation and speed, improved employee relations and employees who demonstrate more ability to change.

These are all critical factors to the success of an organization in today's turbulent environment.

Schools are also finding themselves in a changing environment, and research suggests that they too could benefit from empowered work teams. A high involvement approach to management has been found to be most appropriate in organizations where the nature of the work involves a high degree of interdependence between areas, complex knowledge, uncertainty in day-to-day tasks, and a rapidly changing environment. All these conditions are present in schools. However, applying a business model to education must be done with caution, and the literature suggests adapting the business model to develop a new approach that recognizes the uniqueness of school teaching and of conditions in schools.

While research supporting the use of teams in schools is limited, there is a large body of research supporting the need to increase teacher collaboration and involvement in decision making. One of the major benefits of the team structure is that it promotes collaboration. The literature on school-based management indicates that one of the main reasons this structural reform has failed to result in significant school improvements is because most of the sites that have implemented school-based management have failed to incorporate the critical components of teacher decision making and empowerment.

The research also demonstrates that if an organization is to benefit from the implementation of empowered work teams, they must ensure that there are no organizational barriers to limit the effectiveness of the team. This means that virtually all in-place organizational systems will need to be examined to ensure they are congruent with employee involvement.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter establishes the purpose of this case study within the context of the larger research study of which it is a part. Theoretical orientation and the research approach selected for the study are outlined, and the role of the researcher is clarified. The chapter concludes with a description of the procedures used for the collection and analysis of the data.

Collaborative Research With School Staffs and University Researchers on School-Based Decision Making

This study forms the initial phase of a collaborative research project designed to facilitate, document and analyze schools' efforts to use collaborative school-based decision making in addressing issues associated with the implementation of school-based management. This larger study consists of four stages:

- Stage One is a case study designed to assess the readiness of the school for collaborative school-based decision making. Work during this phase is intended to establish some base line measures for the school by analyzing and documenting where the school is in terms of teamwork and school-based decision making, and to identify any barriers to teamwork and school-based decision making. At the conclusion of this phase, staffs will use a collaborative school-based decision making process to identify school goals for next year, using the data from the case assessment.

- Stage Two marks the beginning of active collaboration. During this stage staff will be provided with information and encouraged to generate alternative strategies to

achieve their school goals. The final step in this phase is the selection of strategies that the whole staff are willing to implement.

- Stage Three involves planning for the implementation of the chosen strategies.

- Stage Four involves implementation of the strategies, evaluation and the drafting of policy to legitimate the approaches that the staff chose to adopt formally.

This researcher designed Stage One, within the parameters of the overall research project, including the questionnaire and the feedback data charts. A second researcher was involved in the data collection. Each researcher interviewed half the staff in each school, transcribed the tapes, and gave copies of the transcripts to the other. Although the researchers shared the data, each researcher had a different purpose for collecting the data. This researcher was involved exclusively in Stage One and sought to produce a detailed case study of both sites. Researcher number two will be involved primarily in the subsequent stages and therefore used the data as an analytical tool for the development of strategies for Stages Two and Three. While each analyzed their data separately, the involvement of two researchers provided the opportunity for informal debriefings and discussions to occur throughout the data collection phase.

Qualitative Case Study Approach

The intent of the research in Phase One was firstly, to establish what organizational conditions can act as barriers to the introduction of school-based decision making teams into the work environment and then, to determine whether staff members perceived these conditions to be present in each of the schools participating in the study. This focus is encouraged by Booth (1994), Herman (1993), and Orsburn et al. (1990), who all suggest that the first step in implementing a team-centered approach is establishing the readiness of the organization for this approach.

The research in this study was conducted from the perspective of the qualitative or naturalistic research paradigm (Eisner, 1991; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Merriam, 1988). This paradigm was chosen because the research focuses on discovery, insight and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied. Merriam suggests that the research paradigm defines the methods and techniques most suitable for collecting and analyzing data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicate that when the naturalistic research paradigm is followed, the research will be characterized by the following: natural settings, humans as primary data-gathering instruments, use of tacit knowledge, qualitative methods, purposive sampling, inductive data analysis, grounded theory, emergent design, negotiated outcomes, case study reporting mode, idiographic interpretation, tentative application of findings, focus-determined boundaries, and special criteria for trustworthiness. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) and Eisner (1991) qualify this by explaining that while all qualitative research exhibits certain characteristics, every study does not necessarily exhibit all the traits with equal potency. Merriam (1988) identifies the characteristics of qualitative research that figure prominently in case study research as:

1. Qualitative researchers are primarily concerned with *process* rather than outcomes or products.
2. Qualitative researchers are interested in *meaning*–how people make sense of their lives, what they experience, how they interpret these experiences, how they structure their social worlds.
3. The researcher is the *primary instrument* for data collection and analysis.
4. It usually involves *fieldwork*. One must physically go to the people, setting, site, institution ("the field"), in order to observe behavior in its natural setting.
5. In qualitative research one is interested in process, meaning and understanding. Words or pictures rather than numbers are used to convey what the researcher has learned about the phenomenon. Qualitative research is thus descriptive.
6. Qualitative research is largely inductive. This type of research builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, or theories, rather than testing existing theory. (pp.19-20)

In addressing the research of analyzing organizational conditions and the members' perceptions of them, a qualitative case study design was selected as being most appropriate based on Merriam's (1988) description of the purpose of this approach:

> ...investigators use case study design in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and its meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than in outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation (p.xii).

The intent of this research project fits well within the framework of a qualitative case study, in its goal to provide what Stainback and Stainback (1988) describe as an "in-depth, holistic description of events, programs, procedures, and/or philosophies as they operate in context in natural settings" which will enable researchers and participants to understand and make informed decisions about their organization (p.11). The results of this research are intended to enable the teachers and administrators in each of the participating schools to make informed decisions about the best strategies to use in introducing school-based decision making teams into the school.

Focus on the Researcher

It is important to understand fully the role of the researcher in qualitative research, because of the potential strengths and weaknesses that the researcher-as-tool brings to the study. Merriam (1988) indicates that:

> Naturalistic inquiry, which focuses on meaning in context, requires a data collection instrument sensitive to underlying meaning when gathering and interpreting data. Humans are best-suited for this task – and best when using methods that make use of human sensibilities such as interviewing, observing, and analyzing" (p.3).

Because of this focus on "*the self as an instrument*" in qualitative research, Eisner (1991) emphasizes the importance of sensibility and perceptivity in the researcher. This is because, as he says, "the features that count in a setting do not wear their labels on their

sleeves: they do not announce themselves" (p.33). Eisner believes the researcher must have the "ability to make fine-grained discriminations among complex and subtle qualities," an ability he calls "*connoisseurship*" (p.63). By this he means:

> Researchers must see what is to be seen, given some frame of reference and some set of intentions. The self is the instrument that engages the situation and makes sense of it. This is done most often without the aid of an observation schedule; it is not a matter of checking behaviors, but rather of perceiving their presence and interpreting their significance (p.34).

He goes on to note that "without sensibility the subtleties of the social world go unexperienced" (p.34). In a similar vein, Merriam (1988) suggests that the case study researcher must have the following characteristics:

- *Tolerance for ambiguity.* She indicates that this is necessary because "throughout the case study process, from designing the study, to data collection, to data analysis, there are no set procedures or protocols that one follows step by step" (p.37).
- *Good communication skills.* Her definition of a good communicator is someone who "empathizes with respondents, establishes rapport, asks good questions, and listens intently" (p.39).
- *Sensitivity.* Like Eisner, Merriam emphasizes that the researcher must be sensitive to the context and all the variables within it including the physical setting, the people, the overt and covert agendas, the nonverbal behavior. In addition she notes that the researcher must be sensitive to the biases inherent in this type of research "because the primary instrument in qualitative case study research is human, all observations and analyses are filtered through one's worldview, one's values, one's perspective" (p.39).

As a result of this researcher's experience in a school where an attempt was made to introduce teams without first ensuring that the school was in a state of readiness, she was particularly sensitive to the subtleties and nuances which might suggest a lack of readiness on the part of staff members. At the same time, because of this predisposition, she had to be particularly careful not to overreact to possible indicators of a lack of readiness. This was dealt with through triangulation in the study, through her own awareness of this potential bias, and through discussing these "hunches" with the other

researcher. This sensitivity came into play at Town School, for example, where although several committees existed to enable staff members to provide input on issues, one staff member commented on her experience on a committee where "one or two voices were heard more than other people's on staff." This comment alerted the researcher to take a more careful look at what might otherwise appear to be an effective way to increase staff involvement in school decisions. Another example of the need for sensitivity and perceptiveness also occurred at Town School, where two teachers were very involved with team teaching. One of the team members described the attitude of the rest of the staff in this way:

> The attitude towards team teaching, and the attitude that we've gotten is that, "Oh geez, you guys have got an easy job, two of you in one room. So that's the pervasive attitude around this school. You know, forget the fact that fifteen of our students are special needs. And you should actually have two specialists teaching that many kids. And on top of that we've got a regular class. But they don't see that. So they see it as an easy way out ...because if you have two teachers that means one teacher isn't doing anything. We have thirty [students]. And the other fifteen are high needs kids. We've got enough kids for three teachers really. You know, that's the way it seems.

During interviews with other staff members comments were made about the team like, "I'm not calling that necessarily a success," and " they get more attention, more privileges." These types of comments suggested to the researchers that rather than providing a "model" for the rest of the staff, this team might actually represent what Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) refer to as a "balkanized clique," where a team of innovative teachers see themselves as ahead of their colleagues and segment themselves in ways that are detrimental to whole school development. This led the researchers to check more carefully into the effect this existing team might be having on the development of other teams throughout the school..

The ability of the researcher to communicate effectively was critical throughout this study, not only in the areas identified by Merriam which relate primarily to the interview situation, but also in encouraging school staffs to participate in the study, and in presenting the information back to the staff to provide them with a foundation of knowledge about themselves and their school to enable them to make informed decisions about the best strategies to use in introducing school-based decision making teams into the school. While it was necessary to ensure that they had valid information to work from, it was also important to be sensitive to the impact a negative report could have on future efforts to eliminate some of the potential barriers to teaming. It was critical that the staff not perceive the feedback information to be critical of them or their abilities. Therefore, the researcher had to be very careful to present the findings in ways that were non-threatening to the listeners, and would stimulate them into taking the necessary steps to eliminate the barriers.

This researcher certainly had to learn to develop a tolerance for ambiguity. This became easier when she learned that ambiguity was an accepted part of case study research, and did not necessarily represent incompetence on her part.

Sample Selection

Merriam (1988) indicates that nonprobability forms of sampling are consistent with the goals and assumptions of the qualitative research paradigm because "generalization in a statistical sense is not a goal of qualitative research" (p.47). She suggests that the most common form of nonprobability sampling is purposive or criterion-based sampling, where the researcher establishes the criteria necessary for units to be included in the investigation and then selects a sample that matches these criteria. The goal is to "select a sample from which one can learn the most" (Merriam, 1988, p.48).

Gaining access to any schools to carry out the research turned out to be a long and arduous process, taking several months and much negotiation. According to LaRocque (1995), experiencing this much difficulty developing a collaborative research project with school staffs in today's political and fiscal context is not an uncommon experience. Initially, the superintendent of a school district was approached regarding the project. A meeting was held with the district superintendent, associate superintendents and about six administrators from schools in the district who had indicated potential interest in participating in the research project. The intent of this meeting was to enable the researchers to: formally introduce and explain the research project; explain the principles of collaborative action research and clarify the responsibilities of all the participants in a collaborative action research project; make them aware of the critical importance of their own participation for the success of the research project; present and discuss the timeline; respond to questions and concerns; discuss and approve the procedures for carrying out the project, i.e. release time for interviewing teachers, time at staff meetings to fill in the survey or to provide feedback, additional staff meetings, etc.; set up methods for maintaining communication throughout the project; discuss the issue of confidentiality for individual participants and for schools; indicate the feedback that would be provided to participants; discuss distribution of the final report; and, distribute consent forms.

However, because of the diverse agendas of the principals, the wide range of interests displayed by the various schools, and their general lack of agreement regarding the direction the research project should take, the district and school personnel agreed to meet again at a later date to see if common ground could be reached. Ultimately only one school indicated a willingness to participate in the project. This school was selected to participate in the project based on the principal's genuine interest in increasing teacher

,collaboration in decision making through teamwork, and the willingness of the school staff to participate in the study.

The second participating school was selected based on the researcher's knowledge that the principal was currently taking steps in the school to increase teaming and staff involvement in decision making. When approached to participate in the study this principal agreed to participate, but only as far as the questionnaire stage. Upon receiving the initial feedback from the questionnaire, and being made aware of how tenuous any decisions based only on this information would be, he agreed to proceed with all four stages of the project. Once he felt that the school might benefit from participation in the project, he encouraged the rest of the staff to participate in the study.

LaRocque (1995) indicates that having a common purpose is essential to successful collaborations. Since the purpose of the study matched the already established purpose of both school administrators, they recognized that they would benefit from their participation in the study by having outside facilitators to guide the school through the transition phase to school-based decision making teams and ultimately to school-based management.

Ethical Considerations

Selection of subjects

All participants in the study were adults, employed in the participating schools as teachers or school administrators. Within each school, the involvement of each individual was voluntary.

Informed consent

This was assured through a presentation to the school staff and through a formal cover letter and consent form. Through these two processes the participants were provided with the following information:

- background and benefits to be derived from participation in the project;

- the voluntary nature of their participation in the project, and their right to withdraw from it at any time;

- a guarantee of anonymity through the use of aliases, often indicating the opposite gender from that of the interviewee;

- a guarantee that any information or opinions that they disclosed throughout the project would be kept in strict confidence;

- definitions of what would constitute public and confidential information;

- how data would be presented in feedback sessions to maintain anonymity of responses;

- possible risks; and

- how records would be treated and ultimately destroyed.

Data Collection

Data were collected in three ways: a questionnaire, individual interviews, and researcher observations. Using multiple methods of collecting data about the same unit is known as triangulation, and Merriam (1988) suggests that triangulation represents one of the major strengths of case study research. To support this belief she cites Denzin (1970) who explains: "The rationale for this strategy is that the flaws of one method are often the strengths of another, and by combining methods, observers can achieve the best of each, while overcoming their unique deficiencies" (p.69).

The research started with a questionnaire to provide a framework for the study and to ensure that all staff members had certain basic understandings about the nature of the study and the issues that it was addressing. Merriam (1988) indicates that case studies "can also include data gathered by a survey instrument" (p.8), with the responses forming part of the data base for the case study. Merriam cites Kidder and Fine (1987) in noting that "there is nothing mysterious about combining quantitative and qualitative measures. This is, in fact, a form of triangulation that enhances the validity and reliability of one's study" (p.2). This position is also supported by Bogdan and Biklen (1992) and Lincoln and Guba (1985).

The questionnaire was followed up by interviews, conducted by two researchers. Researcher observations were used to provide verification for the data obtained through the other two sources.

Questionnaire

The primary source for the descriptive data was the questionnaire which was developed by the researcher based on similar questionnaires found in the literature on work groups, culture and change (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Herman, 1993; Hicks & Bone, 1990; Katzenbach & Smith, 1993; Orsburn et al., 1990; Quick, 1992; Wellins et al., 1991). The intent of the questionnaire was to assess the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding their school's readiness for collaborative school-based decision making and teams. The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine what percentage of the staff felt the conditions necessary for the successful implementation of teams and shared decision making were in place in their schools, to identify any barriers to the implementation of teams, and to establish a logical starting point to begin working on increasing teacher involvement in the school through school-based decision making teams.

The questionnaire was piloted by a small group of teachers and administrators from various city schools prior to its use in this study. Participants in the pilot study were asked to comment on the clarity of the statements and to recommend improvements. Based on their comments, refinements were made to some of the statements.

In the questionnaire, teachers and administrators in each of the participating schools were asked to indicate their perceptions regarding the degree to which conditions necessary for the effective implementation of teams in an organization already existed in their school. The results of the questionnaire were to be used to provide a framework for further discussions, and to create a visual image for the participants of where they stood in terms of readiness to implement teams. As the assistant principal of one of the schools so aptly expressed, the questionnaire had the effect of "identifying existing strengths to build upon, and areas of weakness to be addressed". The intent was to get as valid a picture as possible of the existing conditions in each school to serve as a starting point for the collaborative action research to follow. While not tested for reliability, this instrument appeared to be quite valid, based on the feedback the researcher obtained from the school administrators in each school, as well as the follow-up information obtained during the interview process. Each interview, in fact, began by asking the interviewee to comment on how accurate and representative the questionnaire results were. Stainback and Stainback (1988) indicate that in qualitative research "findings can be considered valid if there is a fit between what is intended to be studied and what actually is studied" (p.97).

The questionnaire consisted of fifty statements which could be classified under five general categories, each category representing one of the conditions necessary for the effective implementation of teams.

a. Compatible Systems: The statements in this section asked teachers to reflect on whether they felt the following areas supported the use of teams: (1) the physical

plant, (2) the timetable, (3) teacher evaluation procedures, (4) communication, (5) rewards, and (6) budgeting

b. Vision and Goals: The statements in this section were intended to assess whether or not the school had a clear vision which was understood by all, and whether goals and actions were implemented and evaluated based on the vision.

c. Supportive Culture: The statements in this section were intended to assess whether the current school culture supported collaboration among teachers. It was felt that this would be evident by teachers demonstrating support, trust and respect for each other; a willingness to continue to learn and change; successful past experiences with collaboration; and, the successful implementation of decisions that were arrived at by staff members working collaboratively.

d. Level of Empowerment/Administrative Support: The statements in this section were intended to assess staff perceptions of the level of administrative support for teams and shared decision making, and to have staff indicate where they felt their school would be on a continuum of empowerment

e. Individual Commitment/Suitability: The statements in this section were intended to assess whether staff members as whole believed that there were advantages to working on teams, have had successful experiences working on teams, and would be willing to participate on teams and become more involved in decision making.

All the statements were presented in the affirmative so agreement with the statement would indicate the existence, to some degree, of one of the necessary conditions for the successful implementation of teams. Similarly, disagreement with the statement would indicate a barrier to the implementation of teams. In some instances more than one statement addressed a similar element as a check for consistency in responses.

Interviews

Merriam (1988) describes an interview as a "conversation with a purpose" (p.71). That purpose, explain Bogdan and Biklen (1992) is "to gather descriptive data in the subjects' own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world" (p.96). Taylor and Bogdan (quoted in Merriam) indicate that interviewing is the best technique to use when one wants to study "a relatively large number of people in a relatively short period of time" (p.72)

After being presented with the aggregate results of the questionnaire, each participating teacher and administrator in both schools was given a thirty minute interview. During this interview participants were encouraged to: comment on their perceptions of the accuracy of the aggregate results in reflecting the actual conditions in the school; expand on, or add to the statements made in the survey; clarify their responses on the survey with examples from their own experience; and, suggest strategies for creating a state of readiness in the school.

Initially, a semi-structured interview process was used to allow the respondents to express their own understandings in their own terms, as suggested by Stainback and Stainback (1988). Merriam (1988) indicates that a semi-structured interview is "guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, but neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time" (p.74). Consequently, each interviewee was provided with the visual chart of the questionnaire results in each of the five categories, and asked to comment. While participants were given the opportunity to respond spontaneously to the results of the questionnaire in each category, a list of questions had also been prepared to encourage interviewees who were less inclined to talk spontaneously. As Stainback and Stainback indicate "the advantage of increasing structure in interviewing is a corresponding increase in the probability that comparable

data across participants will be collected; however, there is also a corresponding decrease in the probability of gaining an understanding of how each participant him or herself structures the topic under study" (p.53). At City School the interviewees talked well beyond the prepared questions and introduced many of their own concerns and interpretations regarding the issues involved in increasing teacher involvement in decision making at the school. At Town School, fewer of the interviewees talked freely, and the majority preferred to respond directly to the prepared questions. With the permission of each interviewee, an audio recording was made of each interview which was then transcribed and given back to each interviewee to review for accuracy and completeness. According to Stainback and Stainback this represents a test for validity, in that it ensures that there is a fit between what occurs and what is recorded. In addition, researcher notes were taken throughout each interview to supplement the audio recordings. This approach was particularly useful in the interviews with the teacher team from Town School. Each researcher interviewed one team partner, and both noted independently that there was the obvious discrepancy between the verbal and non-verbal messages of the interviewees.

Care was taken by the researcher throughout the interview process, and also in the observations, to take a neutral position in regard to any existing conflict or dissension that was identified. This represented important data to the research study and it was important not to be seen as taking sides on an issue and thus losing understanding for and access to the people representing the other side of the issue (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). This proved to be an important precaution, because there were instances in both schools where interviewees attempted to co-opt the researcher to champion their views with the principal.

Observation

Observations were made in staff meetings, hallways, the office, the staff room and the work area. Interactions among various staff members were studied. Individual and group behaviors were noted. Informal conversations were held with various staff members. During the traveling time to the research site and back to Calgary, the two researchers often discussed these observations and speculated on their meanings. Stainback and Stainback (1988) suggest that conducting qualitative research in teams helps to assure validity which they view as "the fit between what actually occurs in the setting under study and what is recorded as data" (p.101). For the most part these observations were used for background, to clarify and increase the researcher's understanding of the information obtained through the other methods, to generate further questions, and for triangulation, rather than to provide raw data for the study.

Analysis of Data

In analyzing the data collected, the procedures outlined in Merriam (1988) were followed. Merriam indicates that inductive data analysis is consistent with the goals and assumptions of the qualitative or naturalistic research paradigm. Analysis of the data began at the very beginning of the project with the initial contact made with the participating schools and continued to be an ongoing activity throughout the project because as Merriam (1988) indicates, "a qualitative design is emergent" (p.123). The researchers spent many hours, particularly when they were traveling to and from the schools, discussing and comparing what they had observed and experienced at the schools, and developing what Merriam refers to as "emerging insights, hunches, and tentative hypotheses" (p.119). These analyses were then used to identify the information that was still needed and to direct the next steps in the research process.

At the conclusion of the data collection phase, the researcher conducted a more intensive analysis of the data collected through the questionnaire, the interviews and the observations. This involved consolidating, reducing, and to some extent interpreting the data (Merriam, 1988). Taylor and Bogdan (quoted in Merriam) indicate that the goal of data analysis is "to come up with reasonable conclusions and generalizations based on a preponderance of the data" (p.130). The procedures used to conduct this analysis follow. The results of this analysis are outlined in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 of this document.

Questionnaire

Aggregate results for each school were tabulated by totaling the number of responses under each category for each statement.

The percentage of respondents that agreed or strongly agreed with each statement was calculated. These results were presented in the form of charts that showed the percentage of staff members in agreement with each factor. A chart was made up for each of the five major areas of concern. These findings are reported in Chapter 5 of this document. Since agreement with the statements represented the presence of the necessary conditions, it was felt that charts of these percentages would be the best way to present the aggregate results of the questionnaire to the staff in an effective and positive way. Because the questionnaire was designed as the initial phase in a much longer process, it was important to maintain staff enthusiasm at every phase of the research process. There was a concern that if the data was not presented in a positive way it might have the effect of causing participants to loose heart and not want to continue with the process. Merriam (1988) indicates that it is important to keep in mind the audience for whom the study was originally intended when deciding on the level of analysis and the format of the final report.

The charts were first presented to the principal at Town School and to the principal and assistant principal at City School for feedback on their perceptions as to the accuracy of the findings and to provide them with the opportunity to comment on the results or to express concerns. In both cases, the school administrators felt the charts represented a fair and accurate portrayal of the current conditions in their schools. With the approval of the school administrators, the charts were then presented to all the participants in the project

Interview Transcripts and Observation Notes

The transcripts and observation notes for each school were analyzed separately. For each school the process of analysis involved several readings of each transcript and the observer notes, watching for what Bogdan and Biklen (1992) describe as "certain words, phrases, patterns of behavior, subjects' ways of thinking and events [which] repeat and stand out" (p.166).

The next step in the analysis involved developing certain coding categories to represent the topics and patterns that arose in the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Merriam (1988) explains that "devising categories is largely an intuitive process, but it is also systematic and informed by the study's purpose, the investigator's orientation and knowledge, and the constructs made explicit by the participants of the study" (p.133). Glaser and Strauss (quoted in Merriam) explain that these categories should be both "*analytical* – sufficiently generalized to designate characteristics of concrete entities, not the entities themselves, and "*sensitizing* – yielding a meaningful picture abetted by apt illustrations that enable one to grasp the reference in terms of one's own experience" (p.142). In this study, the researcher felt that the categories were somewhat predetermined by the nature of the research question, by the expectations of the

participating schools, and by the fact that categories had been used to provide structure to the questionnaire and consequently to the interview. However, she was not limited by these pre-existing categories, and fully anticipated the possibility of other categories emerging from the data. Once the categories were established, each unit of data was analyzed and placed in an appropriate category. A description of these findings is reported in Chapter 6 for City School and Chapter 7 for Town School.

The last step of the analysis involved determining whether any theory seemed to be emerging from the data. Glaser and Strauss (quoted in Merriam, 1988) indicate that "generating hypotheses requires evidence enough only to establish a suggestion – not an excessive piling up of evidence to establish a proof" (p.142). The results of this last level of analysis are reported in Chapter 8.

Validity and Reliability

Merriam (1988) believes that internal validity can be one of the major strengths of case study research. Based on her own experience and on the literature on qualitative research, she identifies certain basic strategies an investigator can use to ensure internal validity. This researcher employed four of the strategies she identifies including:

1) Triangulation – the study used three sources of data collection: a questionnaire, interviews and researcher observations.

2) Member checks – participants in the study were given feedback from both the questionnaire and the interviews and were asked whether they considered the results plausible

3) Peer examination – the data was collected by two researchers who constantly discussed the findings as they emerged.

4) Identifying researcher bias – the researcher's assumptions and theoretical orientation were clarified at the outset of the study.

Since the stated purpose of this research was to provide a rich description of the current conditions in each school that would support or hinder the implementation of teams, questions regarding the ability to replicate this study (reliability), or the generalizability of this study to other sites (external validity) are not relevant to this research. The researcher would suggest, however, that certain readers might find enough similarities between their own schools and the schools described in this study, to apply some of the findings to their own situation. Determining the extent to which these findings apply to other situations, however, will be left up to the individual reader.

Summary

In conducting this research project, it was necessary to always keep in mind that it represented the first stage of a four-stage research project, and its primary intent was to provide what Merriam (1988) calls "rich, thick description" to use as a basis for the three remaining stages of the project which would involve the staffs of the participating schools in collaborative action research. The research methodology that was selected as being most suited to addressing this intent was a qualitative case study design, with its focus on gaining an in-depth understanding of the situation and its meaning for those involved. To successfully achieve this in-depth understanding, the primary data collection instrument in this type of research has to be human.

Two schools were selected to participate in the study on the basis of purposive sampling. The primary criteria for inclusion in the sample were that the principal wanted to increase staff participation in school-based decision making, and the staff were willing to participate in the project.

Data for the study were collected in three ways: a questionnaire, individual interviews and researcher observations. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher based on similar instruments that had been developed to study readiness for teams in private sector organizations or to study school culture. Findings from the questionnaire were presented to the school staffs in the form of graphs showing the extent to which each staff felt that the conditions necessary for the implementation of teams were present in the school. All teachers present in the school were interviewed and the data arising from both the interviews and the researcher observations were analyzed by the researcher.

Since the intent of the research was to provide the staff with a detailed description of the school site which would enable them to make effective decisions regarding the steps to take in moving towards school-based decision making teams, a great deal of attention was paid to ensure that the findings were valid and that the staff members felt they realistically portrayed the existing conditions in the schools.

CHAPTER FOUR

SCHOOL SITE DESCRIPTIONS

This chapter provides background information on the two schools that participated in this study. This information was collected through a variety of sources including researcher observations, school handbooks and annual reports, and teacher interviews. The focus of this chapter is on the structural elements in each school that could potentially have impact on the implementation of school-based decision making teams.

City School

City School is an elementary school in a large urban school district in Alberta. The school is forty-one years old. The school has fifteen closed classrooms, two relocatable classrooms and five open area classrooms. In addition, the school has a Junior High school-sized gym and a library. At the present time, about twenty-five percent of the classroom space is not used. The open area which can hold up to five classes is currently being used by two classes containing fifty children. There are thirteen classrooms organized by single grade and three multi-aged classrooms.

The community in which the school is located is composed primarily of lower-income families. It is a multicultural community and the population tends to be quite transient. Parental involvement in the school is minimal, with about three to five active members on the Parent Advisory Committee, five to eight active members on the Kindergarten parent group, about sixty volunteers for various activities throughout the year, including fund raising activities, and a parent-operated lunchroom program.

There are approximately three hundred and forty-five students attending the school from ECS to sixth grade. The 1994-95 Annual Report shows a very high mobility in the

student population. This is demonstrated by the fact that over the last year 39% of the students that started in September 1994 left the school and 35% of the students are new to the school. The Report indicates that this type of mobility affects the delivery of programs, achievement scores, school pride, community pride and school resources.

At the present time the staff is composed of the principal, assistant principal, 15.5 professional staff (some are part time) and five support staff. While there is currently a resource teacher and a half-time librarian, these positions will be eliminated next year.

Impact of Physical Plant on Teachers' Ability to Work in Teams

At the present time the school is primarily made up of individual classrooms which can have the effect of isolating teachers. However Fiona, for example, never found this to be a problem:

> Our classrooms are in close proximity to each other. We have been able to do some teamwork together – and we do fairly often – showing films, doing some centre/group activity kinds of things. We are in close proximity to each other and we haven't met any great obstacles to teaming at all.

Colleen explains how the situation is currently being addressed for those who feel isolated in their classrooms:

> I would say that the building itself is improving because we're having things like a doorway knocked between classrooms. That will facilitate the working together quite well. People found that when they were working in the portable it was wonderful because it was quiet and they had a nice large space. However, they weren't part of the group – they didn't feel part of the group. And next year I think the plans are to move them in so that we can feel more of a team. Those kinds of things I think will really help a lot.

Terry indicates how he can see the doorway, or as some other teachers describe it "the hole in the wall" helping him team teach:

> Next year we will stay where we are, and what we're thinking of doing is putting all of the students that we are responsible for in one room. And then have another

room where the teachers desks will be, and where our stuff will be in one area of the room, and then the rest of it will be a work space for meetings with the kids, or small group settings with the kids. That's what we're thinking of doing.

Brad, the school principal, suggests he doesn't really think the physical plant was the major factor in inhibiting teachers from working together:

Even if we had opened them up earlier in the year, I wonder if it would have made any difference because they weren't ready for the teaming. Now I have 4 classrooms done, and I have another set that want the wall opened up immediately. That will be interesting as the others start looking at it whether they can make the change.

While there is one large open area where five classes could work together, this type of arrangement does not suit everybody. Louise talks about her experience in the open area:

Well, I was in the open area to begin with in this school, and I hated it because it was just too noisy. ...I'd have other teachers come in and complain that my class was too noisy during silent reading. So the problem was that there were ...too many kids, too close. I was really glad to get out of there. I don't remember teaching anything that year, I just remember saying "Be quiet" and "Who's making that noise?" because I couldn't identify — because in your own room you know who's making the noise.

For teachers who want to meet or work together there seems to be plenty of empty space in the school. Michelle explains that "next year we're going to have quite a few empty classrooms. So I don't think space is a problem. Division I has a back-up area. Division II has two back-up areas – spaces they can go to, and can book. So I don't think it's a big problem."

Team Planning Time

Everyone in the school identified the timetable as presenting a barrier to teachers trying to work as teams. Colleen describes some of the problems she encountered:

> Now, timetable, yes. I tried to work – I was supposed to be teaming with [someone] across the hall and although we had successfully done – like a Christmas language arts unit and a couple of other things, it was really tough because [her] music would fall at a certain time and mine would be at another time. So I found that I was on my own for a good majority of the time. So the timetable is really a big, big issue! ...We had to take time after school, before school, you know. So hopefully with next year they're saying there's a possibility of having a half-time music, and a half-time phys-ed. That could free time up so you could actually work during the day. Which would be a huge help.

Sally explains that the advantage of having school time for teams to meet would mean that teachers could "have that time where you could sit down and not where somebody's running home to kids – their own kids, or they have to drive for basketball, or drive for this or drive for that."

In addition to changes in the timetable, Donna indicates that the principal is also exploring the possibility of an early dismissal time:

> We've been trying different recess times. Next year there will be early dismissal at noon on Wednesday. We can't do after school because of the buses. Lunch will be from 11:15 until 1:15 which will give us more time to sit down as a team and plan together. I'm not sure about two hour lunch hours for the kids – how that would work with supervision.

Team Structures

Brad, the school principal, believes that teaming is not something that is entirely new to this staff. He notes: "They have been used to committees. So I guess they evaluated what they did. And I think that will be valuable for the future because as we ask them to work in teams and to evaluate their curriculum units, if they've got those skills that will be great." At the same time he questions the effectiveness of most of the teamwork that was being done, suggesting that perhaps some of the teachers were just operating at the level of what Katzenbach and Smith (1993) refer to as "pseudo-teams" (p.91):

I think they're working together in personalized, small groups of real comfort. Not in groups creating academic challenges for kids. I think they're working at a comfort level that justifies their ability to say we are working together. But they're not looking at their end product. They're not saying that by our working relationship are we really getting the best for the kid. They seem to have an illusion that the kids are fine. That's not my impression. The kids are not fine. Their behavior, their ability to speak, to problem solve, their whole learning...

However, many teachers felt they were successful as teams. While very few of the teachers were actually team teaching all the time, there were a large number that were involved in team planning   Fiona describes her experience which she feels was a successful teaming experience:

For my team, yes. Excellent. We've worked very, very well together and really support each other, and share materials, and share ideas, and we work together on the long range plans and we've worked together on – almost all our plans are done together, generally.

Town School

Town school is an elementary public school located in a medium-sized town in Alberta. The school building is twenty-eight years old. It serves a student population from the fourth to the sixth grade. The socio-economic status of students in the school ranges from upper to lower class. Town School is the only school in the town that offers the fourth to sixth grade program. In addition to the regular program, this school also offers a French immersion program in all three grades. There are fourteen professional staff in the school, in addition to the principal and the assistant principal, and seven support staff. At least three staff members only work part time in the school, with the rest of their time being assigned to one of the other public schools in the town.

There have been some major staff changes in Town School since it opened in 1967 as a junior high school. Due to district level decisions to change the grade levels offered by each school in the town, in 1974 it became a middle school, and in 1990 it was changed

again to house grades four, five and six. It was during this second period of major change, in 1990, that the principal and four new teachers came to the school. Only the assistant principal and three of the original teachers from the middle school are still on staff at Town School. Over the past four years, the principal has been trying a variety of ways to increase teacher involvement in school-level decision making.

Impact of Physical Plant on Teachers' Ability to Work in Teams

Many teachers indicated that the physical plant represented a real barrier for people who wanted to work together in teams because it had the effect of isolating people either upstairs or downstairs or off in a wing. Tony complains:

> Well, for myself, for example, I'm way at the end of the building. About the furthest point to come to the staff room. Mind you that's good exercise for me... But, I don't know, when you have something to do, you sort of think twice before you want to walk all the way and stuff. I guess that's a poor excuse. If you really wanted it, you'd find ways.

Except for the distance, however, everything else seems to support people working together in teams. The school has been planned so that there is a grade four hallway, a grade five hallway and a grade six hallway. In addition, Hanna, the school principal, indicates:

> There isn't a planning area. Well, there is a planning area but it's not used. And we have a computer room just especially for the teachers with some programs on it – it's not used. There's one more room that can be used for team teaching. It's there and it's available. So we have spots. However, once that room is filled, then we don't have the physical space for team teaching. But judging by the staff I don't think – well it hasn't been expressed to me that a lot of people want to do this. No one has come forward and said, "I want to team teach, can you find me some space?"

As far as team planning goes, Sam indicates:

> If you're doing planning during the day it's not really going to be a concern of where two or five people are going to meet. I mean, the library is probably the most comfortable place to meet. And if that's not open, then you could find a classroom that isn't being use, or – because we've got a classroom upstairs too.

In addition, several teachers commented that work could be done in the work space between the office and the staff room.

Team Planning Time

Teachers mentioned that they never had planning time at the same time as anyone else during the school day, and this certainly limited the opportunity for teaming. The principal agreed, indicating that finding time for teams to work together during the day was impossible to schedule in a small school, since there was only one person providing preparation time for everybody. However, she did indicate:

> I've suggested to people when there's an assembly, why don't you and you just go and take that assembly time. I've given coupons, trying to encourage people to take time so they can go and work with someone. They've never been – I think one person out of a staff of 22 used their coupon.

Team Structures

Overall, there is not much teamwork occurring at Town School. Except for special events, most teachers indicated that they do their own planning and teaching. Hanna, the principal, reports that even committees that have been set up to address various aspects of the school program do not seem to be functioning very effectively:

> We've got the professional development committee, we've got the special events committee. And I empower them. "Do what you want. Plan what you want. But it's up to you." So I'm finding we need to learn about leadership skills within the committee, because unless I'm there pushing and saying, "Okay, this is coming up. Have you got it planned yet? Come on people, let's get moving." It's just not

there. But it's a time restraint. This goes right back to the scheduling and timetabling. There's no time allowed for teachers to do this. They're very busy people.

The exception to this pattern is one pair of teachers who are team teaching. They work together in a double room with thirty students. One teacher in the school describes the team teaching program in this way:

> The way this worked out, the way this team teaching was done was there used to be what was called a SNAP room. Students needing special assistance. ...Not the pull-out ones. The lower ones – even below the SNAP's – like the handicapped and stuff. So they used to be separate. And then, last year, they came up with two young teachers. It was their second year. Just fresh out of university and I suppose – I don't know what their motivation was. How it all started. I wasn't there, I can't speak for that. Somehow they came up with this idea of joining, because of the push for integrating those kinds of kids. They though if they mixed it with grade five, a regular grade five, these kids, part of the day would get a lot of integration with the regular kids. And then part of the time, like they can't learn social studies, science – and they do work experience or something like that. Practical things for them to cope. They get pulled out to another room and they do that separately. And they're not, at any time, doing the same work as the other children. But they're doing it in the same room. And they claim that – even the other children – everyone is working individually at their own level at their own grade, and things like that. I don't know how they're doing that, but anyway. That's the theory of it and that's what makes it possible.

The same teacher then goes on to express the attitudes of some of the other teachers in the school regarding this program:

> But see, what we think is unfair, I suppose, if you want to call it that, is that there are two full-time teachers and two or three teacher aides and all that and the number of students is so small, which makes the other classes bigger. So everything is being made handy, convenient, easy. Of course it's going to...

Summary

Two elementary schools participated in this study – one from a large urban center and the other from a medium-sized town. While neither of the schools is designed to

,accommodate the work of teams, both currently have unused space in the building that could be used by teachers who want to work together.

Finding time for teachers to work together during the school day was a serious concern in both schools. City School is modifying its timetable for next year so that teachers at the same grade level will have some preparation time together. They are also eliminating the recess break, so that they can have one extended lunch period each week to use for planning. Town School is more limited in its options because only one teacher provides preparation time for the entire staff.

Team planning and sharing is an accepted practice at City School, but virtually non-existent at Town School. There are two teachers at Town School who are team teaching, but this particular team's practice is generally not accepted by the rest of the staff. This has created some friction between the teaching team and the rest of the staff.

CHAPTER FIVE

QUESTIONNAIRE FINDINGS

This chapter provides an outline of the questionnaire that was administered to the staffs at City School and Town School, and then presents the findings from the questionnaires for each of the schools.

Questionnaire

The intent of the questionnaire was to assess the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding their school's readiness for school-based decision making teams. Participants were asked to respond to the following list of statements based on a four point rating scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. They also had the option of indicating they didn't know whether the statement applied to their school. Each statement represents a condition that would support the implementation of teams. A positive response would indicate the existence of this condition. A negative response would indicate the absence of a supporting condition and consequently a potential barrier to the implementation of teams.

Compatible Systems and Structures

1. The design of our school makes it easy for me to work with other teachers.
2. The timetable is set up to ensure that teachers who want to work together can have planning and preparation time together during the school day.
3. Teachers are evaluated on their ability to work well with other teachers.
4. Information about developments or changes in the school is effectively communicated to all teachers.
5. People placed in leadership positions have first had to distinguish themselves as team players.
6. When I work on a team, there is money available to implement the ideas we come up with.

7. I am kept well-informed about any changes that might affect me or my students.

Vision and Goals

8. Our school vision and goals are so clearly defined that someone new to our staff would have no problem fitting in and knowing what's important here.
9. When I am planning a school activity with a team of teachers, we use the school vision to help us determine the goals of the activity.
10. The school vision has a lot of meaning for me.
11. When I work on a team, we evaluate the results of our efforts to see how successful we were in reaching our goals.
12. The staff all participate in developing the school goals.
13. We stop doing activities that don't lead directly towards the achievement of our vision.

Supportive Culture

14. Teachers in this school compliment, support, and acknowledge each other's positive efforts.
15. Teachers in this school are committed to change and improvement.
16. The discipline policy in this school is administered consistently by all staff.
17. This staff is creative and tends to welcome new ideas.
18. Even if some staff members do not vote in favor of a decision, they are still willing to implement it in their classrooms since the majority of teachers approved the idea.
19. If I have a problem with a student I go to other teachers on staff to get suggestions on how to help this child.
20. I help other teachers who are experiencing difficulties in their teaching.
21. I could work on a team with just about every other teacher on this staff.
22. Teachers believe that learning is a life-long pursuit, for themselves as well as for their students.
23. As a staff, we have successfully worked out and implemented solutions to many school-wide problems.
24. Time spent in staff and committee meetings is usually productive.
25. Most students are adequately prepared when they reach my grade level.
26. Everyone on this staff works equally hard.
27. I have a responsibility as a professional to assist other teachers in becoming more proficient in their teaching.
28. I feel comfortable expressing my opinion at staff meetings, even when it means disagreeing with others on staff.
29. Teachers seek and receive help from other teachers and the principal when trouble arises.

Administrative commitment and support

30. Major decisions at this school are arrived at by consensus, where everyone is in agreement with the final decision.
31. My opinion is heard and considered before decisions affecting me are made.
32. When a problem arises the principal often sets up a team composed of teachers and administrators to study the problem and recommend solutions.
33. Teams composed of teachers and administrators have been set up to both identify and find solutions for problems.
34. Grade-level or division-level teams of teachers plan and make changes to their teaching programs or teaching methods without getting administrative approval.
35. Once a school team is set up to solve a problem, the principal does not interfere with any of the teams' decisions.
36. Teachers have some say in deciding who is hired at the school.
37. In this school, teachers make the decisions in those areas that affect classroom teaching.
38. The principal encourages teachers to be cooperative rather that competitive.
39. We decide as a staff how the budget will be spent.
40. Teachers experiencing problems in their classrooms can go to the principal for help.
41. The principal encourages any new ideas that might improve student learning.

Individual Suitability

42. Although planning with other teachers often takes a lot of time, the results are worth it.
43. Student activities that I plan with other teachers usually work out better than activities that I plan by myself.
44. Student learning could be improved if teachers had more opportunities to work together in teams.
45. I would rather team teach than teach by myself as long as I could select my own partner.
46. I would like to work on a team that was trying to find ways to improve the school.
47. I would like to learn more about the ways other teachers teach.
48. I experience more success when I work on a team than when I work by myself.
49. I find it just as rewarding to achieve a goal as a member of a team, as to achieve a goal by myself.
50. I would be willing to take more risks in my teaching as a team member because I would have more support if I ran into problems.

Data Reporting

At City School, 18 questionnaires were distributed and 15 returned. At Town School all 15 of the questionnaires that were distributed were returned.

The number of responses in each category for every statement are reported for City School and for Town School in Appendix I.

Gay (1992) recommends reporting the results of a questionnaire in the form of percentages. This was the approach selected for reporting the results of the questionnaire back to the participating schools, with some modifications. Since the purpose of the questionnaire was to determine what percentage of the staff felt the conditions necessary for the successful implementation of teams and shared decision making were in place in their schools, and since agreement with a statement would indicate the existence of a condition, the percentage that is reported represents those responses which agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. The remaining percentage for each statement represents those respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, indicated they did not know if the condition existed in the school, or did not respond to the statement at all. Compiling these categories into one percentage seemed appropriate on the basis that disagreement with the statement represented perceptions that the necessary support was not in place in readily discernible forms. In using this format for reporting, it is important to keep in mind that the percentage not reported on the chart does not necessarily represent a barrier to collaboration and teamwork, only the absence of support. One of the major reasons this approach was selected was because it provided a format for presenting the information from a positive perspective – percentage of supporting conditions rather than percentage of absence of supporting conditions. This was critical for ensuring that staff members not become frustrated by negative results so early in the process.

Summary of Results

The following is a summary of the data in each of the five categories of the questionnaire as they appear in Appendix II for City School and for Town School.

Compatible Systems

The first seven statements on the questionnaire relate to whether or not the staff feel that existing structures and systems in the school are compatible with school-based decision making teams.

City School

At City School, about 80% of the staff indicated that there was good communication in the school (#4 & #7), and that the principal reinforced the importance of teamwork in the school by including it as a factor in teacher evaluation (#3). Subsequent interviews revealed that communication was actually a major problem in the school, and that the current principal had not yet been involved in evaluating any of the staff. At least 67% of the staff indicated that they had some say in budget decisions, in that there was money available to implement the decisions they made as teams (#6). The major problem area at City School was identified as the current timetable which does not provide opportunities for teachers to work together (#2). Only about 50% of the staff indicated there was adequate physical space for teachers to work together (#1). While 50% of the staff indicated that extrinsic rewards were provided to teachers who took on the added responsibility of working on teams (#5), many teachers indicated during their interviews that they had not actually associated this statement with rewards.

Town School

At Town School the communication system appears to be quite effective (#4 & #7). There is a strong indication that neither the timetable nor the current use of space in the school are conducive to teachers working together (#1 & #2). In addition, the areas of rewards, performance evaluation, and budget also need to be addressed as the staff indicated that they do not currently reflect the importance of teams in the school (#3, #5 & #6).

Vision and Goals

Statements eight to thirteen relate to the degree to which staff feel that they have a clear and understandable vision that can guide them in working collaboratively to make effective decisions.

City School

The staff at City School seem to have worked together to develop a vision and to establish goals to achieve that vision (#12). The vision seems to be providing some direction and cohesiveness to the school in that about 67% of the staff indicate that they understand and use it in planning activities(#9 & #10) and about 92% indicate that they use it to evaluate the success of their actions. Nevertheless, only 60% indicate that they actually stop doing activities that don't appear to lead toward the vision (#13) and only 47% of the staff feel that the school focus would be immediately evident to a new staff member (#8).

Town School

The staff at Town School have also been working together over the past year to develop a school vision, and consequently 80% indicate that they feel that staff are being given the opportunity to provide input into the vision (#12). However, the vision has not

yet been used widely for planning or evaluating activities and perhaps as a result of this, staff do not have a clear understanding of it.

School Culture

Statements fourteen to twenty-nine relate to whether or not the staff view various elements of the school culture as supportive of teamwork and shared decision making.

City School

Some aspects of the school culture at City School seem to be reasonably supportive of a change to a team-focused environment. A large percentage of the staff view themselves and other staff members as supportive of each other (#14, #19, #20, #27 & #29). Over 50% of the staff see themselves and others as willing to accept the need for change and learning (#15, #17 & #22), and about 73% of the staff report successful experiences working collaboratively with others (#23). Opinions as to whether team decisions are actually implemented by the staff appear to be mixed (#16 & #18), as are opinions regarding the degree to which teachers in the school demonstrate a strong sense of professional understanding and respect for other teachers (#21, #25, #26 & #29). Less that 50% of the staff view meetings as being a productive use of their time (#24).

Town School

In considering the current culture in Town School, more than half of the staff felt that teachers demonstrated a reasonable amount of support for each other (#14, #19, #20, #27 & #29), and they also demonstrated some degree of professional respect and understanding for each other (#21, #25, #26 & #29). However, opinions of the staff about the commitment of other teachers to the need to learn and change barely approached 50% (#15 & 17) and 33% of the staff indicated they had not had successful experiences working collaboratively in the past (#23). In addition, there seems to be a

strong feeling that team decisions often are not implemented by the staff (#16 & 18). Meetings were seen to be productive by 60% of the staff (#24).

Empowerment and Administrative Support

Statements thirty to forty-one relate to the amount of support and encouragement teachers perceive they are receiving from the administration to become more involved in teamwork and shared decision making, and to the amount of authority that teachers perceive they have at the present time to make decisions.

In both schools the motivation to move to a team-centered environment was provided by the school principal. At the start of this research project both principals were already actively involved in communicating this focus to their respective staffs. These efforts seem to be reflected in the results of the survey because in both schools a high percentage of staff members indicated strong feelings that their principal encouraged and supported teamwork, collaboration and informed risk-taking (# 38, #40 & #41).

City School

It was evident that the staff at City School were not very involved in shared decision making at any level and were not yet totally certain of the level of empowerment they had been granted by their new principal. This was evidenced by the number of responses in the "I don't know" field, particularly when asked whether the principal would accept their decisions without interference (#34 & #35). Almost all the staff indicated that they were empowered to make classroom decisions (#37), about 67% of the staff indicated they felt involved in budget decisions (#39), and about 53% felt they were empowered to make decisions at the level of quality circles where teams of teachers and administrators have been set up to identify and find solutions for problems, which then go to administration for approval (#33).

Town School

At Town School, it was once again evident that the staff were uncertain as to the level of empowerment their principal would actually grant them. At this school about 73% of the teachers indicated they were involved in budget decisions (#39), about 67% felt they were primarily responsible for decisions affecting classroom teaching (#37), and about 60% felt empowered to make decisions at the level of special problem solving, where the principal sets up a team composed of teachers and administrators to study the problem and recommend solutions (#32).

Individual Commitment

The last nine statements relate to whether or not individuals feel they are personally suited to working on teams, and whether or not they would like to become more involved in school-level decision making.

City School

At City School everyone agreed that they would like to work on teams focusing on school improvement (#46) and they would like to have more opportunities to learn from other professionals in the school (#47). At least 80% of the staff indicated that they would actually prefer to work in a team teaching situation (#45), perhaps because they felt that working together had the potential for improving student learning (#44). There was strong agreement that better overall planning occurred when teachers worked as teams (#42), that teachers would be more willing to take risks as team members (#50), and that is was just as rewarding to achieve a goal as a member of a team as it was to achieve a goal alone(#49). Nevertheless, only about 68% of the staff agreed that student activities developed by teams were usually better than student activities developed by individuals

(#43), and only about 72% were willing to suggest that they experienced more personal success when they worked on a team than when they worked by themselves (#48).

Town School

At Town School everyone agreed that they would like to work on teams focusing on school improvement (#46). In addition 87% felt that providing teachers with the opportunity to work together had the potential to improve student learning (#44), and they would welcome the opportunity to learn from other professionals in the school (#47). A large percentage of the staff indicated that they find it just as rewarding to achieve their goals as a member of a team as to achieve their goals by themselves (#49) but only 60 % indicated that they generally experience more success as a team member than they do working alone (#48) and only 47% indicated that they would prefer team teaching to teaching alone (#45). About 70% felt that better planning overall results from teamwork (#42), but only 40% believe that better classroom activities result from teamwork (#43). Group support would enable 67% of the staff to take more risks in their classroom teaching (#50).

Summary

Each school was given feedback on the results of the questionnaire for their school in the form of charts that showed the percentage of staff members in agreement with each factor (Appendix II). This seemed to be the best way to present the aggregate results of the questionnaire to each staff in an effective and positive way.

Some of the organizational conditions necessary to support teamwork, that were not identified in the questionnaire as currently being in place at City School include time and space for teachers to work together; rewards for teamwork; a budget that supports the work of teams; a clearly understood vision that is used to guide actions; commitment

at the school level; understanding and respect for others; productive meetings; experience with increasing levels of involvement in decision making; and, a belief that teamwork will produce better results.

At Town School, the conditions necessary to support teamwork that were not identified in the questionnaire as currently being in place include time and space for teachers to work together; rewards, budget and performance evaluation systems that support teamwork; a clearly understood vision that is used to guide and evaluate actions; a supportive school culture; experience with increasing levels of involvement in decision making; and, a desire to work on teams based on a belief that teamwork will produce better and more satisfying results.

CHAPTER SIX

ANALYSIS OF DATA FROM CITY SCHOOL

The data from the interviews and researcher observations at City School can be categorized under six major themes. These themes include change, communication, trust, vision and goals, power, and team and decision making skills. The intent of this chapter is to illustrate how each of these themes is grounded in the data. In doing this the researcher has chosen to provide many, and sometimes long extracts from the interviews. Throughout the interviewing process, the teachers demonstrated considerable thoughtfulness and sincerity, and their responses were obviously the result of careful reflection on the issues that had been raised. Broad coverage of these responses is intended to enable readers to truly view the school through the eyes of these teachers, and it also permits readers to draw their own conclusions based on the data.

Change

City school has been experiencing major and rapid change over the past school year, as Martin indicates:

> We have had so many changes so fast. I mean changes are happening every single day. People are just reeling. And then on top of it all are all the other external changes that are happening – like you know, system-wide changes as well. So there's not just school changes – it's system-wide changes.

Some of these changes have resulted from the recent economic cutbacks and changes made to education by the Alberta Government, which are now being experienced in the school. Fiona talks about how some of these changes have had an impact on City School:

> This has been a real – you know, for myself, it's been a year of change And we have a lot of teachers in this school, this year, who have gone through a lot of changes – in the grade that their teaching, the curriculum – it's a catch-up kind of thing. And then we're always, constantly, bombarded with new curriculum. We have a new science curriculum coming in. I think people just don't have time to keep up. You know, our lives are getting so stressful – for everybody. ...and there's going to be more changes next year. From what I can understand we're losing our librarian and our resource teacher. So it's going to be bare bones. There'll just be classroom teachers. So then again, that's another big change. ...Really, there's not a lot of leeway now, for teachers to get extra support and so forth. Take your librarian. I think the library is the focus of the school. So you don't have that resource person now. Just the idea of taking your children into the library – the librarian was there to help you. I think the specialist teachers are gone on the wayside. Teachers are expected to teach everything now. It really creates a lot of pressure on teachers, I think. There is no relief. The behavior problems in the classroom – you don't have a resource teacher to turn to. You don't have the idea of the LD classes anymore. ...And this I think would be universal in Alberta. With the way funding is going. Just less resources. Less help for the teacher.

In addition to all of the other changes, the school experienced a complete change of administration this year, with a new principal in September, and a new assistant principal the following April. Michelle talks about this change:

> Again, at Easter time we had a change of administration. So that is really – we're still trying to get to know where he's coming from... And I'm sure that the administration themselves are still trying to work things out. So it makes a real – a great deal of difference when you have administration in constant flux. Teachers don't know what to expect of them. They don't know really where they're coming from.

And with the new administration came a complete change in direction for the school. This is explained by Marlene:

> Well, it's totally different, our focus this year – and I don't have trouble swallowing this because this is the way I feel anyway – but I think the kids are here to learn. In previous years – I don't know how I can couch this politely – but this has been a school where it's been more like a community recreation center. Where the focus has been on everything else – all the peripherals – other than teaching and learning. They were trying to meet too many needs I think. Trying to meet every single need. We were more into social work, and stuff like that, and we weren't

concentrating on what really our prime focus should be. So our school mandate, or mission, I think has really changed.

The major strategy that the administration is promoting to address this new school focus is team teaching, which incorporates a change to the current organizational structure. This is placing new expectations on the teachers. Sally comments:

> No, they want me to go to grade "x". I don't mind going to grade "x". I've taught it before, so it doesn't really matter. The one thing is, I'm actually looking forward to going to grade "x", that's good. But I'm having to pick up again and move with another partner. That's the part that I'm not too happy about. It's not that I'm not happy about it, it's just that I'm disappointed that I'm not able to continue... [with my current partner].

And other things are being taken away. Fiona explains:

> I don't know. We've cut so many things out. Really a lot of things cut. Almost all of the extra-curricular kinds of things have gone. And so they aren't happening anymore. I don't know whether – for instance, I don't even know if we're even going to have a sports day this year. Now whether teachers really mind, or care or whether they think that should be happening or not, I don't really know. A certain amount of those kinds of things – aren't they necessary? Well you see, our focus is on academics now. ...We can't forget the option kinds of things – art, drama, music, phys-ed, so forth. We can't forget those completely out of curriculum. They are part of our curriculum. And I don't think you can say completely that a sports day is a waste of time. But we have cut out so much of that kind of thing. We just don't have it anymore. We used to celebrate more special days – multiculturalism – that's not happening anymore. There are a lot of changes that have been made. So for you to come in and evaluate our school and the school culture – so much has changed. It's really difficult to do that. ...It should be a group decision ...and I think it has to be re-evaluated. I mean there was a small committee that decided what things we were going to cut out – with a heavy focus from administration who thought we should cut these things out – which maybe sort of influenced partially at the beginning of the year and those things have to be re-evaluated.

How are teachers reacting to all these changes? How are people feeling at City School? Margie feels that there is "really a lot of unhappiness, a feeling of stress, feeling really put upon. Yeah, it's not a great feeling." Marlene agrees with Margie up to a point when she says: "I think that some people probably would rather not [change]. I think it's

because they're scared. They're not really sure what's involved. They're really scared to do it." On the other hand, Marlene notes, "And then for other people, who perhaps thought that way anyhow, who perhaps had a difficult time before with the culture the way it was, it hasn't been too difficult." Len maintains that, "compared to other schools I've been in I don't feel that the teachers here are being asked to do that much." Colleen suggests:

> To me, there's almost a 50 - 50 here. I feel that there are some that are really resistant to change. They've been doing "x" for "x" many years and right now they're being asked to change to something that's completely different. And I can understand the hesitancy. Because you've been doing English for twenty years and all of a sudden you're teaching phys-ed. So I think it's almost completely divided from my perspective.

Ingrid discusses her feelings about the way people are reacting to the changes:

> I look at the age and they're younger than I, but they haven't been flexible enough to make little changes along the way. So they're resisting. And that to me is a form of defense – to protect themselves. And I've heard that if you take a negative person and put them in a positive environment, it will just make the negative person more negative. And that's what I really believe might apply in this situation. Where I see so many good things happening. But that's my nature. And professional development – that's forever more. But some people stopped fifteen or twenty year ago. And they haven't kept pace. And as a result they've developed – I'm going to say it – a callousness rather than a flexibility. That's just my opinion.

On a more personal level, Sally talks about her own feelings. In her response, Sally expresses so many of the issues that appear in the literature on the barriers to implementing school change, that it is appropriate to include this response in its entirety.

> I think that to some degree... I know for myself, at the start I was reluctant because I wanted to see what was going to happen first. I'm a person who just doesn't go holus-bolus into something unless I buy into it, and I need a little time to buy into it. I'm always a little skeptical because I've been in this business for "x" number of years and I've been through "x" number of principals, so it's not like I haven't experienced a few things during that time. So I think that's very true, but

now we need to move on and try a few of these new things. Maybe it won't work, but try it, change it, and if it doesn't work you're not going to be hung out to dry. But it's very scary to try some of this in a high needs school because the kids require structure at times and with some of the changes it's empowering the kids. So sometimes you have to modify and play with some of the changes.

She goes on to explain:

There have been a lot of fads in education. And I worry about that in the sense that some of them have come and gone. For example the stress on open area classrooms that was a big thing in the 70's and 80's, has kind of gone by the wayside. You don't see it as much anymore... because I think the organization sees the problem that's created because of it. ...And I've seen it with the multi-aging. I have a friend presently teaching in a multi-aging situation. The parents wanted it. And now it's reverting back. Fads in education again. Something that they want, they buy into for a couple of years, and then they find it doesn't really meet their needs anymore and they decide to go back from that and back to the old way.

Yes, it's just exactly what we were talking about a few minutes ago with the open area. The fact is the concept has to be maintained in its integrity. If it's used where it's not meant to be then there's a problem. It's bound to fail. And just as you said it may not be the intent of the change or the fad, but the implementation that's the problem. So I guess that all goes in it with me because I see and have seen those sorts of issues. Like I walk into the classroom and think how things have changed. I walked into a classroom "x" years ago and what the principal wanted was to be able to walk into your room and hear a pin drop. And all the kids would be paying attention to you. And every principal since then has been different in terms of what they expect and what they want. It's different. So you have to try to mesh your system with their system, and sometimes it's difficult. I don't form in chaos. I cannot keep my integrity of my teaching with chaos. I don't like kids waltzing around all over the place with no meaningful direction. I like them focused in on what they should be doing, and if that involves me moving with them, yes. So within parameters, I'm okay with group work and stuff like that. I enjoy it. I think it's good. But it's depending on how it's implemented. So I see a lot of changes over the years. I need it explained to me – why are we doing it? And then once I understand why we're doing it I'm willing to give it a shot. I think that I'm a team player. I think I am. ...I think that I am working towards being a team player, or more of a team player than I have been. It's like you're playing a game by a set of rules, and all of a sudden they start changing the rules on you. Like you played that game for "x" number of years, you played it well, you've had evaluations telling you you're doing a good job and then all of a sudden the system – the organization within the [City] School Board deems there's going

to be a lot change. And then they change the rules on you. And then they expect you to catch up really quickly.

For teachers who are unwilling or unable to adjust to the changes Ingrid suggests: "...some people [will have] to make decisions whether they wish to stay here with this philosophy. And if they don't, it's better for everyone concerned. It is possible for them to find a place elsewhere, professionally."

Communication

Downward Communication

Many teachers expressed concern with the downward communication in the school. They felt that they were not getting enough information from the school administration. Fiona expresses this concern in regard to the day-to-day communication in the school:

> Ah, not always that great, not always that great. We used to have a system where things were written in the day book. And a big calendar chart where things were written on the chart. And those things aren't being kept up at this point in time. Like today – coming in this morning and having a sub in at 9:00 in my classroom. "Make sure you have something ready for the sub and have everything explained, and so forth." And as you know, things have to be written out. I mean we had no advance notice about the interview time. And so, very short notice on some things. Very short notice on staff meetings sometimes – changed or canceled and then people get angry because you aren't there! But if you don't get adequate lead-up time. So things happen a lot that we don't even know about – and I don't feel enough time in advance. ...You know with the big schedule up – with that big calendar last year and the previous years we knew what was happening during the week – you could just look at the calendar and find out what was going on in the school. Lots of times we don't know. Things just happen and ... But, maybe it's just because of my personality. I like things written. You know, let's have this written down so we know exactly what's going to happen, what sort of procedures are to be expected.

Teachers commented on the lack of information about the budget. Although many people noted that there seemed to be more money around for the purchase of things that were needed in the school, there seemed to be a general lack of information about where the money was coming from, and about the budget in general. Donna comments: "We have acquired a lot of new things and I'm not quite sure where the money's coming from. I'm not sure where it's going either. And it would be nice to know." Margie also addresses the issue of budget:

> We never see the budget. Money is spent and we don't know where it's going. It's operating [the store] and we don't know how much money it's making or anything about that. So we haven't seen the budget. When we ask for things, they seem – a lot of things seem to be forthcoming. We don't know where the money's coming from.

Several teachers commented on a lack of information about school policies. Harold makes this comment about the school discipline policy:

> I think right now, and I only speak for myself, but I don't fully understand the discipline policy. I really don't have a clear-cut understanding of the policies to follow when different discipline situations arise. So I feel like I need more awareness so that I can be more consistent with the other staff member in the ways that I'm dealing with student discipline.

Martin has difficulty identifying the items of information that are really important for him to know:

> Things like that, that are very important, they come through a staff meeting just like every other piece of information. And there's so much of it that comes down, we don't know what's important and what's not. What's real and what's not. What's going to change and what's not. We don't know where the emphasis should be placed. All of a sudden it will start to gel by the end of the year that geez, you know, this thing about IPP's that we're supposed to be doing with our kids, this is really important! But nobody ever said that. It was just sort of mentioned that we might have to do this. But how do we differentiate between information that is truly important for us to know and understand, which is a whole other thing, and information that is just there. Just the same old business that doesn't really have much to do with us.

Sally expresses a serious concern about not having enough information to assist her in overcoming her fears of change:

> I think people will buy into change if they understand what will happen. You really need to understand what is really wanted by the change. That's how I view change. If it's explained to me why we're doing this or why we're doing that, I can readily accept it. It may take awhile, it may take three or four months because I've been entrenched in something for quite a few years. All of a sudden, "x" years of education, you don't just change. Some of the stuff I still do and it still works.

Upward Communication

Concern was also expressed about the lack of upward communication in the school. Brad, the school principal has noticed this and comments: "I've been quite surprised that I haven't been challenged all year. Other than once when someone suggested that we have a vote on another meeting at noon hour. And it was soundly defeated, 15 to 1. And that's the only challenge I've had all year." Fiona expresses concern that because of this, the school administration is not getting the information they needed from the staff:

> And then some people will never say anything. But that is a problem with our staff. It is a problem that people are not expressing opinions and so I'm sure it's difficult to make decisions. But still it has to be done if we're to be working on the basis of consensus. Things can't just be coming top down.

Ingrid relates a story to express her perception of this issue:

> I'll make this short. You go to a family reunion and everybody leaps into the car and everybody is all excited because you're going to see Aunt Mathilde and so on. And you get there and everybody has their party manners, and they're all dressed up. You talk and eat and bid your adieus. Then you get in the car and close the door and all the way home your thinking about things like "Did you see how fat she was!" And so many times I think that in staff meetings the pseudo staff meeting – just like the pseudo community – occurs. And I don't know how many times I've been snagged in the parking lot to hear the real viewpoints. And I know this is the long way around to answer you question but I think it's relevant.

Perhaps we're locked in for a while here to that pseudo-staff situation where party manners are displayed. You know – the better self. But there's a job to be done. And I believe that communication – there should be the latitude for that to come from either direction. And hopefully from both. Depending on maybe the confidence of the individual involved.

Colleen suggests that teachers will probably continue to be hesitant to voice their opinions "...until they feel comfortable that what they say is not going to be taken in the wrong way or seen as an attack instead of as a suggestion."

Horizontal communication

The fact that communication among teachers may be limited is aptly demonstrated by this comment made by Fiona: "...most teachers in our school are involved in a kind of team situation already. But again, I don't really know what those teams are doing. I just know that they work closely together. But I don't know a lot of what they are doing." One of the reasons she doesn't know what the teachers at other grade levels are doing is explained by Donna when she says, "I don't know because I haven't really talked to any other teachers. Because we go out as a team at recess."

In terms of professional communication, Brad, the school principal, observes: "We don't do a lot of talking. We don't talk about our successes. Now they are sharing more and more with me, but I don't think there's a lot of sharing with other teachers going on."

Trust

Trust of Administration

Some teachers suggested that perhaps the reason that people were afraid to express their opinions was because the school administration was new, and there was not

·yet the understanding and trust needed for people to freely express their opinions. Monica expresses this when she says:

> Well, it take a while to gain trust doesn't it. Trust doesn't come everyday, or just overnight. It takes – it's a two-way street – and trust in the kinds of decisions that are being made for you and how people will treat your opinion and so forth – that's not something that's instant. It takes a while. And so there is – it's a getting to know. And I think whenever you have a lot of change, within teachers, with what they're doing ,and administration and all the rest, it takes a while. It does.

Similarly, Colleen states:

> Well, maybe in certain areas there may be some hesitancy to express things that you feel could affect your position. Sure, there is a bit of trust building that has to happen there. You have to know that you can say what you think and it's not going to affect your job. I think there's probably a hesitancy there.

Is the level of trust between teachers and administrators increasing at City School? Ingrid feels that, "In the pseudo-staffing situation, I believe that it's there. But there still are the whisperings in the parking lot and people going off to lunch together."

Trust of Other Teachers

The staff at City School are very collegial. This was evident in observing their behavior in the staff room and the hallways, and in the way they spoke of one another during the interviews. Terry expresses this feeling very well when he says: "I think this is really a very unique staff. They're very supportive. People who have left the school and have come back – they come back because they want to see the staff. Which is really neat."

That trust, however, is currently being put to a test, and many teachers are finding that there is a big difference between superficial collegiality and professional trust. The test that is being put to the teachers at City School is in the form of an administrative decision to go entirely with team teaching next year. Further, the teachers will not be

given any choice as to who their team partner will be. Ingrid states the dilemma that many

of the teachers are now feeling when she says:

> I'm going to say what I really think here. It was proposed that perhaps I could team with a certain teacher. And because of a difference in values – and core values – and because over the years I believe that I have a pretty well respected professional reputation, I mentioned to the principal that I have nothing against that person, but I don't want my professional reputation tarnished. Now I can go to the pseudo-staff situation, into pleasantries and things. But for a working relationship?

Everyone has had the experience of working on a team where one member didn't pull their

weight. This is Marlene's concern:

> That's happened to me before. I've had a principal say "Marlene, you're a strong teacher. Voila! So-and-so is going to be part of your team." Well it's really tough. And actually I'm really tired of it because it does happen to me quite regularly. And, you know, you have to pull that other person along. The last time I did that it was bad. But at least I had one other person -- there were three of us on the team. So at least I wasn't the only person pulling that other person along. Both of us did. But now we're in a smaller school situation, there's only two grades and it's not going to be nice.

Harold expresses another common concern:

> My biggest concern, not having team taught per se, is the compatibility. Like I know, and I've heard from people who have team taught, that there have been compatibility problems which have arisen. So if you have two or three people that are teamed up and their philosophies and methodologies are totally day and night. I don't know. I feel a concern with that. ...If two people are cooperative and not competitive in nature, I guess you could make it work. But if there's a competition, it could be destructive for both.

Even Terry, who feels he is lucky with the partner that he's been assigned to work with,

understands the problem that others may be facing. In his first year of teaching he had

been assigned a team partner:

> ...I've got a job. Thank you so much. But it was strange – it really was. But I just tried to make it work. If somebody asked me to team with anyone I would just try to make it work – somehow. I would have to try to make it work. ...And

that's why I say that I'm lucky with this partner ...I don't even know how it works. It just does. It just really does. So I think there's a real chemistry that has to be there. You have to want to work with the other person. So I don't know. I find that it's probably hard for administrators to try to put teams together because a whole other set of problems could happen if it doesn't work, or if one person isn't interested in trying to make it work. But I don't know, I think that's hard. If I was told – I would just try to make it work. That's all I can say.

On the other hand, Martin feels that if teachers were to select their own team partners, they would probably pick the wrong person. He explains:

> That's what teachers tend to think, is you have to really like them as a person before you can teach with them. To me, as long as you've got the same philosophy – teaching philosophy – and you've made a commitment to move in the same direction, then who cares how you get along outside school. I mean you have to work with people. I think the reason they think that way is because when teachers meet it's generally in the staff room. It's a social situation. And that's where you gain your perception of somebody. But in a classroom it's completely different because your focus is on the children not on each other. So if you can team people together who have similar philosophies on teaching and on "how to" strategies, then it should work. I think it should just be fine.

Vision and Goals

Most of the staff at City School seem to understand the importance of a vision in providing direction for the school as a whole. Colleen indicates why she thinks this is important at City School:

> I think there are a lot of different things happening in this school. Which I think may be part of our problem. Not that it's a bad thing that everyone is doing a different thing but we're not all sure of what everybody's doing or how they're going about it. And so, to say that we all do something one way – you can't do that in this school. You have little groups that do things in a similar way, but then as a whole group, there seems to be a lack of continuity.

Brad, the principal, would add to this, that when a school has a vision, one can start asking some important questions:

Does what we are doing have application to our goals? Why are we doing this? ...Someone comes in and says they have a great program for us. Well that's nice. But is it in relation to what we want to do this year? Wait a minute – this is our goal for the year. So we have to start putting a hold on some of these things.

In a similar vein, Terry projects how having a school vision could be helpful in the future as well:

I just think that we need to know what our vision is, and our school culture. ...Then it would be easy, even for people coming to this school. If we're a team teaching school then that's what we are. We advertise ourselves that way. ...So, I think once we get that out of the way then it should flow more nicely in that you won't get a hodgepodge of different kinds of personalities who are not sure what's going on. They'll know that once they come into this school – this is what it's like here. I think that having that known by everybody would be most helpful.

Most of the staff would agree, however, that the vision at City School does not yet provide this kind of direction. Louise explains:

Well no, because we've been working on it as a staff for three stinking years now and have barely gotten past – oh, it's just so frustrating. We had our mission statement and our beliefs. And this year, this whole year it's taken us up till now to restate three beliefs that we already had before. So it's just agonizing. I would rather use it. That's the whole idea of a school improvement plan. To get some use out of it, and to get some direction from it and some focus. Say what do we want to focus on gang – let's go for it. I want to go for it, and we're still rehashing "Can everyone learn?" I think so – but some people say "Well sometimes they can't". Oh honestly.

Colleen outlines some of the reasons she feels the process is moving so slowly:

Part of it is because this year we have a new administrator, so obviously there has to be some review there. Also, I think because people are concerned that it has to be so concise – it has to be perfect. As soon as we put it into print it has to be perfect rather than – you put it in print, you get working on it, and then you change it. That doesn't seem to be happening. So I think that's also why it's not so understandable to others. In a lot of schools you'll find, you walk into the school and they've got this big piece of paper saying our vision – our philosophy – our school is this. And you won't – you don't see that here. So you would have to go by feel.

At the same time, most of the staff seem to appreciate the importance of ensuring that everyone has input into the school vision. As Terry suggests:

> Everyone is trying to give input and I think that's fair. Everybody should get that opportunity. On the other hand, I think there needs to be a little line that says okay we've talked about it – now let's move on. Because we can just spend all the time just talking about it. And no action ever gets to happen. And it has to be consistent action as well – everyone needs to know what the action is.

In spite of this concern about the school vision – or lack of school vision – there seemed to be overwhelming agreement among staff members about what the school focus is. Some people called it the school focus, others called it the school goal, and some even called it the vision. Regardless of what they called it, everyone in the school was working towards improving the academic performance of students. As Len indicates:

> I know one of our primary goals of this school was to raise the academic achievement in the school. We've all, I think, been working quite solidly toward that aim. And we've restructured the kinds of activities that we do in the school and so forth. So, yeah, I guess it does mean something, because we're all working for that.

Louise indicates that this focus would be apparent to anyone coming into the school as well:

> Academics are important because, as a lot of parents found out, they've lost a lot of different extra-curricular programs that were happening. We didn't have a Christmas concert and we haven't had any fun days. So we've really cut back on that to focus on the academics. So I think that's pretty clear that that's where we have our focus.

It would appear, however, that the staff did not have any input into this school focus. Marlene explains:

> ...you know I probably would have done it the same way Brad did, to tell you the truth. I think when he came in, he looked around and felt we had to start somewhere. And I think he had a vision for the school and – I've been around for a long time so I can usually size things up pretty well. I could see he had a vision, and I could tell what it was. But a lot of other people couldn't tell what it was and

therefore, I think they felt upset when things started to happen I might have been upset too, if things had gone down a different path that maybe I didn't agree with. But I do agree with it, so I'm fine there. I think Brad had the vision and he started changing things. I think when you start doing that – he had a lot of changes to make – and as you know with site-based management there are certain decisions – you have to weed things out and say "All right. Certain decisions. I'm not going to call the staff together to decide whether we should have coke or pepsi." Things like that. The silly little things. But he did make a lot of decisions. I think he had to do it, just to get the school going. Otherwise we would have been bogged down on Day One. So I think it was just to be expedient.

In spite of the teachers' apparent commitment to the school focus, Brad questions

the degree of this commitment:

> I'm not sure their commitment is in the right ways yet. There's still a focus on that social, self-esteem stuff. It needs to be driven back to the academics...they need to ask themselves how they are addressing the academics. My sense is they haven't been asking those kinds of questions yet.

Power

In spite of the many changes that have been occurring at City School, so far most

of them have involved limited, if any input from staff. As Marlene indicates "...a lot of

decisions have been perhaps made for us, or it's been suggested we go along with [them]."

Fiona provides this example:

> We were supposed to decide everything on the means of consensus. But that hasn't really happened. Even for the purpose of staffing – that was all supposed to be done by consensus. And then all of a sudden you heard that so-and-so is teaching this grade and that grade and all. When did all this happen? How come I don't know about it? It was never presented for us to discuss it and to form the decision based on consensus. That never happened! And then, after all these decisions were pretty well made on little pockets – then it was presented "Does anyone want to make any comments on this?" And everyone sits there and no comment was made whatsoever. So it felt like it was a fait accompli. And, like this store business. When did this all happen? Do we not have any say as to whether we even want this store or not? Do we even – not a lot of input was made that we were going to cut recess out. Just all of a sudden we had one day to get ready for it – one day before the holiday. And it was supposed to happen.

Even teacher's classroom decisions are being challenged. Brad indicates that while teachers may have been allowed to make all their own classroom decisions in the past, "that's the area I'm going to challenge them on – their decisions about the kids in their classroom. Because I have some questions for them that ask if they're really making good decisions for those kids."

Martin explains why he thinks a lot of decisions are being made by the administration without involving staff:

> The vision I believe, or the way I see it, has been that they want changes and they want them right now – or they want them yesterday. That's why I say people are reeling because of the speed of the change. Like I'm away a couple of days, and I come back and there are ten things that are different. It's just amazing. ...So I think its the speed, it's wow! I think it's perceived that if things are left to evolve then nothing will happen. I think the status quo was not something they wanted to keep.

Brad indicates that he wants the staff to have more input into school decisions. The staff would evidently like this too, for as Marlene says, "because if you don't have it you feel absolutely powerless." Terry goes on to add:

> I think people want more. I really do. They would like to be in on more things. Maybe hear some ideas and then decide whether they should follow through on them or not. Rather than, "this is what we're going to do." I think that's a definite need at this school right now. For me, I think that is a need, but at the same time I'd like to have the guideline of the idea. Like if it's coming top-down, I like to hear about the idea and then make a decision on it. But make it a decision that will actually be followed through on. I think that most other people would like that to happen too. So that we really get to decide what we want as a staff.

At the same time, Colleen wants to be sure that the staff are only asked to be involved in decisions that are important to them:

> Sometimes I wonder why certain things are brought to the staff to make a decision. Where to me, some things could almost be just telling us which way certain things are going to go. And then, no discussion on that. But here's an issue that we need to discuss. But the smaller things like, I can't think of an

example right now. Well last year we had one. It was that we were going to lock the doors at lunch because a lot of kids were coming into the school. We even had kids from outside the school coming in and stealing jackets. So it was brought to the staff, "should we lock the doors?" Well, lock the doors. Just tell us you're locking the doors. [But] who should work with who next year. That seems not to have been discussed. You're told. But then after you're told you're asked, "Do you have any ideas?" Things like that. The big issues that affect everyone and how we're going to work together and how positive we're going to feel [should be discussed].

Ingrid feels staff have always had some input, and that things are starting to improve even more in that area:

> We decided to forego a Christmas program for this year and several other decisions were made. There was input on it and we did follow through in pulling back on some things. Now, there is a committee, made up of volunteers from the staff, to explore even more school culture. Now it may not be to eliminate some things, it might be to identify some things that you need to consistently be doing. For example, our focus is on academics now – here are some things we are going to do and here are some things we're not going to do. The committee will explore.

Brad explains why it's not always possible to include the staff in decisions:

> Because part of what's been happening, as I've been able to make some of the changes I've been making them really quickly. And you saw what happened this morning. One instant I had something done and the next instant it was gone. I didn't have the time to go down and consult with a whole bunch of people. I felt I'd been around enough to make that kind of decision and I'll tell everybody after, thinking that again it should be a positive. ... I guess what I should be doing with them is saying "Look, we're in a position right now where I am in situations where I have to make some decisions. I hope that I have all the facts and I'm making the best decision for everybody. But you won't have that information until later because I don't have time to come back and consult."

Brad also indicates that he is increasingly starting to go to the staff for input:

> And even now with hiring decisions – it would be interesting to see how this would differ today. Because they had an opportunity to hear the whole story. They had the opportunity to suggest the level of the IRP involvement they wanted ... They had an opportunity to sanction the music specialist. I went back to them when we couldn't get the person and asked about maybe changing to a phys-ed and

music specialist, and explained the rationale and so they sanctioned that. Now they're not hiring the people. But they did have a little more input.

While some people indicated they would like to have more say in how the budget is spent, Brad feels he is already including them in budget decisions:

> We've started ordering math manipulatives. But before I ordered them I talked about them, I got them talking, I talked individually, I talked to groups. And then I said "I'm going to start ordering because here's what I think I heard. Tell me if I'm not right." So we ordered five or six thousand dollars of resources and materials and we still have a long ways to go. Now again, I didn't consult with them about spending a fair amount of money on containers for storing things. I never said to them that there would be a cost to reorganize. I just did it and let them see the product and they're saying that it's great.

Ultimately, Brad indicates:

> Really, when you think about it, they're really the ones that should be thinking about a better way of operating the school. I might have a bird's eye view – but they're in there and they can see that if they do something different it might really help the kids. Let's talk about it. Let's invite Brad to hear. That's all. I'd like to be able to sit back and say, "great, go for it. Money's no problem – we'll get you the money."

Team and Decision Making Skills

While many of the staff have indicated they would like more involvement in decision making at the school, Terry indicates why he thinks it may not be happening quite as quickly as some people would like:

> It's coming. Slowly. It's something that I think we're working on right now. We're not even sure how to make a decision – how to vote on a decision, really. I mean now we kind of are. And people being present all the time is a big issue as well. I mean if everybody isn't there, then the communicating is broken down – the whole process is broken down. So I think that's really difficult.

Similarly, Harold illustrates the need for more time and learning before staff can become more involved in decision making:

Well they've come out with this attempt at collaboration, and at previous staff meetings we've been working on trying to understand the concepts associated with that. ...I'd like to now see this implemented. ...So, time will tell.

Regarding input into budget decisions, Monica states:

I think budget is something I'm only beginning to understand and so to make any educated or solid budget decision, somebody's going to have to take me by the hand and say "yes, that's a good idea and here's why," or "no, we've only got so much money to spend." And for every dollar you spend you want to be able to effect the most change.

Brad's experience in the school has also made him aware of some issues that will have to be addressed before teachers can be empowered to make more decisions:

With that level of empowerment, and I even feel that at this time, although I've tried to build more consensus and provide the opportunity for them to dialogue more, they never have moved toward the point of wanting to talk more about things. And I have a concern about whether they even know how. I have no idea whether they can truly – all of them – engage in discussion. ...The other problem too is that they don't want to meet as often to talk about some of these things. So it's kind of a duality.

Martin identifies a number of skills that teachers will need if they are to be able to work effectively on teams:

You have to be comfortable enough to be able to throw criticism out, because there is a danger of thinking, "well we're working together and I have to work very closely with this person for the next 10 months so I don't want to make any waves. So I'll just shut up and won't say anything." But what it boils down to then is if a problem comes up then who's responsible? Well both of you are. But if I didn't agree with it in the first place then I'm not going to feel responsible. But you have to. ...You have to be able to communicate effectively with your partner too, if you're going to get into a teaming situation. And make a commitment to each other ...that if you have a problem with it, I want to hear about it, but be gentle. ...And that is a skill that teachers need more work with – articulation to colleagues. You can articulate to parents very easily when it's your program, because you know why you're doing it. But when you're sharing a program, you need to articulate to each other. ...You have to be able to solve conflicts effectively.

Summary

While the results of these interviews may appear to be somewhat negative, it is important to remember that the purpose for the interviews was to establish the existence of barriers to the implementation of school-based decision making teams at City School. The areas of school strength that were identified on the questionnaire were not discussed during the interviews, unless teachers disagreed with the questionnaire results.

Teachers at City School are experiencing a year of rapid change. This has included a complete change in the school's administration, a major change of school focus, and the changes resulting from the new provincial guidelines and budget restrictions. These changes are affecting the teachers as a group, as well as at an individual level. The response by teachers to all this change is mixed. Some teachers are totally "buying into" the changes, others seem to have the strategies necessary for dealing with all this change, and some are showing signs of resisting the changes.

Teachers identified communication as a problem at City School and expressed concern with both the downward and upward flow of information. Many teachers felt that they were not informed about changes before they occurred, particularly in the areas of budget and school operating procedures. A major concern was the lack of adequate information about the need for change and the impact the change would have on the teachers. Another major issue to many teachers was the fact that teachers were not yet comfortable enough to express their opinions regarding the changes, with the result that the administration was having to make decisions without having important information that could have been provided by the teachers. Teachers also indicated that the elimination of a common recess time reduced still further any opportunities they had to communicate with each other.

Closely associated with the issue of communication is the question of trust. Teachers recognized that it would take time for trust to develop between themselves and the administration and that adequate time had not yet elapsed for that to occur. Teachers did identify a very positive atmosphere of trust and support among staff members. This trust appeared to break down at the classroom door however, and many teachers expressed serious concerns about having to team teach with someone with whom they felt they might not be compatible in terms of educational philosophy or classroom organization strategies, or with someone who was not committed to the concept of team teaching.

While teachers and administrators continue to work together to develop a school vision, the school is clearly being driven by the current school focus, introduced by the new principal, of improving the academic achievement of students.

Most staff members seem very aware that their input into school decisions is somewhat limited at the present time. While they all indicate that they would like more input into decisions, many of them indicate they are not yet comfortable expressing their ideas to the administration, already feel under severe time constraints, or lack the knowledge and skills needed to make effective school-level decisions.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ANALYSIS OF DATA FROM TOWN SCHOOL

The data from the interviews and researcher observations at Town School can be categorized under six major themes. These themes include teacher isolation, school commitment, trust, resistance to change, conflict and power. The intent of this chapter is to illustrate how each of these themes is grounded in the data. In doing this the researcher has provided as many extracts from the interviews as possible. This was more difficult with Town School in that the teachers seemed to be more guarded in their responses and tended to restrict their answers to the questions asked by the interviewer. Nevertheless, an attempt was made to provide as broad a coverage as possible of these responses to enable readers to view the school through the eyes of the teachers, and to permit readers to draw their own conclusions based on the data.

Isolation

As illustrated in Chapter Four, many teachers at Town School feel that both the physical plant and the timetable have the effect of isolating teachers from each other. Some teachers feel, however, that these two factors do not totally explain the isolation that exists in the school. Tony explains that nobody uses the staff room anymore:

> I used to look forward to seeing people in the staff room before, and we used to all gather in the morning before school started. Now that's the one time you don't see anybody. No one stays in the staff room in the morning before nine o'clock. That used to be the most fun time...

Oscar talks about special occasions in the school:

> I walk into the staff room and there's nobody there. Everybody's in their space doing their own thing. ...If we do have a birthday, everybody's called in [to the

staff room] if there's a birthday. But not everybody comes, you know? …The staff seems to get along really well, but very rarely are we together.

Some of the reasons why he feels many teachers choose to work in isolation include:

Part of it is a need for control. They want to be the person in control in their classroom. They don't want somebody else… And I suppose part of it is an egotistical thing. You know. "I like the way I do things. I don't want somebody else to come in and mess that up."

Many teachers alluded to the problems that resulted from this school norm of teacher isolation. Paulette mentions that teachers don't really support each other very much because "they don't know what I'm doing and I don't know what they're doing." Barbara indicates that there's no collaboration occurring:

I mean it's definitely not happening among grade levels. Everyone just does their own science, their own whatever. There's still not a lot of sharing of ideas, and I think that would be good because there are a lot of people with a lot of really good ideas. And it's just not being shared.

At the same time, others question why teachers would need more time to meet together. Ursula illustrates this when she says: "They have two staff meetings at this school, rather than one as they have at all the other schools, so they actually have built into that more time here. I'm not so sure of how much more time they need."

Theresa feels that even though the staff retreat wasn't entirely successful in enabling them to come up with a vision it did help to address the issue of teacher isolation a little:

You got to meet people and talk to them. Maybe the first time you talked to them all year. You can go through a whole day without seeing and without talking to teachers, you get so busy.

Sam also feels the retreat was beneficial in this sense:

We didn't need that step at that moment [vision]. You need to bond first – well, bond as much as you can so to speak, and just say, "we understand each other.

We all know where we're coming from now." ...And then you can say, "okay, now from here let's..."

School Commitment

The lack of feelings of commitment to the school as a whole shows up in the failure of the staff to commit to the school vision as well as in their failure to implement group decisions. As Tony indicates:

> We start contradicting ourselves because we don't have the cooperation and the consistency reaching that goal. We're saying – like the vision itself is good. So is motherhood and apple pie. But everyone has their own way of getting there, I suppose, and they're not agreeing. Like discipline, for example, is very inconsistent. No matter how many things we've tried, people once they leave the staff room or the staff meeting, they go and do their own thing anyway... I don't know how valid the vision becomes if you don't all work at it together the same way.

Hanna identifies the problem quite clearly when she says: "You know it's taken me a whole year, with a lot of talking, just to drive home the point that we really do need a vision. That took me a full year with this staff."

Paulette suggests that the main reason people don't use the vision is probably "because we go on to day-to-day things and we just forget about everything except day-to-day operations, and all this vision and everything is put by the wayside. But I think there's a lot of pressure on you and you just don't get to these things." Oscar goes on to explain why giving people the opportunity to provide input into the vision doesn't really change this:

> Well, you know, when you're sitting together and your ideas are just kind of pouring out, it's easy for people to work together and come up with a statement. And then you take yourself away from the group, it's a lot easier to say, "I don't want to be bothered with that. I want to work on this lesson plan."

Sam uses the following words to illustrate what he thinks some of the staff's attitudes are towards their responsibility to provide input into the vision:

Okay, we did our job. We wrote it on paper. Yeah, okay. Well, we'll please them. Say that we did it. Let's do it and get it done and then let's just forget about it. We'll put it on the shelf. It doesn't affect me anyway.

Elizabeth feels that the same attitudes prevail regarding staff input into policy decisions. She explains that the discipline policy was brought to the staff three or four times before it was implemented:

And they agreed, agreed, agreed. And then when it came down to the crux, only 20% or 30% implement it. So, how do you get around that? ...It's easier just to pass it through. It's easier just to say, "I agree." But they don't really agree. ...They pass something through but they're not going to implement it.

In an attempt to resolve the issues that might be preventing people from implementing the policy Hanna, the principal, explains some of the strategies she has tried:

We've even done things like – okay, you've got a problem, go on the discipline committee. So we have people on the discipline committee now that had problems with it. But I don't know, I don't go to those meeting now. I have removed myself completely to let them take charge. So I don't know what's happening but they haven't made any major changes.

Yvonne feels the problems of people not committing to the school focus lie at a deeper level:

When you get into different visions you get into different philosophies of education. And there's a big span of philosophies. And you can't change the philosophy. You can't change the beliefs or the values. I know it's really tough to change. But there's that conflict there too, because people have different perspectives on what education should be, and what teaching should be, and what the role of the student should be, and what the role of teacher should be, and what the role of the administration should be. It's tough to come to consensus on that. And I think in the end it just requires more time. The more time you put into it, the more you talk and discuss it ... I just think people will begin to feel more comfortable with it. It's still relatively new, and I think that's why there's some problems with it. ...It's for the parents and for the community and for the teachers and for the students. The vision should be for everybody. And when a person reads the vision they should know exactly what it means. And sometimes you use too many vague terms, like "a safe environment" – and it's vague. It sounds great.

But I think it needs to be broken down a little bit more to be more specific. ...But I think it will take time. And it will take debate and talking it over.

She feels that this is an important step to take because:

> You have to have a goal at the school level, that you want to accomplish. And then you know what the steps are to accomplish that, so you know how to focus your budget, you know how to focus your communication, you know how to focus the parent councils, because it would all center on your goal. That's your vision. And without that you would have no plan for purchasing your materials, you would have no plan for evaluating your teachers, you would have no plan for when it comes to any changes or backing up "why did you do this?" There would be no foundation. That's your foundation for your decisions. ...And I think our school can do it, like no problem. Our staff on the whole are easy going Despite differences in the teaching approaches, they all want what's good for the kids.

Trust

The theme of trust showed up in relation to teachers trusting administration, as well as in teachers trusting each other.

Trust of Administration

Tony indicates that there is a perception among some of the teachers that the administration favors certain teachers. He uses as an example the fact that two teachers in the school are team teaching and his perception is that "they get more attention -- more privileges. And it sort of rubs the rest the wrong way." He explains:

> Not about the fact that they're team teaching, but the extra privileges that they get. That they're not -- that we're not, sort of the rest of us, and I'm not speaking for myself necessarily -- we're not given equal kind of recognition... It just seems like they get more attention, more recognition, more stuff like that and it just -- and it's not going to be admitted. It's going to be denied that that's how it is, but everything is a question of how you perceive it...

Tammy expresses the same sentiment based on her experience working on a school committee:

> I guess I've been on committees, and the one thing I find very frustrating about being on a committee and making a decision on a committee and then based on one person's dissatisfaction, after the work, after hearing the report, everything is changed. And that's happened. And so now I guess I'm a little reluctant to volunteer for committee work. I think that what happens is that one or two voices are heard more than other people's on staff.

Paulette suggests that there is also a concern among some of the teachers that the administration may support parents over teachers: "If the parents ever phone and make a complaint, that's a very big worry because they listen to parents. Even if one parent phoned, that is magnified out of proportion sometimes. You can get a lot of trouble from that."

Hanna, the principal, is aware that trust between the administration and teachers is not yet in place. She uses her own experience to illustrate this:

> I've expressed my concern with evaluation, and my beliefs that – maybe not so much evaluation, but my ideas of teachers growing is if we can get in and start coaching and doing some cognitive coaching. And I've been really encouraging people to head to that model. And I haven't had any buy-ins yet.

Hanna indicates that she is aware that increasing staff involvement will require trust, and she indicates some of the things she has been doing to develop this trust:

> A lot of talk and discussion about how we can't stay the same. The statement has been made that, "The old ways aren't bad, they're good. And we're not saying that the new ways are the best." We're trying to get more of a risk-free environment as well. We're saying, "Why don't you just try it. See if it works. No big deal if it doesn't work. We'll just keep going, and keep trying." It's coming.

Trust of Other Teachers

There were several suggested explanations for the fact that many teachers in the school did not want to work together as a team. Sam simply felt that the main concern for most teachers was "people coming in and seeing the way they actually teach, and they're

scared about that." Along that same line, Oscar suggested that the reason some teachers might not want to be involved in teaming with someone else is fear that someone might think "they weren't doing their job." Theresa agreed:

> Maybe they feel they'll be scrutinized more. Held up for criticism more. By the people that they're working with. If people are closely observing them or working with them more, they may get called to account for some things that they'd rather get away with – or just continue doing things in their own way that they like and don't want to change.

On the other hand, Tammy felt that:

> It depends on who you're teamed up with. I think that if it's a choice, then I don't think there's much risk involved. But I think if you're told you have to team up with somebody then there's a fear of evaluation by the other person. ...I know I don't feel comfortable with peer evaluation.

Paulette indicates she might be willing to try teaming with someone, but the other person would have to be "compatible ...and criticism has to be delicate."

Resistance to Change

Creating teams to enable teachers to become more involved in school-based decision making involves a major change to the way schools are currently structured. Oscar comments on how teachers in Town School generally respond to change:

> There seems to be a real resistance. Not always. Not among everybody. But there seems to be a resistance to want to change the format of something and I suppose it's, well it's because it's scary. You know? You're so overloaded already and change means even more work. So there's a lot of resistance, I think.

Tony explains why he's not motivated to change, using team teaching as an example:

> See, some of us, those of us who have been teaching for as long as I have – I know we're wrong – we're just set in our ways, you know? I mean, we have a few years left to go and it's kind of hard to change, you know? So I can't speak for others. I don't find anything wrong in team teaching, but I don't know.

Al suggests another reason why people might not be willing to implement change:

> The students could maybe loose their direction and maybe not cooperate as much, or something like that. I know that's a great worry with people. …They don't want things getting out of control and then people saying, "Well that classroom doesn't work very well because they're doing this and the kids are not behaving." This is a big worry with people. And you can see why, of course.

Sam indicates that a very common reaction among staff members when a change is suggested is "What were we doing wrong?" He explains: "Change is a very bad word here. Red flags go up. What do you mean you're going to change what we're doing? We were just perfectly fine with what we were doing before." Similarly, Paulette explains:

> Some people, if they're having success with what they have, they don't want to change. "Don't hassle me. If it's not broken, don't fix it. Everything's working for me. I'm happy." I would say most people would say that. But people who are having trouble or they see some need, then they're willing to change. They'll say "sure, I'll try that," if they're having problems with something. But people who have big success, they won't change. Should they? Or should they carry on with what they have?

Oscar feels that the real reason people don't want to change is because initially "there's the fear of going through the change." He believes that:

> The biggest fear is the unknown, and I think if they could get past that and having done it once, I bet their idea of it would be different. I mean, it could go the other way, too. Maybe we'd like to just jump in and find out no, we don't like it. But I think it's just the change. The fear of doing things differently and having to go through the whole process of replanning and restructuring and I think that's the biggest reason behind not wanting to do it. …I think maybe fear in themselves of failure, might be a big one. Going back to the idea that we're kind of egotistical and to admit that something just didn't work–that might be a big one. …I think another fear is the work. The work involved. I just think that we feel so overloaded that – and I don't know how to alleviate that but it's just – I think people are just tired. Especially this time of year. Who wants to start something brand new? I think that's a big part of it, too. Stay with what you're comfortable with that you know you can handle.

On a more positive note, Oscar has observed that:

> With my experience here, I've found that when the change is first introduced that people will argue it and fight it a lot. But if it's voted on, and it's voted for, they will go along with it and usually within a short period of time, they're okay with it. ...But I have never encountered a situation in the staff where somebody absolutely says, "no, I won't do that." And I've been on staffs where that happened!

Ursula makes an interesting observation about the willingness of the staff to change. She points out that, based on listening to various conversations around the school, her perception was that: "...everybody from that point of view – the government changes and so forth – that they are ready to hear them and see what these change are and I think they're open to them. I think within the school itself, people are quite opposed to change." That may be why Theresa suggests the following method for encouraging staff members to change to team teaching: "Forcing it on them. You'd do it experimentally of course. You'd say, everybody has to participate, and let's have feedback after that. And then I think they'll realize the benefits for you and for the students are great."

Conflict

There was seldom any direct reference to the conflict that exists in the school. Sam probably gave the best indication of the source of the conflict. It would be difficult to quote him directly without revealing his identity, so in this case the researcher will summarize the major points made by Sam. It seems that about three years ago, four new teachers and a new principal joined the staff. Basically, the new teachers and the principal all held a similar philosophy of education. However – and Sam feels this is the source of the conflict – their philosophy was quite different from the philosophy of the existing staff. This caused the existing staff to form a solid front of resistance against the new staff and the principal.

All the staff members seemed to be aware of this conflict. Ursula provides her perceptions of the situation:

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I think it's kind of split. You know, the people that are within that one little group that are into this creative change stuff, of course do support them [changes]. Some of the, shall we say veteran teachers, stand back and look with a questioning eye as to whether this is going to work or not. Not that they're opposed to it, but it's more of a, "let's go at this a little slower," type of thing. "And see if this is what we really want to do, rather than to jump into the frying pan." It's quite the veterans and the new people. There's not much in the middle.

Tony alludes to the conflict situation when he says:

I don't want to say anything too negative, but there is a wider generation gap which can–which has been causing a bit of a problem. I don't know, it's just become a little more colder so you're just not feeling like making an effort to... I suppose again, I just don't know what the real problem is, but there is not this camaraderie or whatever that is needed to come to consensus on things. You know, I suppose teachers, as a rule, are pretty pig-headed. They're pretty opinionated. ...Like I said, there is this kind of a gap and what may be acceptable or agreeable for one is not – it's bad. But there's like cliques. And that causes things to work or not work. ...The personality clashes will have to be cleared.

Tammy illustrates how the split is visible during staff meetings:

You know what usually happens in our staff meetings? It's usually split – dead center. There's usually half this way and half that way. Well not always. Sometimes people will buy in to, you know... Quite often if there's something that's, you know... and there is going to be a split... it will be half and half. You usually know who... Well there are a few people who make up their own minds, and then there's a lot of followers.

Sam refers to the conflict in talking about the people who are not willing to implement the vision: "Well, if they're at least neutral, you're not fighting a battle. But we don't have all neutral. We don't have neutral. We do have the ones that will fight." Barbara feels that this conflict creates a very negative teaching environment in the school:

I think unfortunately what has happened somewhere, I'm not quite sure where, there's a perception of what you have to be, to be changed and on the up-and-up, or be the model teacher. I have my own perceptions of where that's coming from, and unfortunately I think that has the tendency to be a bit negative. And I don't know if this is something that I'm particularly sensitive to, but I have received

some information from my environment that suggests that you should be doing more of this "stuff" to be an effective and good teacher. There's "stuff "coming my way that says I should be doing some things. And it's almost "a measuring stick," I guess is what I want to say. If you're a good teacher you're going to reach that mark. And if you're not, and you just don't happen to be doing that thing, then you're not really a good teacher. That's my perception sometimes of what's happening here. And I think – I don't think that's correct.

Solving this conflict will be no easy matter because as Hanna explains:

Getting to the underlying part of it... is really hard to do. Really difficult. We even had a volunteer, not directly involved with central office staff, not involved with ATA, not involved with teachers on staff ,and he volunteered to do conflict resolution between any two parties that had a problem. He would mediate the problem. If you have a problem, come forward and let's get it solved. No buy-ins. So. But we'll keep trying.

Yvonne feels, however, that things are improving in this area:

I think it came to the point where we had to say it doesn't matter if you've been teaching for a couple of years or just for a year or two. Like the old versus the new. You both have good ideas and you can learn from each other. And I think that idea has smoothed out a lot. It seems to me. But again, it's tough, because it's a lot on personality too. It's not just a matter of teaching professionally, it's your personality too. Like some people are more flexible than others. And that just comes down to personality, not necessarily to your teaching or your professionalism. But they're always respectful and they're always willing to listen to each other, and to different ideas and that sort of thing.

Power

The structures to enable teachers to provide input into school level decisions seem to be in place at Town School. For example, Sam talks about the budget committee:

So it's not the principal decides and that's it. There is a committee that meets and you volunteer to be on that committee. ...There are obviously some decisions that have to be made without everyone's approval, but other than that we do have that committee to voice your opinions.

Similarly, Elizabeth has found that "If you want to be involved, you can be involved. We decided we wanted a program here. We decided it and did it. It's possible to do that here." Hanna, the principal, is pleased with some of the changes that are starting to occur at the school which indicate that teachers are becoming more involved:

> We have to set our goals for next year, but based on our vision this time. Previously, we had a jurisdiction meeting and all the principals were called together and we were given a block of time to come up with the goals. So that was the traditional way. So it's nice to involve the staff now. ...I'm beginning to see signs of groups of teachers making decisions on ways to improve things and going ahead and acting on them. For example a problem came up last recess. And this was a whole staff decision – okay what are we going to do. So we decided let's try to do away with last recess. That was their decision. It wasn't one I would have made. But we went for it. We went for the trial and the whole thing. And it basically came right from the staff.

At the same time, teachers seem to be aware that ultimately, decision making authority rests with the administration. As Oscar indicates:

> But for the most part, in our staff, if we need to make a decision on something, we discuss and take a vote and for the most part, I think that vote is agreed to. However, sometimes administratively, if the administration feels really strongly about something and really wants that change made, the staff will discuss it and if it looks like the vote is going to go against it, it might be tabled or it'll be maybe redirected so that it will be implemented somehow. Not always. Only in an extreme case where they feel that it's an important change to make. And I don't know. Maybe that's not entirely wrong.

Tony comments on how decisions arrived at by the staff decision may be changed by the administration:

> Like most decisions, the administration tries hard to give us the opportunity to have our input, but then changes have always been made after the fact. And probably rightly so. Some things because they may know the situation better. They may have a better view of the full picture than we do, I suppose. But we're sort of consulted and sort of not.

Ursula also remarks on this:

Sometimes, say on an administrative level, if the decisions are made at a staff meeting, and then one or two parents comes up and are opposed to that, well the decision is reversed. So you never know what's going to go in and what isn't. ...Small groups [of parents] and of course, you know, it's the old thing. The squeaky wheel gets the grease, and so the small vocal groups are very vocal and they seem to be able to sway things.

In this regard, Hanna explains some of the problems that can arise after the staff make a decision:

...So that the staff may make a decision. I may go back, check that policies and say, "Oh, I can't do that." That is a reflection then of the administrator stopping me from making decisions. They need to understand the balance too – like, the parents need buy-in. Like if the staff is 100% in favor, but the parents aren't. Okay, then we have to start doing some collaborating. And that was a big change for this staff. That's new.

Hanna is also discovering that there are a number of factors that limit her ability to involve teachers more in decision making:

It's a shift in beliefs, and a shift of getting teachers to take ownership for that empowerment that they're getting. It changes a lot of beliefs, and that really takes time. Sorting through for me too, because what is important to the teachers? Because you for sure don't want to involve them in a decision that doesn't affect them. That's a waste of their time. ...I'm finding we need to learn about leadership skills within the committee, because unless I'm there pushing and saying "okay, this is coming up. Have you got it planned yet? Come on people, let's get moving." It's just not there.

At the same time, some teachers are making the decision that they don't want to be empowered. As Elizabeth explains:

I don't want to be involved in making decisions where people disagree, but they agree just to get it over with. And you put all the time and effort into getting a program into place, or the policy in place, and they all agree and agree, and then it flops. And then they say, "Well, it flopped." Like our discipline policy. We had okays all the way up the line, and then all of a sudden it flops, because nobody implemented it.

Similarly, Yvonne explains why she does not want more empowerment:

I think with consensus being such a tough one. I think especially when you have different groups with different personalities and different teaching styles and different philosophies, it's tough. I don't mind if the principal make the decisions. It's not so much, "This is the decision," it's usually, "Well this is what I thought of. Any suggestions of any different way to go about it?" But our staff has the bad habit – well we talk so much out that we almost sway from what the problem is. There's so much debate.

In terms of how far the school should move in terms of teacher empowerment, Hanna also has this to consider:

We're hearing from our administration that site-based management still includes the administrator as the final decision maker You go to the staff, you go to your parents, you get their input, but the administrator is still accountable so therefore he or she shall make the final decision.

Summary

There is an established norm of teacher isolation at Town School. It is felt that this is not just a result of the physical plant and the timetable, but rather a choice on the part of many teachers. As a result of this isolation, the amount of teacher sharing and collaboration is minimal. A further consequence of this norm is that teachers tend to focus on their individual classrooms and there is very little feeling of commitment to the school as a whole. This lack of commitment is evident in their failure to use the school vision and to implement group decisions, even though they have had the opportunity to provide input into both.

Trust between the administration and the teachers is not yet firmly established. There are perceptions that the principal has "favorites" among the staff and these people receive extra benefits and considerations. Similarly, trust among teachers is not strong, and there appears to be serious concerns about being "evaluated" by the other teacher in a teaming situation.

At Town School, many teachers perceive the need to change as an indication that something is wrong and needs to be "fixed." From this perspective, they view change as something negative and scary. Past experience indicates, however, that once a change is implemented, most of the teachers accept it. This led one teacher to suggest that maybe they need to be forced to change.

There is a definite split in the staff, which seems to have developed about three years ago, and which has created an atmosphere of conflict in the school. This split was originally based on new teaching strategies versus tradition teaching strategies, which effectively meant new teachers versus experienced teachers. The existence of this conflict prevents any sort of cohesiveness from developing in the staff as a whole.

While committee structures are in place at Town School to encourage teacher involvement in decision making, the level of this involvement is limited by a number of factors including teachers' knowledge of all the factors that need to be considered in making the decision, the willingness of teachers to participate in decision making, the skills of the teachers, and the fact that ultimate responsibility for any decision lies with the school principal.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND REFLECTIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter begins with a brief summary of the study. This is followed by a discussion of the supporting conditions and potential barriers to school-based decision making teams that exist in each school, with reflections about factors for staff members to consider as they determine how to address any such barriers. The last section of this chapter addresses the implications of the research findings for theory, research and practice.

SUMMARY

The strategy employed by many successful businesses to compete in today's turbulent environment has been to decentralize – to move planning and decision making to the lowest possible level of the organization. In many companies this process has involved reorganizing around empowered work teams. However, a major barrier to the implementation of teams has been identified as the organization's lack of readiness to change to a team-centered environment. Similarly, decentralization, through school-based management, has been the strategy adopted by the Alberta Government to address the perceived public dissatisfaction with the educational achievement of students, and to bring about greater operational efficiencies in schools throughout the province. To be effective, school-based management also necessitates reorganizing around teams. The purpose of this study was to determine whether schools in Alberta were ready to change to a team-centered environment.

Research in the area of work groups, particularly the work of Lawler (1992),
Wellins et al. (1991), Katzenbach and Smith (1993), and Booth (1994) provided valuable
background on empowered work teams in private sector organizations and on the
conditions necessary for their successful implementation. The numerous publications of
Mohrman and Wohlstetter were particularly helpful in relating Lawler's research to the
field of education. The research of Lieberman (1991), Rosenholtz (1989) and Nias et al.
(1989) was particularly relevant in establishing the value of teams and teacher
collaboration in improving student performance.

Since the primary purpose of this research was to provide the participants of the
study with an in-depth understanding of the current conditions in their schools which
could have a negative impact on the implementation of teams, the research methodology
that was selected as best suited to addressing this intent was a qualitative case study
design as described by Merriam (1988). Two elementary schools were selected to
participate in the study on the basis of purposive sampling. Data for the study were
collected in three ways: a questionnaire administered to the teachers and administrators in
both schools, individual interviews with the teachers and administrators in both schools,
and researcher observations.

The two sites, City School and Town School, were similar in that they both had
space to accommodate the work of teams, but neither had time scheduled for team
members to work together during the school day. Team planning and sharing was an
accepted practice at City School, but virtually non-existent at Town School.

The results of the questionnaire were reported back to each school in the form of
aggregate graphs showing the percentage of staff members in agreement with each factor.
Organizational conditions supporting teamwork that were not identified as being in place
at City School included time and physical space, rewards, budget, vision, school level

commitment, understanding and respect for other teachers, productive meetings, decision making experience, and a belief in the benefits of teamwork. At Town School, organizational conditions supporting teamwork that were not identified as being in place included time and physical space, rewards, budget, performance evaluation, vision, school culture, decision making experience, and a belief in the benefits of teamwork.

An analysis of the data collected through researcher observations and the interviews at City School identified six major themes: rapid change; barriers to effective communication; inadequate trust between teachers and administrators, and among teachers; lack of a clearly understood vision; limited teacher involvement and experience in school decision making; and, a lack of team and decision making skills.

Six major themes also arose from an analysis of the data collected through researcher observations and the interviews at Town School. These themes included teacher isolation, lack of commitment to the school as a whole, limited trust among teachers, resistance to change, internal conflict, and limited teacher involvement and experience in school decision making.

DISCUSSION AND REFLECTIONS

In assessing organizational readiness for empowered work teams, the literature from the business field indicates the need to examine virtually every functional area and existing system within the organization to ensure that it is congruent with empowered work teams. In assessing the readiness of schools for empowered work teams, particularly for school-based decision making teams, this study considered only the following eight areas over which the school site has at least some level of control:

1. Vision and values

2. Cultural readiness

3. Management support

4. Time and resources

5. Training

6. Information processes

7. Performance management and reward system

8. Employee readiness

Data from the questionnaires, interviews, and observations for each school were analyzed to determine whether the conditions in each of these areas supported the implementation of school-based decision making teams.

1. Vision

The literature on empowered work teams indicates that the organization's vision must be clearly understood by everyone in the organization, as well as being supportive of empowered work teams.

Teachers at City School have been investing a great deal of time – some suggested as much as three years – in writing their school vision. Everyone was given ample opportunity to have input into the vision, but the staff acknowledged that the process needed to slow down this year to ensure that the vision incorporated and reflected the views of the new principal as well. While nobody disputes the importance of having a vision to provide the school with a sense of direction, many teachers feel it is time to translate it into some meaningful actions.

While teachers and administrators continue to work together to develop a school vision, the school is clearly being driven by the current focus on improving the academic

achievement of students. This focus was introduced by the principal when he arrived at the school in September. Teachers had no input into this focus, but many teachers indicate that they are in favor of it. One teacher indicated she hoped that the vision would somehow incorporate this new focus. Teachers who do not support this focus are receiving strong encouragement to move to another school.

It is very evident that the jargon that has built up around the processes of visioning and goal setting is causing confusion in this area. I am not sure that even when it is finally developed, the school vision will be particularly meaningful to this staff. What is important is that they currently have a clearly defined and understood direction for their school, and that everyone is working together to move the school in that direction. This is a critical first step in the development of teams in schools because as Lieberman (1991) points out "in normal school practice there are neither the structures nor the expectations that teachers and principals will decide upon common goals" (p.13).

The principal has also informed the staff that team teaching will be the strategy they will be using to work towards the focus of improving student academic achievement. Towards this end he has set the school up for next year with two classrooms of each grade level and assigned two teachers to work together for each grade. This decision is currently causing a great deal of stress for some teachers. Some teachers indicated they did not understand why they needed to team teach, and many others felt that if they do have to team teach, they should have been able to select their own team teaching partner.

Overall, City School seems to have a focus that is understood by everyone. What has not yet been addressed is the development of an understanding of why teams are essential to achieve this focus.

At Town School the staff has also been working on developing a school vision. This has been an ongoing process over the last year that even included a weekend retreat

dedicated to this purpose. While most staff members indicated they understood the need for a school vision, the principal noted that it had taken her a year to convince them of this need.

At the present time it is difficult to judge how effective this vision will be in providing direction to the staff and making them aware of the need for teams, since it was only officially completed at the end of May. On the basis of a first impression it would appear to be a little too vague and general to be entirely effective in this regard. However, it can still be effective if very specific goals are developed to guide the staff in working towards this vision.

Prior to the development of the vision, there have been very few examples of this staff working together effectively to achieve school goals. Even in situations where they are given ample opportunity to provide input and recommend changes, as was the case with the discipline policy, they do not follow through with implementation. Consequently, considerable effort may still be needed to convince them of the need for teamwork in today's educational environment.

2. Cultural Readiness

Cultural readiness in school would be indicated by a willingness to support norms of collegiality and collaboration.

Some of the conditions necessary to support teamwork are already evident in the school culture at City School. One of the major factors favoring the development of teams includes the positive collegial relationships that already seem to exist among staff members. It is generally evident that trust has not yet developed on a strong professional level where teachers would be comfortable working closely together, but a foundation for building more trust certainly exists. Little (1990b) identifies four levels of collegiality.

She describes the first three, (1) scanning and storytelling, (2) help and assistance, and (3) sharing, as relatively weak forms of collegiality. She considers the fourth type – joint work – as the strongest from of collegiality. Certainly all the teachers at City School are working at least at level three, and some are operating at the fourth level.

There are several cultural factors that would impede the development of empowered work teams in City School. The lack of trust between the teachers and the administrators represents a significant barrier. However, most teachers simply attributed this to the fact that they needed more time to enable that trust to develop. Another potential barrier is represented by what appears to be an overall acceptance and expectation of a hierarchical structure in the school, which is suggested by the fact that teachers never challenge decisions made by the school principal.

Collegiality and collaboration are virtually nonexistent at Town School because of the entrenched norm of teacher isolation that exists there. A natural consequence of this isolation is that teachers focus their energies totally on their own classrooms, and feel little if any commitment to the school as a whole. This lack of commitment was already identified as a problem in regard to teachers' failure to "buy in" to the school vision, and in their failure to implement group decisions. It is also evident in their unwillingness to share ideas or resources with other teachers, and the lack of assistance that is provided to new teachers. Collegiality does not even seem to exist at a contrived level in this school, as evidenced by the fact that contact with other teachers in the staff room seems to be avoided. These observations were further confirmed by explanations provided by teachers in the interviews.

Trust between the administration and the teachers is not yet firmly established at Town School, although the staff describe the principal as supportive and acknowledge that she encourages informed risk taking and collaboration. Nevertheless they do not view her

as a "coach" and do not encourage her to visit their classrooms. There is also a perception among some of the teachers that she favors some staff members over others, and these favorites receive more privileges and attention. Similarly, trust among teachers is not strong, and there appear to be serious concerns about being evaluated by the teaching partner in a teaming situation.

3. Management Support

Orsburn et al. (1990) warn that if managers actively oppose employee involvement, work teams should not be introduced. In their review of the literature on problems and obstacles to empowerment in schools, Lane and Epps (1992) found that the reluctance of administrators at all levels to give up their traditional prerogatives was one of the most frequently cited problems. For this reason, one of the major factors that was considered in selecting the schools for this study was that the principal already supported the concept of teacher empowerment and was already working on ways to increase teacher involvement in decision making in the school.

While research indicates that the role of management needs to change significantly if empowered work teams are to be successfully introduced into an organization, school districts seem to be providing little, if any training and support for school administrators who want to introduce school-based decision making teams into their schools. Consequently, it is not surprising that even school administrators who support the concept of school-based decision making teams, do not necessarily understand the role they need to play or the best strategies to use in the development of these teams.

At City School the principal has taken a strong, directive position in providing leadership in this area. He has developed and communicated to the staff a clear focus which incorporates the need for teams and teacher involvement, and is taking steps to

modify the school structure to assist teachers in their work towards the vision. At the present time most decisions are made by the principal or the administrative team, and subsequently presented to the staff for feedback. Many decisions incorporate information acquired from the staff through informal conversations. With the current focus on improving the academic achievement of students, many of the decisions that fall outside of that scope are just made unilaterally by the principal or the administrative team and communicated to the teachers. The principal identifies his major challenges to empowering teachers as being the teachers' lack of knowledge and skills and their unwillingness or inability to communicate their ideas.

At Town School the principal is using a collaborative approach to encourage teachers to understand and "buy into" the concepts of teacher involvement and teamwork. She provides the staff with copious information relating to the school and the district, and encourages them to identify the need for change. She has created committee structures in areas such as budget and discipline to enable the staff to have input into decisions in these areas. She has empowered the staff to make final decisions in areas such as professional development, and special events . She identifies her major concerns about empowering teachers as being the unwillingness of the staff to take on leadership and responsibility in areas where they have been empowered, the inability of the staff to resolve conflicts, and the failure of staff to implement decisions in areas where they have had input.

4. Time and Resources

These have been identified in the literature on empowered teams as two of the most important elements in enabling the transition to teams. Time has traditionally been identified as a scarce resource in schools. Additional funding is unlikely considering the present economic climate in Alberta, where schools are being exhorted to do "more with

less." One of the major benefits to the schools participating in this project was having outside facilitators to guide them through the process of team building.

At City School at least some team planning is occurring, which certainly helps to address the problem of inadequate teacher time. In addition, most of the extra-curricular programs that were being offered in the school have been put on hold for the present time to ensure that teachers are able to direct all their attentions to the school focus. This decision is to be re-evaluated at a later date, and, if some of these activities are seen as having made a direct contribution to the achievement of the school goals, they will be reinstated at that time.

The isolation problems caused by the physical plant itself are currently being addressed at City School. Openings between classrooms are being created, and numerous empty classrooms are kept available for team planning or team work. There is also talk of creating a teacher work space near the staff room.

At Town School, lack of time for team meetings and team planning was identified as a major concern by most teachers. This situation is aggravated by the fact that, with one exception, virtually no team planning occurs at Town School.

Although many teachers did not seem to recognize this, Town School also has the benefit of having spaces available for teachers to meet and plan, or to bring their classes together, including empty classrooms, the library, and a large space referred to as the "rec" room.

5. Training

Inadequate training has been identified as one of the biggest hindrances to team performance in business, and Lane and Epps (1992) identified lack of training as one of the major obstacles schools have encountered in their efforts to bring about reforms

through empowerment. Teachers' lack of knowledge and skills was identified in both schools as a major factor in limiting teacher involvement in decision making and their participation on teams at the present time.

At City School, teachers indicated a reluctance to become more involved in the budgeting process because of their lack of overall knowledge in the area, particularly about the implications of any decisions they might make. They also expressed concern about the adequacy of their technical knowledge due to recent changes in the curriculum, the changing roles for many teachers as a result of many positions being eliminated or reduced, and the need to adapt the curriculum to meet the diverse needs of their students. Teachers indicated they were still trying to learn how to work together to solve problems and make decisions, and that they were experiencing particular difficulty with consensus decision making.

There were other areas at City School where the need to change attitudes and behavior was identified . So far, teachers have had very little input into the decisions that have resulted in the many changes that have been occurring at City School. While they are experiencing stress and have concerns about many of these changes, they are unwilling or unable to voice their opinions and reservations. This may indicate an unwillingness on their part to challenge the traditional hierarchical structure of schools and the role of the principal in making decisions. The need to build trust and improve communication has also been identified as a problem at City School.

The staff at Town School continue to be divided by a severe split which seems to have developed about three years ago over new teaching strategies versus traditional teaching strategies, effectively pitting new teachers against experienced teachers. The existence of this conflict prevents any sort of cohesiveness from developing in the staff as a whole. The inability of teachers at Town School to resolve this conflict is not surprising.

Conflict is one of the most difficult challenges for schools to deal with because as Lieberman (1991) points out: "(1) teaching is not simply a craft, but flows from deeply held personal beliefs, and (2) schools have no tradition of public argument as a means of resolving differences and arriving at decisions" (p.15). As a result of this on-going conflict, teachers will also have to rebuild their collegial relationships.

The need for changes in the attitude and behavior of teachers at Town School is also demonstrated by their willingness to perpetuate the traditional roles and responsibilities associated with a hierarchical structure. While many teachers at Town School appreciate the opportunity to provide input into decisions, they accept the fact that many of their decisions will ultimately be changed because the administration might "feel that it's an important change to make" or they might "have a better view of the full picture than we do."

Another problem area was identified by the school principal in noting that whenever she withdraws from a committee, no leader emerges from within the committee to fill the leadership vacuum, and the committee does not assume responsibility for achieving its goals .

6. Information Processes

Lawler (1992) explains, "An information system that provides employees with ongoing business information and a sense of the organization's long-term direction is critical to employees' exercising greater self-management and coordinating their work laterally with other employees" (p.xiv).

Communication was identified as a problem by both the teachers and the principal at City School during the interviews, even though this was not indicated on the questionnaire. Teachers felt that changes were occurring in the school with incredible

speed, and they were not always informed ahead of time about some of the changes that affected them directly. They also felt they were not adequately informed in areas such as the school budget and school policies. A major concern was the lack of adequate information about the need for change and the impact the change would have on teachers. Some teachers indicated they had difficulty evaluating the importance of the information they did receive, since it was all delivered in the same way. The principal indicated concern that he got no feedback from teachers regarding proposed decisions, because this meant he had to make decisions without the benefit of the valuable input that could be provided by the teachers. This concern was also expressed by teachers. Regarding horizontal communication, teachers indicated that the elimination of a common recess time seriously reduced any opportunities they had to communicate with each other.

Communication was less of an issue at Town School, probably because structures were in place to encourage staff input into many school decisions, and the principal has devised various strategies for ensuring that information she receives is communicated to the staff in an effective and timely manner. However, it is evident that because of the pattern of teaching in isolation, horizontal communication among teachers is virtually nonexistent.

7. Performance Management and Reward System

Within the literature on business organizations, the subjects of performance management and reward systems are recognized as being of critical importance in motivating effective team performance. As Schlechty (1990) points out, people know what is important in an organization by what is measured and what is rewarded. Consequently, if a school principal wants to encourage teachers to participate on teams and to become more involved in decision making, it is extremely important to reward the

behaviors that lead to this desired outcome, while ceasing to reward the highly individualistic behaviors that have been rewarded in the past.

There was very little discussion at either school on these topics, since most principals have very little control over rewards, and teachers have learned not to expect extrinsic rewards. Most teachers felt that the rewards for effective team work were intrinsic, in that it enabled them to do a better job with students. At most, teachers suggested they would feel rewarded if they were given time during the school day to work with other members of their team. There was general agreement that if teamwork was considered necessary for the school to achieve its goals, then performance evaluations should reflect the importance of this focus, and teachers should be evaluated on their effectiveness as team members.

These are obviously two areas that need to be addressed if empowered work teams are to become a reality in schools.

8. Employee Readiness

Orsburn et al. (1990) and Wellins et al. (1991) indicate that team members need to be selected based on their capabilities, skills, and motivation to work in a team environment. Capabilities and skills were previously discussed under the need for training. In terms of motivation, many, but certainly not all of the teachers at City School demonstrate a very positive attitude towards working in a team environment. Several teachers indicated that they have already had very positive experiences working on teams and feel that the advantages to themselves and to their students far outweigh any disadvantages associated with teamwork. Others have had limited but positive experiences with teamwork, and express a willingness to continue to explore working in this way. Some are very opposed to working in a team situation. Some of the reasons

suggested for this resistance are fear of change, cynicism regarding yet another reform in education, previous bad experiences with teamwork, fear of inadequacy, fear of being judged by others, unwillingness to commit the time to team meetings, unwillingness to change current teaching strategies, lack of trust regarding the ability of other teachers, and lack of understanding of the need for change.

Similarly at Town School, some teachers are very excited about the potential that working in teams has to offer. Others, however, are very resistant to breaking down the current pattern of isolation. The greatest concern appears to be that the implementation of more teamwork in the school would result in a loss of classroom privacy and autonomy. Other concerns expressed by the teachers at Town School are very similar to fears expressed by the teachers at City School including fear of change, fear of evaluation by others, and fear of being found inadequate. Their primary fear, however, seems to be a loss of power and control over their professional life.

Reflections for Action: City School

At the present time, teacher empowerment is at quite a low level at City School. Before this level is increased, it is important that teachers have certain basic understandings about some of the implications of increased involvement. The first of these understandings is that empowerment does not give them a license to do what they want. Rather it means that within certain parameters they will have the right and the responsibility to make informed decisions, and that they will be held accountable for the results of those decisions. In decision making, it is also important that teachers understand the systemic nature of change. An excellent example arose with the introduction of staggered recess times to eliminate many of the discipline problems that occurred during this fifteen minute time period. The elimination of the common recess

·time did in fact significantly reduce the number of discipline problems, but it also had the effect of eliminating one of the few periods of time during which teachers had an opportunity as a staff to meet. Even with these understandings, however, there are certain major factors that should be addressed before the level of teacher empowerment at City School is increased.

It is evident that while there is a clearly understood goal at City School and everyone is working towards that focus, many teachers are not convinced of the need to change what they are currently doing to accomplish this goal, nor are they convinced that team teaching is necessarily the best strategy for achieving the goal. The lack of understanding and commitment in these areas is closely tied to the need to improve overall communication in the school. Decisions need to be made regarding what information should be communicated to different people in the school, and then any barriers restricting this flow of communication must be identified and eliminated. At the present time, one of the major barriers to the upward flow of information appears to be lack of trust between teachers and the school administration. While trust takes time to develop, teachers may also have to take some risks in this area. Similarly, increased trust among teachers also needs to be developed before increased levels of collaboration are likely to occur. Teachers will also require increased knowledge and skills in many areas including curriculum and instruction, interpersonal relations, problem solving and decision making, and management. While Professional Development days and peer support groups can certainly be focused on some of these concerns, there is need for an ongoing commitment to training in many of these areas if teams are to be successful.

While City School is not yet ready for fully functioning school-based decision making teams, some of the conditions that are critical to the successful implementation of empowered work teams are definitely in place. If strategies to address the remaining

barriers to empowered teams are vigorously pursued, I have no doubt that school-based decision making teams could be highly successful in moving City School towards the achievement of its goals.

Reflections for Action: Town School

Although the principal at Town School has done everything possible to create a collaborative environment in the school, until the two major issues of teacher isolation and conflict are resolved, school-based decision making teams will not be successful. Attention must be focused on training teachers in conflict resolution skills and on building collegiality among staff members. Not only are skills in conflict resolution and interpersonal relations necessary to address these two existing barriers, they will continue to be necessary in a team environment, since conflict is inevitable when teachers begin working together.

Teachers need to be encouraged to expand their focus beyond their individual classrooms to the school. The need for this change in focus is based on educational, political and economic reasons. The more we understand about how learning occurs, the more we are recognizing the interdependent nature of our work, and the need to reinforce and build on what the student has experienced in the past. Politically, schools are facing increased involvement by school councils, composed of parents, community members, and educators. If teachers in the schools don't come together as professional educators to determine and implement the best strategies for achieving school goals, based on their knowledge of educational research and their experience, they may lose the power to make those decisions. The Alberta Government has provided the economic reasons by indicating that supplementary funding for the whole school will be based on the results attained by students writing the achievement tests, not the results of individual classrooms.

Consequently, ensuring that students achieve those results becomes the concern of every teacher in the school, regardless of whether or not they are currently teaching that student. Hopefully, the school vision will not only provide teachers with a common direction, but will also help them understand the need to work together on teams to achieve their vision.

Teachers at Town School also need to understand that empowerment, which gives teachers the right to make decisions, carries with it the responsibility to implement the decisions and to be held accountable for the results of the decisions.

School-based decision making teams involving the whole staff at Town School face major barriers. Continuing attempts to implement teams without first addressing these barriers may only result in frustrating the individuals who already support teaming, as one teacher indicates when she says: "I think with consensus being such a tough one. I think especially when you have different groups with different personalities and different teaching styles and different philosophies, it's tough. I don't mind if the principal makes the decision." However the belief in the value of shared decision making teams is already firmly in place with the principal and many of the teachers. The implementation of an intensive training program to assist teachers in addressing the barriers that have been identified will be an important first step towards creating a state of readiness for school-based decision making teams at Town School.

IMPLICATIONS

Implications for Theory

The theoretical basis of this study was derived from the extant literature in the areas of work groups, participative decision making, and school restructuring. The following implications for theory emerged from this study.

Information, Knowledge, Power and Rewards

Based on the literature and on his own research Lawler (1992) espouses the theory that increasing the level of involvement in any organization is dependent on increasing the access that individuals at lower levels of the organization have to these four elements or key resources; information, knowledge, power and rewards. While Lawler's research was carried out in the private sector, the work of Mohrman and Wohlstetter (see Mohrman et al., 1992; Wohlstetter & Odden, 1992; Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1993; Mohrman & Wohlstetter, 1994) suggests that this theory should be equally relevant to education. Since the current level of teacher involvement in school-based decision making is indeed quite low in both City School and Town School, the research data were examined from the perspective of these four elements.

Information

Communication was identified as a major concern at City School. This included both downward and upward communication between teachers and the school administrators, as well as horizontal communication with teachers in different classrooms and grade levels. Teachers specifically commented on the fact that they did not receive adequate information in the areas of budget and school policies, and there were no distinctions made to indicate the relevance or importance of the information that was being

communicated. Most importantly, information regarding the need for change and the implications of the change were not communicated to staff.

While communication was not expressly identified as a major concern by the teachers at Town School, it was evident that communication among teachers was negligible because of the high level of self-imposed isolation that was being perpetuated in the school. Teachers did comment on the lack of sharing, and on the fact that there was very little interaction among teachers even on a social level in the staff room. While there was some top-down communication occurring because of the principal's concerted efforts to communicate information to the staff, she was receiving very little information back from the staff.

Aside from the actual mechanics of information flow, staffs in both schools also commented on the need to have complete information – to be able to see the whole picture. This observation bears out Lawler's assertion about the importance of enabling the employees to see the big picture in order to understand how their actions contribute to the work of the whole organization.

Knowledge

At City School gaps in knowledge were identified in several important areas including knowledge of teaching, knowledge of team skills, and knowledge of the organization as a whole. The principal indicated the need to work at upgrading the teaching skills of some teachers, and several teachers expressed concerns about the teaching ability of the individual with whom they were partnered for team teaching. Absence of knowledge about the organization as a whole was demonstrated by the fact that many teachers neither understood nor used the vision to guide and evaluate the effectiveness of their daily activities. Teachers also had limited knowledge of hiring and

budget procedures. Both the principal and teachers expressed concern about the skill-level of teachers in the areas of problem solving and effective decision making.

At Town School, lack of knowledge about the organization as a whole was even more evident, in that there was neither understanding of the need for, nor commitment to the vision or to the consistent implementation of school policy. Similarly absent was a real understanding of the interdependent nature of teachers' work, as few people could come up with examples of instances where they felt it was absolutely necessary for the staff to work together. Critically absent in this school were skills in conflict resolution, problem solving, and interpersonal relationships.

These observations demonstrate that teachers in both schools need training to increase their knowledge of instructional reforms, social skills, and management practices. This clearly supports Lawler's position that lack of knowledge in these critical areas will limit the ability of employees to contribute to new operational practices

Power

At City School teachers felt that for the most part their power was limited to approving decisions that had already been made. At the same time the principal indicates frustration at his inability to give staff more power, partly because of their lack of knowledge and skills and partly because of their unwillingness to commit more time to meetings. In addition, many staff members indicated that they did not want to be involved in many areas of decision making, nor did they want total responsibility for many decisions.

At Town School teachers felt that any decision they made might be overruled by the administration. Some teachers also felt that any available power was not equally distributed to all staff members, and that some people's opinions were valued more than other's. As these members were perceived as more powerful, their more passive

colleagues experienced greater difficulty in presenting opposing opinions. Consequently, the existence of conflict in the school, coupled with this power differential, had the effect of discouraging many teachers from becoming involved in decision making. The principal also indicated that the level of teacher empowerment was limited by policy guidelines and parental expectations.

Lawler stresses the importance of the connection between power and accountability. The examples in these schools bear out this importance – in many of these examples teachers seemed to fear empowerment because of the attendant responsibility and accountability.

Rewards.

Significant by its absence was any discussion of rewards. For the most part it was not raised as an issue in either school, primarily because both teachers and principals felt they had very little power to do anything in this area. The traditional view that teaching is a calling was evident in the reaction of a few teachers whose professional pride appeared to be offended by any suggestions of extrinsic rewards. It was also noteworthy that when the topic of rewards was discussed in interviews, teachers automatically thought of extrinsic, monetary rewards, or occasionally extrinsic rewards in the form of extra preparation time or opportunities to attend conferences. None of the teachers perceived that teacher evaluation criteria can be designed to reward some desired behavior – for example a principal who wants to implement school-based decision making might choose the majority of the teacher evaluation criteria to be related to teaming and collaborative activities.

The findings of this study would appear to support Lawler's theory, in that the absence of information, knowledge, power and rewards certainly acts as a barrier to increased teacher involvement on school-based decision making teams. However, this

· research also demonstrates that there are other barriers to teacher involvement that are not accounted for by this theory. Clearly, simply addressing these four elements in schools will not be enough to result in the desired level of teacher involvement on school-based decision making teams. That is also the argument put forward by Willower (1991) in suggesting the advantages of also looking at schools from a micropolitical perspective.

Micropolitics

Micropolitics is concerned with the interplay of power, influence, and control at the school level (Mawhinney, 1995). Townsend (1990) indicates that ultimately it is about the "conflictive interests that swirl around schools" (p.208). Marshall and Scribner (1991) identify several recurrent themes in the emerging literature on micropolitical analysis, which I feel can be applied to this study and help to make meaning from the data collected. The themes that relate to this study include:

Ideologies and values of subsystems of teachers and administrators in schools.

The clash of ideologies and values is very evident at Town School, where one of the major conflicts in the school appears to be between teachers who support a traditional approach to teaching and teachers who support an innovative approach. While efforts are being made to address this conflict, it in fact remains unresolved after three years. Complicating this issue is the fact that even within each subgroup there is no homogeneity of viewpoint or teaching approach. Further, loyalty to the subgroup is not consistent on all issues. Consequently, at staff meetings situations develop where the staff is split "down the middle," and other situations where the split will not occur. Generally however, when one or two key players decide to take a stand on an issue, their subgroup will follow their lead.

Similarly, at City School there is a subgroup of teachers who support the traditional school focus of addressing the social needs of students, and another subgroup made up of the administrators and teachers who support the new focus on student academic achievement. These differences result in power plays which prolong staff meetings.

Boundaries and turf, as in the focus on negotiated order.

A very interesting turf battle is evident at Town School, where two teachers are totally immersed in the only team teaching situation in the school. Both are incredibly powerful advocates of the benefits of teaming, for the teachers and especially for the students. They have in fact served as a demonstration model for teachers throughout the district, who come to see their fine program in action. They are very critical of other teachers in the school who do not recognize the merits of what they consider to be a most powerful approach to teaching. Having been made aware of their fame in the district, we expected these two teachers to be our strongest supporters as we worked to facilitate teamwork among the rest of the staff members. In reality, they did everything in their power to undermine our efforts. This was initially demonstrated by hostility during the interview and subsequent contact in the staff room. This hostility was blatantly expressed during a staff session where we provided feedback about the results of the interviews and began the process of developing school goals for next year. Throughout the session the two teachers acted bored and disinterested. They giggled, read outside materials, and refused to participate seriously in the process and in fact took action to invalidate the input from other members of the staff. At one point where staff members were given stickers to vote on their priorities for the coming year, one of these teachers put them on her nose instead. Since we did not know these individuals prior to our involvement in the school, we tend to discount the possibility of their intense and immediate dislike of both of us.

This leaves us with the hypothesis that these teachers do not want anyone else to share in the limelight on their "turf" of teaming.

Another turf battle which may potentially emerge in both schools is teacher autonomy versus the authority of the principal. Although well established at Town School, this autonomy is certainly being threatened by the current training focus of this study. At City School, the principal is already challenging teachers in this area, in questioning both what they are teaching and the strategies they are using.

Privatization of conflict.

City School provides a good example of privatization of conflict. Teachers have been told they will not be able to select their own team teaching partner – that the decision will be made by the school administration.. On the surface, staff relations are excellent. Many teachers, in fact, comment about the support and good feelings that exist among staff members. It is, in fact, quite amazing to hear one teacher talk about her concerns, and feelings of powerlessness about the teacher who has been designated as her partner for the coming year, while at the very same time that teacher is talking about the positive, supportive environment that she sees herself moving into for the coming year.

Another amazing example comes from Town School during the "sticker episode." In addition to exhibiting ongoing behavior which was generally characteristic of students in their early teens, one of the two team-teachers openly refused to join a table occupied by one of the traditional teachers. While we, as outside observers, found this behavior to be unusual as well as unprofessional, the rest of the staff acted as though everything was in order.

Policy-remaking in site-level implementation.

This issue of taking policy and remaking it to fit the individual circumstances was evident at both schools in terms of the discipline policy. In fact, even though teachers

were involved in the development of the policy and given the opportunity to provide input into it, there was still a problem with consistent implementation. Despite an understanding of the intent of the policy and the need for consistency in this area, teachers still seemed to feel the need to make "judgment calls" as demanded by the circumstances. Virtually every teacher indicated that there were occasions where they did this.

As with Lawler's theory, while micropolitical research does not address all the barriers to the implementation of school-based decision making teams, it can certainly lead to a better understanding of some of the elements that could inhibit the development of these teams in schools. There is no doubt that power and conflict play such a major role in this area, that to ignore them would be doing a disservice to the schools involved, in that any meaningful change is unlikely to occur unless these issues are addressed.

Implications for Research

This case study was conducted as the first phase of a four phase collaborative action research project. Everhart (1991) explains that:

> action/participatory research approach does not claim to be neutral, but rather calls for close collaboration between the research consultant and those individuals with whom the research is conducted. This collaborative process involves collective problem definition, investigation of the problem, and analysis of the data collected, with a particular understanding of the social/political factors embedded in systems and extrasystemic contexts. All of the steps are interactive and all individuals in the inquiry process are active participants in this evolutionary process. (p.463)

The purpose of the case study was to identify barriers to the implementation of school-based decision making teams in the two schools participating in the study. Throughout this phase the researcher has worked with the participants to describe and understand the current situation in their school. The next phase of the research will involve the participants in actively researching ways to change the current situation to reduce or

eliminate the barriers that were identified. In doing this they will need to focus their research on some of the following areas:

- identifying the most effective place to start their change efforts,
- strategies for conducting action research, including determining who should be involved at each stage,
- strategies to address each of the barriers identified, and
- strategies for successfully implementing change within the school.

A suggestion for a related research project would be to study the effectiveness of different management approaches in implementing school-based decision making teams. While both principals in this study expressed strong support for the concept of school-based decision making team, their strategies in working towards this goal were very different. One principal was using a very directive approach, while the other principal was employing a much more collaborative approach. During the period that this study was being conducted, these approaches appeared to be producing quite different results. Long-term research would need to be done to assess the relative effectiveness of the different approaches in achieving the desired outcome.

More research also needs to be done to determine the best way to increase teacher involvement at the school level. While the schools in this study were attempting to involve the entire staff at the same time, other schools have been reported to begin the process with teams of volunteer teachers who have expressed sincere interest in becoming more involved in school-based decision making. While there are problems inherent in either approach, research in the area could help to clarify the advantages and disadvantages of the two approaches or to identify situations where one approach might be preferable to the other.

This research illustrates the fact that several of the elements that are critical to the successful implementation of school-based decision making teams lie outside the jurisdiction of the school. These include factors such as training, rewards, and restructuring teacher work time to acknowledge the fact that the work of teachers extends beyond the time spent in direct contact with students. Additional research needs to be undertaken to determine the role of the school district in supporting school readiness for school-based decision making teams.

Implications for Practice

The implications for practice that arise from this study are based on the findings that the participating schools are not yet ready to implement school-based decision making teams. Addressing certain barriers prior to implementing a team structure can help to eliminate many unnecessary frustrations for team members and can help to ensure that the time and effort that goes into developing teams will be more likely to result in the desired benefits for schools. While these implications are directly relevant to the schools participating in the study, other schools anticipating a move to school-based decision making teams might also want to consider these factors before actually setting up teams. While most of these implications have been outlined in the discussion section of this chapter, they are summarized here as follows:

- develop a clearly understood vision that clarifies the need and direction for change;
- build trust among teachers and between teachers and the administration;
- establish and maintain good lines of communication within the school;
- provide teachers with information about the organization as a whole – the big picture;

- focus professional development activities on developing the skills teachers need to enable them to function effectively in a team environment;

- build flexibility into the school timetable to create opportunities for teachers to talk, meet, and work together; and

- focus on breaking down teacher isolation and creating a sense of interdependence among teachers.

Concluding Remarks

While the results of this study relate directly to the participating schools, it is hoped that these findings demonstrate, in a more general sense, the importance of establishing readiness before implementing school-based decision making teams. By identifying and addressing any barriers or potential barriers ahead of time, the likelihood of successful implementation will be greatly increased.

These findings also demonstrate the critical need for outside facilitation and extensive training to provide teachers and administrators with the knowledge, attitudes and skills they will need to overcome the barriers and make this new organizational structure effective. Outside facilitation is necessary because of the time required to carry out an assessment, the sensitive nature of the information needed to identify many of the barriers to the implementation of teams, and the specialized skills and knowledge required to assist schools in developing strategies to overcome these barriers. The need for training has been demonstrated throughout the study.

A state of readiness for school-based decision making teams can be created by providing schools with the resources they need to identify and address any barriers to empowered work teams. The provision of outside facilitation and extensive training will enable teachers and school administrators to move beyond the structural concerns associated with the transition to a team-centered environment, and to focus their creative energies on their primary task of enhancing student learning.

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APPENDIX I: RESPONSES

CITY SCHOOL

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Percent Agree
1. Physical plant	1	5	4	4	1	0.53
2. Scheduling/Timetable	4	9	1	0	1	0.07
3. Performance evaluation	0	1	12	0	2	0.80
4. Communication - school change	0	2	11	1	1	0.80
5. Rewards	1	4	7	1	2	0.53
6. Budgeting	0	2	10	0	3	0.67
7. Communication - change affecting	0	2	10	1	2	0.73
8. Understandable to others	2	4	6	1	2	0.47
9. I use it	0	4	10	0	1	0.67
10. Understandable to me	0	4	8	2	1	0.67
11. Evaluate success of actions	0	0	9	5	1	0.93
12. Staff Input	0	1	11	2	1	0.87
13. Evaluate to stop actions	0	3	7	2	2	0.60
14. Support - recognition	0	3	6	5	1	0.73
15. Learners - change	0	3	9	2	1	0.73
16. Implement decisions - discipline	0	9	5	0	1	0.33
17. Learners - creative	0	3	9	0	3	0.60
18. Implement decisions of majority	0	3	10	1	1	0.73
19. Support - students	0	0	11	4	0	1.00
20. Support - teaching	0	1	10	2	2	0.80
21. Respect - teaming up	0	5	6	3	1	0.60
22. Learners - lifelong	1	0	6	8	0	0.93
23. Successful collaboration	1	1	8	3	1	0.73
24. Productive meetings	1	5	6	1	0	0.47
25. Respect - student preparation	1	7	7	0	0	0.47
26. Respect - equal work	1	6	5	1	1	0.40
27. Support - professional	0	1	9	5	0	0.93
28. Respect - different viewpoints	1	2	10	1	1	0.73
29. Support - administrative	0	0	12	2	1	0.93
30. Consensus	1	4	8	1	1	0.60
31. Dialogue	2	3	7	0	3	0.47
32. Special problem solving	0	6	7	0	2	0.47
33. Quality circle	0	5	8	0	2	0.53
34. Focused problem solving	0	4	7	0	4	0.47
35. Limited self-direction	1	0	4	0	9	0.27
36. Hiring decisions	0	8	4	0	3	0.27

CITY SCHOOL

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Percent Agree
37. Classroom decisions	0	0	14	0	1	0.93
38. Encourages collaboration	1	0	7	6	1	0.87
39. Budget decisions	0	3	10	0	2	0.67
40. Supportive	0	0	12	2	1	0.93
41. Encourages informed risks	0	1	7	6	1	0.87
42. Better planning	0	1	6	8	0	0.93
43. Better student activities	0	3	8	2	2	0.67
44. Improved student learning	0	1	7	5	2	0.80
45. Prefer team teaching	0	1	8	4	1	0.80
46. School improvement	0	0	9	6	0	1.00
47. Learn from others	0	0	9	6	0	1.00
48. Personal success	0	3	10	1	1	0.73
49. Rewarding	0	0	10	4	0	0.93
50. Take risks	0	2	10	3	0	0.87

TOWN SCHOOL

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Percent agree
1. Physical plant	2	7	5	0	1	0.33
2. Scheduling/Timetable	3	10	0	0	2	0.00
3. Performance evaluation	3	7	1	0	4	0.07
4. Communication - school change	1	0	9	5	0	0.93
5. Rewards	1	6	5	1	2	0.40
6. Budgeting	1	5	3	0	6	0.20
7. Communication - change affecting	2	1	7	4	1	0.73
8. Understandable to others	2	5	6	1	1	0.47
9. I use it	3	6	3	0	3	0.20
10. Understandable to me	1	4	7	1	2	0.53
11. Evaluate success of actions	2	5	6	0	2	0.40
12. Staff Input	1	1	9	3	1	0.80
13. Evaluate to stop actions	1	5	4	0	5	0.27
14. Support - recognition	2	5	7	0	1	0.47
15. Learners - change	2	5	8	0	0	0.53
16. Implement decisions - discipline	2	8	4	0	1	0.27
17. Learners - creative	1	4	8	0	2	0.53
18. Implement decisions of majority	2	3	7	1	2	0.53
19. Support -students	1	3	9	2	0	0.73
20. Support - teaching	1	1	8	2	3	0.67
21. Respect - teaming up	0	3	9	2	1	0.73
22. Learners - lifelong	1	2	7	5	0	0.80
23. Successful collaboration	1	4	9	1	0	0.67
24. Productive meetings	1	4	7	2	1	0.60
25. Respect - student preparation	0	2	8	0	5	0.53
26. Respect - equal work	1	4	8	1	1	0.60
27. Support - professional	0	1	10	3	1	0.87
28. Respect - different viewpoints	0	4	8	2	1	0.67
29. Support - administrative	1	2	10	1	1	0.73
30. Consensus	1	5	9	0	0	0.60
31. Dialogue	2	2	11	0	0	0.73
32. Special problem solving	1	2	8	1	2	0.60
33. Quality circle	1	4	7	1	1	0.53
34. Focused problem solving	3	8	2	0	2	0.13
35. Limited self-direction	3	4	3	0	5	0.20
36. Hiring decisions	4	4	4	0	3	0.27
37. Classroom decisions	0	3	10	0	1	0.67

TOWN SCHOOL

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Percent agree
38. Encourages collaboration	0	0	14	1	0	1.00
39. Budget decisions	1	2	11	0	1	0.73
40. Supportive	0	1	8	5	1	0.87
41. Encourages informed risks	0	0	7	8	0	1.00
42. Better planning	0	1	8	3	3	0.73
43. Better student activities	0	5	4	2	4	0.40
44. Improved student learning	0	2	4	9	0	0.87
45. Prefer team teaching	2	4	3	4	2	0.47
46. School improvement	0	0	7	8	0	1.00
47. Learn from others	0	2	7	6	0	0.87
48. Personal success	1	4	3	6	1	0.60
49. Rewarding	0	2	9	4	0	0.87
50. Take risks	0	3	6	4	1	0.67

APPENDIX II: CHARTS

CITY SCHOOL

I. Compatible Systems

	0.00	0.10	0.20	0.30	0.40	0.50	0.60	0.70	0.80	0.90	1.00

1. Physical plant

2. Scheduling/ Timetable

3. Performance evaluation

4. Communication - school change

5. Rewards

6. Budgeting

7. Communication - change affecting me

CITY SCHOOL

II. Vision and Goals

	0.00 0.10 0.20 0.30 0.40 0.50 0.60 0.70 0.80 0.90 1.00
8. Understandable to others	
9. I use it	
10. Understandable to me	
11. Evaluate success of actions	
12. Staff Input	
13. Evaluate to stop actions	

III. School Culture

	0.00	0.10	0.20	0.30	0.40	0.50	0.60	0.70	0.80	0.90	1.00

14. Support - recognition

15. Learners - change

16. Implement decisions - discipline

17. Learners - creative

18. Implement decisions of majority

19. Support -students

20. Support - teaching

21. Respect - teaming up

22. Learners - lifelong

23. Successful collaboration

24. Productive meetings

25. Respect - student preparation

26. Respect - equal work

27. Support - professional

28. Respect - different viewpoints

29. Support - administrative

CITY SCHOOL

IV. Level of Empowerment

Horizontal bar chart with x-axis "Level of Empowerment" ranging from 0.00 to 1.00 in increments of 0.10.

Item	Value
30. Consensus	~0.60
31. Dialogue	~0.45
32. Special problem solving	~0.45
33. Quality circle	~0.52
34. Focused problem solving	~0.45
35. Limited self-direction	~0.27
36. Hiring decisions	~0.27
37. Classroom decisions	~0.93
38. Encourages collaboration	~0.85
39. Budget decisions	~0.67
40. Supportive	~0.93
41. Encourages informed risks	~0.85

CITY SCHOOL

V. Individual Commitment

```
        0.00  0.10  0.20  0.30  0.40  0.50  0.60  0.70  0.80  0.90  1.00
```

42. Better planning ▐████████████████████████████████████▌ (~0.93)

43. Better student
    activities ▐██████████████████████████▌ (~0.66)

44. Improved student
    learning ▐████████████████████████████████▌ (~0.80)

45.Prefer team
   teaching ▐████████████████████████████████▌ (~0.80)

46. School
    improvement ▐██████████████████████████████████████▌ (~0.97)

47. Learn from others ▐██████████████████████████████████████▌ (~0.98)

48. Personal success ▐████████████████████████████▌ (~0.72)

49. Rewarding ▐████████████████████████████████████▌ (~0.93)

50. Take risks ▐██████████████████████████████████▌ (~0.87)

TOWN SCHOOL

I. Compatible Systems

	0.00	0.10	0.20	0.30	0.40	0.50	0.60	0.70	0.80	0.90	1.00

- 1. Physical plant
- 2. Scheduling/ Timetable
- 3. Performance evaluation
- 4. Communication - school change
- 5. Rewards
- 6. Budgeting
- 7. Communication - change affecting me

TOWN SCHOOL

II. Vision and Goals

TOWN SCHOOL

III. School Culture

	0.00	0.10	0.20	0.30	0.40	0.50	0.60	0.70	0.80	0.90

Bar chart with horizontal bars for items 14 through 29.

- 14. Support - recognition
- 15. Learners - change
- 16. Implement decisions - discipline
- 17. Learners - creative
- 18. Implement decisions of majority
- 19. Support -students
- 20. Support - teaching
- 21. Respect - teaming up
- 22. Learners - lifelong
- 23. Successful collaboration
- 24. Productive meetings
- 25. Respect - student preparation
- 26. Respect - equal work
- 27. Support - professional
- 28. Respect - different viewpoints
- 29. Support - administrative

TOWN SCHOOL

IV. Level of Empowerment

0.00   0.10   0.20   0.30   0.40   0.50   0.60   0.70   0.80   0.90   1.00

TOWN SCHOOL

V. Individual Commitment

0.00   0.10   0.20   0.30   0.40   0.50   0.60   0.70   0.80   0.90   1.00

42. Better planning

43. Better student activities

44. Improved student learning

45.Prefer team teaching

46. School improvement

47. Learn from others

48. Personal success

49. Rewarding

50. Take risks