

# Creating People-centred Schools

School Organization and Change  
in South Africa

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*The SAIDE Teacher Education Series*

**Saide**   
South African Institute  
for Distance Education

# Creating People-centred Schools

School Organization  
and Change in South Africa

## Learning Guide

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**Creating People-Centred Schools**  
ISBN 978-0-9869837-1-9

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The first edition was funded by the WK Kellogg foundation. This digital version has been funded through the International Association of Digital Publications.

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# Preface

## The SAIDE Teacher Education Series

***Creating People-centred Schools*** is one of the modules in the SAIDE Teacher Education Series developed between 1998 and 2002.

This comprehensive multi-media series comprises:

- Learning Guides, which operate much as a teacher does in structuring learning, explaining concepts, exploring debates in the field, and direct readers to other parts of the module at appropriate times;
- Readings which function as a 'mini-library' of edited readings for further exploration of concepts, issues and debates raised in the Learning Guide;
- An audiotape which use interviews and classroom events to develop the issues raised in each of the modules (not for all modules)
- A video which bring issues and debates from the modules to life (not for all modules).

Although designed to support the learning guides, the readings, as well as the audio and video resources could also be used independently of the learning guides. Used creatively, they provide valuable resources to support existing teacher education programmes.

This set of learning guides with accompanying readers develop teachers' abilities to use theory in practice; and to understand, intervene in and improve their practice as teachers. The diagram below shows the inter-relationships of the modules in terms of curriculum coverage.

From within a framing context generated by ***Creating People-centred Schools***

• ***Being a Teacher*** and ***Working in Classrooms*** cover the professional and classroom contexts within which teachers practise

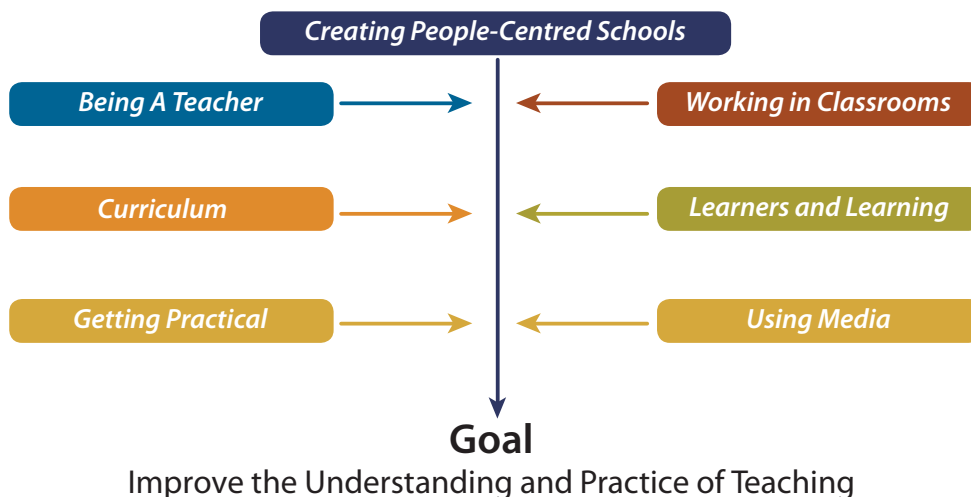
• ***Curriculum*** and ***Learners and Learning*** provide a theoretical understanding of resources or tools teachers may draw on

• ***Getting Practical*** and ***Using Media*** draw on the above in guiding practice.

***Curriculum*** and ***Getting Practical*** are available in second editions from Oxford University Press.

The other titles are available on [www.oerafrica.org](http://www.oerafrica.org).

### Inter-Relationship of SAIDE Teacher Education Modules



## Components of the Creating people-centred Schools module

This module deals with school organizational change and development to provide the context in which systematic learning takes place, particularly in developing countries. It is designed for practising classroom teachers as well for those who play a role in school management.

The module is likely to be most appropriate for practising teachers, and is potentially useful but probably not essential for introducing teachers-to-be to different kinds of organizational contexts. The focus on South Africa is easily adaptable to other contexts as the use of ideas and issues from the literature provide a common thread across all schools.

The four sections of ***Creating People-centred Schools*** present a coherent progression. However, each section is downloadable as an individual unit.

### ***Learning Guide***

#### **1. Section One: Introducing the module**

This introduction provides a rationale for the module, as well as its structure and content. We read how the writers intended the module to be used.

#### **2. Section Two: School organization: a brief history**

This provides an overview of organizational styles and the importance of cultures as well as structures in organizational models and change.

#### **3. Section Three: New contexts, new policies: new schools?**

Beginning with a focus on South Africa, this section provides valuable coverage of approaches to school 'effectiveness' and school 'improvement'. We learn more about schools as learning organizations.

#### **4. Section Four: Changing schools**

Ideas on understanding change are taken forward into approaches to leading and managing change. School-as-organization approaches are compared with the school-as-community approach.

### ***Readings***

- **Section One: South Africa: New plans for new contexts**
- **Section Two: Organizations: The impact of global change**
- **Section Three: Schools: The processes and constraints of change**
- **Section Four: Strategies for school change**

Not all the copyright holders of these readings have given permission to release them digitally, and so, although notes on all the readings are included, the full text is in some cases omitted.

The available readings can be downloaded from the ***Creating People-centred Schools*** module page on [www.oerafrica.org](http://www.oerafrica.org).

### ***Audiotape***

The audiotape is linked to sections of the learning guide, but carries debates which could also be used in a free-standing way by anyone interested in school organization and change.

Downloadable sections, varying in length from 3½ to 11½ minutes, are:

1. The learning organization
2. Cultures and hierarchies in schools: changing school cultures as well as structures
3. Changing management to manage change: a government report
4. School effectiveness and school improvement
5. What is a learning organization?
6. Managing change
7. Taking account of traditional ways of learning in Africa
8. 'Schools as organization' and 'Schools as community' approaches
9. Experiences of a school-based reform initiative.

### **Videotape**

Like the audiotape, the video is linked to sections of the learning guide, but also offers much scope for creative use in free-standing ways. Downloadable sections are:

1. Visuals of how historical and social problems have impacted on schools. The fact that schools may also be badly managed leads to the question of how they might be better managed.
2. By visiting schools we learn more about two approaches to school change and improvement: the school-as-organization model based on internal reflection and action; and the schools-as-community approach based on networking.
3. We learn more about the organizational approach during the course of a visit to a school that has successfully implemented this model. Participants are also interviewed.
4. We visit a community which has developed a successful schools-as-community approach through a network of schools managed by a coordinating body.
5. Reflection on the schools-as-community approach leads to some conclusions on lessons learnt, and there is useful discussion on commonalities, differences – and relative strengths – of the two models of organizational development and change.

## Acknowledgements

.....

***Creating People-centred Schools*** was developed through the Study of Education project managed by the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) and funded by the WK Kellogg Foundation. The series editor was John Gultig who facilitated the lengthy process of curriculum and materials development that enabled the module to benefit from the contributions of critical readers. In varying ways, Dawn Butler, Pam Christie, Andrew Schofield, Mark Potterton, Willem Steenkamp, Annemarie Odendaal and Basil May all made significant contributions to the character, form, and final shape of the module.

The first edition was published by SAIDE/Oxford in 1999 under conventional 'All rights reserved'. This (slightly adapted) 2010 version is available digitally on [www.oerafrica.org](http://www.oerafrica.org) under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 licence to facilitate updating and adaptation by users. The processes involved in making the 2010 version available were managed by Ken Harley and Tessa Welch, with funding through the International Association for Digital Publications.

# SECTION ONE

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## Introducing the module

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# What do we want to achieve in this module?

## 1.1

### Introduction

This module on *school organization and change* tackles a key question in South Africa's educational transition, namely:

***How do we need to change our thinking about the ways in which schools are organized in order to create schools that provide better learning opportunities for learners and a more democratic working environment for teachers?***

In order to offer answers to this question, this module introduces you to some contemporary approaches to *school organization* and *management*. While we hope many people involved in school management (particularly principals and deputies) will study this module, it is not aimed primarily at management personnel. The revitalization of our schools as organizations cannot be left only to those traditionally regarded as managers; ordinary teachers have a crucial role to play. A key outcome is that you, the teacher, should reach the end of this module with an enhanced ability to *begin changing, or contributing to positive change* in the way you operate in your school.

We aim to answer the following related questions on the way to answering our key question:

- Why are most South African schools currently organized in *authoritarian and bureaucratic* ways?
- What *alternative and more democratic forms of school organization* could we introduce in our schools to replace these forms of organization?
- *Why* is this kind of *change important*?
- *How* do we go about changing schools, and how do we manage the resistance we are likely to encounter in making these changes?

A central concept that will emerge is the notion of a *learning organization*. Your instinctive response might be, 'But all schools are learning organizations ... they are all involved in teaching and learning!' But we mean something different. It is our belief that a learning organization is an institution in which members:

- constantly reflect on their work;
- discuss their work as a team rather than as isolated individuals;
- learn from their mistakes;
- change and improve their work.

If we accept this definition, then all kinds of organizations can become learning organizations. But we will expand on this later. All the democratic approaches to school organization that we introduce in this module share the aim of turning schools into learning organizations, but they differ in their understanding of:

- *what a learning organization looks like in practice*;
- *how we go about changing schools* so that they become learning organizations.

### Why should you study this module?

Many people talk about the need to restore the culture of learning and teaching in South African schools. The national matric pass rate is low. Often, it seems that teachers are demotivated and learners are not interested in schooling.

The new national Department of Education (DoE) has introduced a number of education policies since April 1994. These changes will impact directly on teachers,



This icon indicates the particular week of study in which you should begin working on the section it introduces.

so we cannot ignore them. Even more importantly, almost all the new policies stress **participation** and suggest increased management and leadership responsibilities for **classroom teachers**. In order to respond positively to these suggestions, we need to develop our understanding of how schools function and how we can participate meaningfully in their functioning.

Inevitably, these suggested changes have received different responses from teachers. Some teachers have welcomed them with warm enthusiasm, while others are indifferent or even hostile. Why are the responses so varied? Will these changes bring the transformation that the South African schooling system needs? How can we help teachers and managers in schools to deal with the demands and pressures brought about by the changes?

This module recognizes that many schools will find it difficult to respond to external and internal challenges because they are organized in an inflexible, hierarchical way. Certainly, schools face many other serious problems, such as a lack of learning resources, shortage of classrooms, and large classes. But this module will focus on how we can begin making a difference – despite these other constraints – in the **ways in which our schools are organized**.

**hierarchical:** organized into a system of higher and lower ranks, each with a different level of power and status

## 1.2

## How does this module teach?

### Introduction

This module ‘teaches’ in two ways. It teaches through:

- the **content** it covers: in other words, through **what** it teaches;
- the **style** in which it is written: in other words, through the **way** it teaches.

So, as writers, we not only aim to inform you **about** key school organization principles but also attempt to **demonstrate** these principles in the way we teach. In addition, we rely strongly on your **participation in the activities** we set which often require you to practise the ideas introduced in this module in your own school. We believe that our style of teaching works best if you also try new ways of learning, rather than only concentrating on increasing **what** you know. We think our style of teaching – which is conversational, interactive, and grounded in the experiences of teachers – will make your learning more meaningful and enjoyable.

We attempt to ground school organization theory in the lives of school teachers by taking a **case study** approach to education. We teach the different approaches to school organization and change through the discussions and activities of teachers at an imaginary school called Thuthuka as they try to do something about improving their school.

## The case study: Thuthuka School

*Thuthuka is situated in a 'township' just outside Durban in KwaZulu-Natal. It has been ravaged by political violence in the last decade. Many houses and schools are empty shells – with no window panes or doors – and many dwellings have been deserted since their owners left at the height of the violence.*

*Thuthuka school buildings are dilapidated – some broken windows, some classroom doors missing, some chalkboards with holes in them – but they are clean. At times they are used by members of the community for church and community meetings. A School Committee was elected six years ago, but few members are active. In reality, the principal and his management team take most of the decisions relating to the day-to-day running of the school. It seems that while the community uses the school facilities, it does not feel the need to be involved in Thuthuka's development and management.*

*The school has an enrolment of just over 950 learners from Grades 8 to 12 and 28 teachers (including the principal, the deputy and three heads of department). This translates into a teacher-learner ratio of 1:34 (but classes are often larger in practice). Over the past seven years, the school has never had a formal school inspection and seldom sees departmental officials.*

*The general atmosphere at the school is rather 'laid-back' and often gives the impression of quiet chaos. There are always teachers and learners standing around in the school grounds or walking around outside the school. Although a bell rings to indicate new periods, both teachers and learners take their time in changing classes. It is often difficult to distinguish between senior learners and teachers: they look the same age and wear similar clothing. One teacher told me that teachers were 'demoralized' and all the talk of 'restoring the culture of learning and teaching' was a 'joke'.*

**laid-back:** relaxed

## The teachers

*In this module we meet a small group of teachers at Thuthuka School. The only thing that has brought this rather diverse group of teachers together is their concern about their school and their keenness to improve it. There seems to be a shared understanding that something needs to be done, but no one is really sure how to go about it. Although they have heard about various new education policies and the need for change, the Thuthuka teachers are uncertain about what this means for them and their school.*

*Thulani Shabalala has taught for four years. He joined Thuthuka two years ago from a farm school some distance away so that he could be nearer the local university where he is enrolled as a part-time student. He has recently been made Acting Head of the Languages Department. Thulani is doing a course in school management, although he does not aim to become a principal and rise through the ranks because his real passion is working with children.*

*Nomusa Ngubane has been teaching at Thuthuka for nine years. She is among the oldest members of staff and is a dedicated Science teacher who has consistently produced good 'matric' results. She is also studying part-time for a Further Diploma in Education. Nomusa has an enquiring mind and has been heard to say: 'Pretending you know for fear of ridicule is a sign of stupidity'. But her constant questioning does sometimes irritate her colleagues.*

*Sipho Gumede is another long-serving member of staff who is known for challenging anything anyone says. He has a BA degree and has enrolled for three different diplomas and degrees in the past four years. He seems to know a little of everything and hates to lose an argument.*

*Sindi Nxumalo is a Maths teacher who spends long hours after school working with learners who have problems. She has been teaching for five years. She is regarded as 'strict', but is also generally respected by learners because of the time she gives them. Sindi tried to start a school netball team but eventually gave up because money and equipment were constantly being stolen.*

## 1.3

# How should you study this module?

## What are the components of this module?

This module has four important components:

- This **Learning Guide**, which operates as your ‘teacher’. The Learning Guide will structure your learning, explain concepts, and direct you to other parts of the module at appropriate times.
- **Readings**, which you could consider as a ‘resource person’. This Learning Guide will direct you to edited Readings in which people working in the field of organizational change share their experiences and ideas with you.
- An **audiotape**, which contains interviews with school organization experts and policymakers, as well as excerpts from conversations where teachers talk about the difficulties of implementing change in schools.
- A **videotape**, which tells the stories of a number of South African schools through interviews with teachers, learners, principals and parents who have embarked on changing their schools.

In addition, you need a **workbook** in which you will do all the activities as well as record any other ideas you may have. This will act as a **portfolio** of your thinking and development. We suggest you purchase a hardcover A4 book or a file for this purpose.

## Important learning suggestions to keep in mind

### **Consider the module as a conversation and not as a didactic textbook**

The Learning Guide is not an old-fashioned textbook that you must read and learn by rote. We have written the Guide as a **conversation** about changing schools. In particular we will talk about the implications of more democratic school structures for you, the teacher. We will also explore ways in which ordinary teachers can involve themselves in changing schools into organizations they feel comfortable working in.

Like all good conversations, the Guide works best if you **participate**. In order to encourage this, we have inserted many activities and requests to ‘think!’ in this module. **These are indicated by the icon you see in the margin.** In fact, it is probably true to say that **your work** is the most important part of the Guide. If you don’t do the activities, you will miss out on the most central and important part of the learning experience we have designed for you.



When you see this icon, stop reading. Think about the question or problem we have raised. You might want to make notes in your workbook.

### **It is essential to re-read sections**

You will notice that the Guide often suggests going back and reworking something you have already completed. We do this for a reason. There is a lot of evidence to suggest that **understanding** (as opposed to rote learning) develops in **layers**. Think about how we get to know things in the world. When we are first introduced to an idea it seems strange and confusing. It is only once we **think** and **talk** and **read** and **write** about these things **again and again** that their full importance becomes clear to us.

That is why we ask you to go back and rethink things that you have already done. We believe that learning about something is a **continual process of construction**

**and reconstruction.** Often something that we have already learnt, something that we take for granted, or with which we are already familiar, looks very different when we revisit it.

### **Your learning must include a constant application of theory to practice**

You will notice that we begin all our sections in a school and with teachers. In other words, we begin with practice and then go to theory only when we believe theory can offer us some practical ways out of a problem we face. Finally, we return to the school to see **how** the theory we have studied is useful. Ultimately, though, **only you can relate these ideas to a context with which you are familiar.** We don't want you simply to learn things so that you can pass the course. The many activities in the Learning Guide should encourage you to apply what you are learning to practical situations. **These are indicated by the icon you see in the margin.**

We also believe you should set aside time to **talk with other students.** Talking about school organization issues – especially if you have debates and arguments, and share practical experiences – is an effective way of studying this module. It allows you to 'ground' many of the theoretical ideas presented here in the realities of your own contexts.

### **Learning is about being critical and being able to disagree with us**

Don't be afraid to disagree with us. We will present you with a number of approaches to school organization, and often suggest that all of them can be right **and** wrong! In other words, we don't believe that everything we have written in this module is the absolute truth. Rather, we present you with a **point of view and a story.** It is up to you to decide whether you agree or disagree with our point of view and our story. We welcome your opposing opinions because it means that you are becoming part of the conversation.

Whatever position you take, however, **has to be argued.** You cannot just say, 'I disagree because I don't like it.' Similarly you cannot say, 'I agree because I like it.' **You need to justify your choices.**

### **Keep a record of your learning: write down all your ideas in your workbook**

A vital learning skill that you should develop is the ability to plot and evaluate your own progress. But this is only possible if you keep a record of your understandings throughout the course. Then you can return to your early work and see how your understanding has changed. This makes your workbook a very important part of your learning strategy. It will become the record of your thinking – and the changes in your thinking – about school organization and change.

You should do all the required activities in your workbook. Also write down any other comments or ideas that enter your mind as you learn. The activities you are asked to do are formative and continuous self-assessments. In other words, they are designed primarily to help you learn (rather than 'measure' your learning). As with the readings, we will sometimes ask you to go back to an activity you have done in your workbook and revise it in the light of new understandings that you have developed.

### **Regard the Reader as a 'resource person'**

The Readings are short extracts from articles we think are useful in understanding key aspects of organizational theory and school change. We will often ask you to shift between the Guide and **Readings.** However, we want you to read these excerpts with a particular goal in mind: you need to **use the ideas to address the problems set in the case study or activity** that precedes or accompanies each reading.



Stop reading when you see this icon. Follow the instruction in the activity and then write your answer in your workbook. .

**vicarious:** instead of directly experiencing something ourselves, we experience it through our imagination while watching others



When you see this icon, stop reading. Turn to the video/audiotape and watch/listen to the excerpt indicated. Then write down in your workbook any queries or observations you may have.

Simply memorizing the reading is pointless! Try to see these readings – this ‘theory’ – as the thought-through experience of other educators. We suggest that you treat the readings as you would an experienced or suitably qualified person that you would go to for advice when you have a problem. You wouldn’t simply memorize their advice – you would **use** it!

### **Use the audio and video tapes as vicarious ‘experiences’**

It is quite easy – and tempting – simply to listen to the audiotape or watch the video before working through the module. But this is not the best way to listen or view. The Learning Guide has structured the ‘experiences’ contained on the video and audiotape into the learning of particular concepts. We will refer you to either the video or audiotape by inserting icons in the margin at the appropriate place in the Guide. Viewing or listening at the appropriate time – with ideas and questions from the Guide and/or a Reading in your head – will make the use of the video and audiotape much more meaningful.

The videotape tells the stories of schools where staff are busy changing organizational structures and processes so that they become more participative and democratic. It **illustrates** two important approaches to school organization and change.

The audiotape consists mainly of interviews with, and debates among, important policymakers and school change experts. It also aims to clarify key concepts through linking these to the everyday practices of school change.

If you wish, watch or listen to these tapes ahead of time, but do so again when the Guide asks you to do so. And try not to ignore our requests for you to view something a second time. Remember, we are doing this on the understanding that you will see and learn a lot more **once you know more**.

## 1.4

## What are the module’s desired learning outcomes?

At the beginning of this section, we suggested that this module’s key outcome is to:

... develop your understanding of a number of contemporary approaches to management and school organization so that you – as a classroom teacher – can begin changing your school into a more democratic and efficient organization ...

In order to build this key outcome, the module has a number of related outcomes. You should demonstrate an ability to:

- Explain the key characteristics of **hierarchical** and **bureaucratic** organizations.
- Explain why hierarchical and bureaucratic forms of organization were useful ways to organize institutions **in the past**.
- Explain how **societies are changing**, and **how** and **why** these changes are making hierarchical and bureaucratic forms of organization obsolete globally and in South Africa.
- Explain some of the **reasons why** South African schools tended to be organized in particularly authoritarian and hierarchical ways.

**obsolete:** out of date; no longer useful

- Explain the *key characteristics of new forms of organization*.
- Show how these changes would *impact* on an educational institution with which you are familiar.
- Explain the relationship between *structural* and *cultural* factors, and their importance in change processes.
- Use your understanding of structure and culture to *analyse change processes* at a school with which you are familiar.
- Explain the *key characteristics of a 'learning organization'*.
- *Develop a plan* for a school that has been restructured as a 'learning organization', and *plot your changed role* within this organization.
- Explain the key differences and similarities in two forms of educational research – *school effectiveness research* and *school improvement research*.
- Use these forms of research to explain *what* a good school is and *how* you can begin changing your own school to meet these criteria.
- Understand *constraints* on change – both personal and organizational – and *plan a change programme* which takes these into account.
- Understand the key differences between *school-as-organization* and *school-as-community* approaches to school change.
- Use knowledge about school change to *analyse problems* in schools and to *develop a school change programme* for an institution with which you are familiar.

## How is the Learning Guide structured?

# 1.5

### The structure

The Guide structures its teaching as a series of debates – of contrasts – between what we initially call 'old, hierarchic' and then 'new, participative' approaches to organization in general. First we explore this broadly, drawing strongly on the experiences and theory of business management (Sections Two and Three).

Later we pinpoint more specifically how these ideas apply to *school* organization. We also focus more tightly on the 'new, participative' approach to school organization (Section Three). But we demonstrate that, even *within* this approach, there are differences of emphasis. These occur in the research about *what* a good school is in Section Three (we characterize this as a 'school effectiveness' versus 'school improvement' debate), and within strategies about *how* to change schools in Section Four (we simplify the debate into one between 'a school as organization' approach versus a 'school as community' approach). These differences are illustrated on the video where we visit schools in the Pretoria region which are using school change strategies that fall within these different approaches.

We always begin with a *simple problem* that the Thuthuka teachers are experiencing. Then we refer you to readings which we believe provide new ways of thinking about the particular problem. Sometimes the readings offer direct solutions; at other times they offer a way of *thinking* in order to reach a solution. But most often readings show how our simple explanations are only *partly useful*.

Each section, therefore, develops a *skeleton* of the debate to which we then

proceed to add flesh. Make sure you understand the basics before you move towards the end of each section where matters become more complex. This style is deliberate. We want you to *understand the key differences* between the different approaches. But we also aim to demonstrate that, while there are differences, there are also important *similarities* in the ways seemingly different approaches understand school organization and change.

In addition, you should be able to develop these similarities into a 'checklist' which you can *use to assess your thinking* as you work to change your teaching and assessment practices. It is for this reason that we so often ask you to *apply* these ideas to practice, and to write down your ideas in your workbook.

## How much time do you need?

We think this module needs about six hours of work a week for a period of about 20 weeks. In other words, you should set aside about 120 hours of time to study. But of course, different students work at different speeds, so you may well find you need more (or slightly less) time.

We suggest that you pace yourself by ensuring that you keep up with the weekly time guides we have inserted in the Guide. For instance, you will notice that 'Week 2' appears next to sub-section 2.1 (page 15). This means you should have completed all the work up to that point by the beginning of Week 2.

Generally, we would expect you to spend the 120 hours in the following way:

- **Reading time:** about 60 hours. This includes reading the Guide as well as readings in the Reader.
- **Activity time:** about 40 hours. This includes the time it takes you to think about your readings, listen to your audiotape, and write your answers in your workbook.
- **Assignment writing time:** about 20 hours. This is the time you will spend writing the assignments you submit to your tutors.

## How will the module be assessed?

This module should be assessed using the listed outcomes as the basis of assessment. We understand assessment as a process that is continuous and formative, assessing your ability to apply ideas in practice and your development through the course. While you may still write a final exam, we do not believe it should be the major 'measurement' of your ability. Consequently, we suggest the following assessment breakdown:

- **tutor-marked assignment 1**, to make up 20% of your final mark;
- your **workbook** – which represents an assessment of how your understanding has developed through the course, and of your engagement with the course – to make up another 30%;
- **tutor-marked assignment 2** (or a final 'open-book' exam) – an integrative task which assesses your ability to draw relationships between the three sections and apply your knowledge to a practical case study – to count for the final 50% of your mark.

We hope that you will find this journey challenging, exciting and fulfilling. Good luck!

Themba, Carol, Nonhlanhla and Neil



## SECTION TWO

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# School organization: a brief history

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# What is an 'organization'?

## 2.1

### Introduction

Think of how often we use the word 'organize' or 'organized'. Often it is used as an instruction. Someone might say, 'Please organize the catering for the meeting on Thursday'. At other times it might be used as a compliment. For instance, 'Thandi is such an organized person'. Just the other day, a soccer commentator said the same of Bafana Bafana's performance against Argentina: 'That is the most organized performance I have seen from our team in recent months.'

Generally you will notice that the different versions of this word are used to describe *favourable* characteristics. In contrast, to be labelled 'disorganized' is not complimentary!

But even more importantly, the word is used to describe an *achievement*, whether it be excellent catering at Thursday's meeting, or Thandi's successful life, or good play by Bafana Bafana. However, it goes further than this: it describes an ability to *plan* and *carry out* these plans successfully so that a *goal or vision* – be it a tasty lunch, a well-run life or a good soccer performance – is achieved. In other words, it doesn't describe an achievement which occurs as a consequence of luck! And a big part of an organized performance is the ability to get things or people to *work together*. For instance, it is unlikely that Thandi would be described as 'organized' if she was good at one thing, but the rest of her life was chaotic! Likewise, Bafana Bafana could only be described as 'organized' if the team *worked together*. In fact, we might describe a collection of individuals working together in an organized way as an *organization*.

*Any group which works together in a planned, co-ordinated way to achieve some common purpose could be described as an organization.*

The description obviously covers a wide variety of organizations: soccer teams, burial societies, teachers' unions, churches, businesses, charities and stokvels, for example. In fact, throughout our lives we are dependent on, and interact with, organizations. But what about schools? How do we decide whether a school can be called an organization?

#### ACTIVITY 1: IS MY SCHOOL AN ORGANIZATION?

To answer this question, use our new criteria for an organization to assess a school that you are familiar with. Examine the school by asking:

- Does it consist of a *group* of people?
- Are the individuals *working together* ...
- ... in a *planned, co-ordinated way* to achieve this purpose?
- Does this group have a *common purpose*?

Later, as we learn more about organizations, we will ask you to re-assess your answer. You will then be able to do more informed analyses of your school.



Spend no more than 45 minutes doing this activity. You may want to discuss your thinking with a fellow student.

## Is a school an 'organization'?

The writers of this module didn't study a school (because we don't currently teach at one). Instead, we examined the college of education where one of our team works. We decided it could be called an organization if we defined an organization in terms of the four criteria listed above.

First, it does consist of a *group* of people – lecturers, learners, administrative staff – gathered together for the *common purpose* of training teachers. We initially had some difficulty in deciding whether we should include administrative staff since they are not directly involved in the training. However, we decided that their purpose at the college was to assist in making the training of teachers possible.

We also wondered whether we should include parents. In the end, we decided to exclude them as most of our learners are adults themselves (and so make their own decisions about education). However, we realized that if we'd been assessing a school, we would probably have included parents as they are represented in governing bodies (and so on), and do have a direct interest and say in their children's education. In other words, they share a common purpose with other staff, even though they are not active in the actual teaching.

We found that the members did *work together, and in a planned way*, to achieve their purpose. Sometimes, though, it doesn't feel like this! At times, there is tension between lecturers and the Rector, between staff and learners, and even between academic and administrative staff. And often the plan seems rather vague and haphazard! But, in the end, we decided that while we should *improve* the way we worked together, and also spend more time planning together, we did work together in a sufficiently planned way to be called an organization (although, possibly, a fairly disorganized organization!).

The criteria are quite useful in distinguishing an organization from ordinary groups of people, such as soccer spectators. While Bafana Bafana and the spectators at their match are both groups of individuals, they differ in significant ways. A soccer team *works together* towards a *common purpose*, but a soccer crowd does not. A soccer crowd also has no plan (although they do have a common reason for being in one place together).

“  
... individual  
members contribute  
their skills and  
intellectual resources  
to achieve the goals of  
organizations  
”

## Deepening our understanding of organizations

We saw earlier that, even when organizations do meet the four criteria, they can differ a great deal. We noticed that even while organizations might have a common purpose and might work together in a planned way to achieve this purpose, it is not always achieved in a very organized way. For instance, in our organization there is a great deal of suspicion among members – particularly those in charge – which prevents our working together effectively. Also, we are often *told* what we must achieve rather than jointly discussing and agreeing upon our goals.

When we think of a business or school as opposed to a church, for instance, we notice other differences in the ways in which they are organized. Priests, for example, may be leaders of a Christian community, but do so largely through inspiration. They are dependent on the *support* of their congregation and usually have no power to order the congregation around. However, in schools, most principals are appointed to their positions and have the power to give instructions to teachers and learners. In most schools, teachers and learners have very little power to oppose principals.

Another key characteristic of an organization now becomes apparent: in all organizations, individual members *contribute their skills and intellectual resources* to achieve the goals of that institution. This also distinguishes an organization from a group of people, like a soccer crowd or a crowd of shoppers. Thus, we need to add 'members contribute skills and resources' to the criteria for an organization.

In addition, we need to explore the *way in which members work together* in order to be able to describe *different kinds* of organizations more accurately. Do members

simply accept instructions, or do they participate in decision making? Towards the end of the module, you will notice that there are people who believe schools are not organizations. Instead, they suggest that schools are far more like *communities* than organizations.

## What will we do in the rest of Section Two?

In Section Two we will develop our understanding of how South African schools are organized and why they are organized in this way. We want to find answers to the following questions:

- **What are the organizational characteristics of most South African schools?** We find that most South African schools could be described as *hierarchical*. This often means that members don't work together as teams and that decisions are made by a central authority and transmitted down to other members.
- **Is this form of organization still appropriate for schools in South Africa?** The answer is probably 'no'. In a world increasingly characterized by rapid change, and in a South Africa committed to democracy, organizations need to be structured so that decisions can be made quickly and in a participative manner. We will find out about some of the key changes that need to be made in order to transform schools.
- **Why are South African schools organized in this way?** The hierarchy and bureaucracy that characterizes South African education is not unique. In many ways it reflects a dominant theory of organization and management called 'scientific management'.
- **What do we need to do to change our organizations into more appropriate organizations?** We maintain that it is important to change the *structure* – in other words, to set up committees and processes which allow all members to participate in decision-making. We also need to change people's attitudes (the school's *culture*) and teach them how to operate successfully in these new organizations.
- **Finally, why are South African schools so authoritarian and hierarchical?** We find that while international ideas about how to create efficient organizations (scientific management theory) were an important influence, another major influence was the conservative political philosophy of South Africa's apartheid rulers.

So, let's begin our study by visiting our 'case study' school on a typical day ...



Read your answer to Activity 1. Reassess it in the light of the new criteria. For instance, ask what skills and resources different people contribute to achieving your school's goals. You could also decide whether your organization is similar to ours (i.e. operating mainly through top-down instructions), or whether it makes decisions collaboratively.

## 2.2

# How are South African schools organized?



We have designed this Learning Guide with a wide margin so that you can make notes as you read. Please use the margin!

### Introduction

You will have spent many years in school as a learner, and you may also have some experience of schools as a teacher. A good way to start building an understanding of schools as **organizations** is to think about your own experiences of how schools work. Let's begin by visiting our case study school, Thuthuka, on a typical day. Observe carefully. Write down your observations of the following aspects of the school's functioning:

- Do school members work together towards a clearly defined goal?
- Do all school members have equal amounts of say in the way the school is run?

### A day in the life of Thuthuka school

*It is Monday morning in the third term. The school day is supposed to begin at 7.45 a.m. When the first bell rings, most teachers are still chatting in the staffroom. The principal comes in looking flustered. He tells teachers that he's just heard from the Chief Superintendent of Education and Management (CSEM, the old 'district officer') that the trials for the inter-school athletics will be held tomorrow. Most teachers are happy at this 'day off'; but two teachers are irritated by the news.*

*'I'd planned to have an important Maths test tomorrow,' says Sindi Nxumalo. 'Yes, and my matrics were going to start their orals tomorrow. Now we will be behind schedule,' replies the English teacher, Thulani Shabalala.*

*The teachers who have lessons in the first period pick up some chalk and move off to their classes, slowly. They know that the learners will also be slow to arrive. The school is surrounded by a wire fence to keep the learners in and the vandals out. The fence is not very effective, as the school has often been burgled. There are still many learners loitering around outside the fence. The teachers do not chase them inside. They think that is the job of the deputy principal. Their job is only to teach.*

*The class next door to Sindi's class is very noisy and doesn't seem to have a teacher. The learners don't greet Sindi when she walks in, and she has to insist that they stand and say, 'Good morning, ma'am.' Their Science teacher is away at an in-service workshop, and hasn't left the class any work to do. Thuthuka has no policy about staff development workshops. So sometimes teachers go off for days at a time and there is no one to replace them. The learners just have to miss out on work, and they become noisy and disruptive. There is also no requirement that teachers must share what they have learned at the workshop with other staff. In fact, it has been reported that teachers sometimes just spend the day in town, doing shopping, instead of attending the workshop!*

*Meanwhile, back in the staffroom, the Grade 9 Geography and Biology teachers are discussing a field trip to the river that they want to organize for their learners. They are planning to do some integrated teaching. At the river the learners would study soil erosion and the effects of pollution on the local ecosystem.*

*'I went to the Head of Department (HoD) and she said it was a good idea. But she still refused permission for it, saying that it would be "impossible" for the classes to be away from the school for the whole day as they'd miss Maths, English and Science. "What if the Superintendent of Education and Management (SEM, the old 'circuit manager') comes and wants to know why the learners missed a whole day of school? Then I'll be in trouble," she said to me. She said I must talk to the principal – but he is so busy, it is almost impossible to see him!' complains Nomusa Ngubane, the Biology (and Science) teacher.*



The video produced as part of this module will only be used in detail in Section Four. But, if you have a video, you may want to watch it now (and then do so again later).

The video tells the story of a number of schools near Pretoria which are trying to change the way they function. Take note of:

- the sorts of difficulties they are attempting to address;
- how they are reorganizing their schools to meet new demands.

*'Isn't it crazy that we are still so scared of the authorities? Surely we should be treated like professionals and be allowed to make decisions?'* replies Siphon Gumede, the Geography teacher.

Another teacher overhears the conversation. *'I know what you mean. Yesterday I was reprimanded by the principal because my learners were outside looking for plants and leaves so that they could draw them. He said they should have been in the classroom, learning properly. It seems impossible in this school to try out anything different.'*

In another office, two HoDs are discussing the field trip too. *'I don't know what to do. Mrs Ngubane and Mr Gumede want to take their classes to the river. But what about the other lessons they will miss? And what about the other classes that the teachers should be teaching on the day? Our timetable won't allow this new-fangled "integrated" teaching. It is nothing more than integrated chaos! And the principal is so busy with meetings that he has no time to listen to these issues!'* says the Sciences HoD fiercely.

*'Well, you should be glad that you have some innovative teachers in your department! It is difficult to get teachers in my department to even submit their work schedules to me. They really resent it when I ask them. They think I'm just trying to police them. They don't realize that I'm just trying to fulfil my responsibilities,'* answers the Humanities HoD.

The principal is also in his office, with a long stream of people waiting at the door. Parents are there to explain why they can't pay their school fees, learners are waiting to be disciplined, and a teacher is applying for study leave. The principal is under pressure because he must go to a special meeting to discuss the implications of the new government policy for governing bodies. There is also trouble brewing with the SRC; they're angry about the large number of learners who failed the mid-year exams. They say that the teachers are biased, and they will boycott classes until the papers are re-marked.

## ACTIVITY 2: COMPARING THUTHUKA WITH MY SCHOOL

Re-read the story of a day in the life of Thuthuka School. Then answer the following questions:

- a** How do the different people at the school *relate* to one another? Who has authority, and over whom? How do people respond to this authority? How do the different people understand their responsibilities?

Here is an example of what you should do:

- *The CSEM seems to have more power than everyone else. He sends down instructions, and the principal acts on them even when he doesn't seem to support the idea fully. This, in turn, seems to suggest that the principal does not feel he has a responsibility to challenge this instruction. He seems to see his responsibility as one of communicating the instruction to teachers and ensuring that it is carried out.*

Do this kind of analysis for the *principal, deputy principal, HoDs, teachers* and other people at the school (*learners, SRC, governing body, parents*).

- b** Do the events at this school sound familiar? Write down any incidents which you have experienced at your school too (either as a teacher or as a learner). Do you think these incidents are a consequence of individual attitudes, or of the way in which the school is managed?

Here is an example of what you should do:

- *The teachers and learners move off slowly to classes. I think this is a consequence of teacher and learner attitudes. They all seem rather uninterested in education and demotivated. The teachers don't seem to believe that they have to work in order to deserve a salary. However, the management of the school must also be a factor here.*



Spend about 1 hour doing this activity. Share your different experiences and different answers to these questions with fellow students.

## Making sense of relationships at Thuthuka

Clearly Thuthuka is an organization, in terms of our criteria. But it is an organization with a number of problems.

While there are teachers at Thuthuka who are committed to their work – and to innovation and change, they feel quite frustrated. The *attitudes* of management, other teachers and learners make it difficult to teach in new ways, and to plan their teaching. In addition, the *structures* at the school – such as a rigid timetable and an all-powerful but distant management level – make change difficult. For instance:

- An instruction from the CSEM can disrupt an entire day's schooling, without the staff having the chance to discuss and decide on the timing of the athletics trials.
- The school's timetable (and the HoD's attitude) is not flexible enough to allow a good educational idea – like a well-planned field trip – to take place.

It is clear that Thuthuka does not have a collaborative style of operation. In most cases, teachers *work alone* – in teaching their particular learning area, for instance – and management figures make decisions alone. Moreover, it seems that non-management members of this school – such as teachers and learners – have *very little power* over what happens at the school. They are not included in making decisions. However, it seems that even principals and HoDs are relatively powerless, at least in relation to the CSEM!

A consequence of this individualism, and of the top-down decision-making, seems to be increasing levels of demotivation and demoralization among good *and* bad teachers.

Like many other South African schools, Thuthuka is organized *hierarchically*. Hierarchical organizations assume that the *people at the top have the right to give instructions* and that those below them will *obey these instructions*. Each level of the hierarchy (the CSEM, for instance) is given more power and authority than the level below it (the principal). In addition, in hierarchical organizations, each person is given a particular *function* to carry out (the deputy principal, for instance, has the function of discipline in the school), and is not expected to discuss this with other members of the organization.

In other words, in a hierarchical organization:

- authority is achieved through *appointment to a senior position in the organization*;
- relationships – such as 'line functions' – are *clearly defined and arranged vertically* (top-down);
- responsibilities are clearly defined and increase with seniority.

While this form of organization might sound undemocratic – and it is true that many hierarchical organizations are authoritarian, it emerged as a viable organizational style because it was able to increase organizational efficiency at one time. It was argued that:

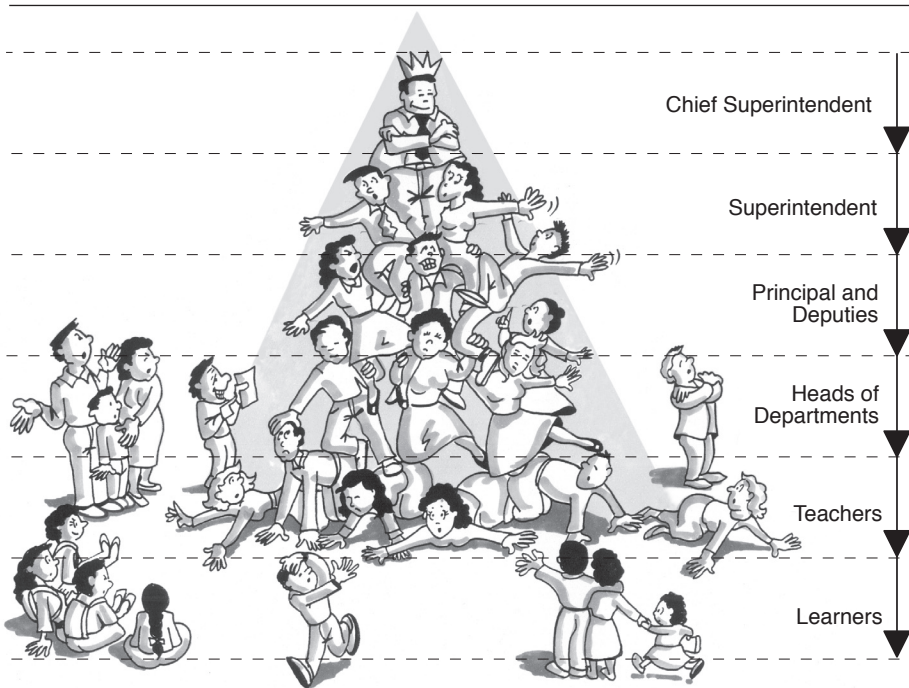
- a hierarchy – with a clear indication of who was boss – allowed for quick and unambiguous decision-making;
- the clear division of responsibilities clarified who to approach for a particular action (or problem), and who to hold accountable if that action was not carried out.

Something else that is noteworthy about Thuthuka is that its hierarchy doesn't actually achieve its aim of increased efficiency. For instance, the principal is so caught up in small, daily problems that he doesn't have the time to carry out the important leadership functions associated with his position in the hierarchy (such as dealing with poor teaching or bad timetabling). Another factor which undermines efficiency is the strict division of responsibilities. Because the deputy principal was responsible for discipline, other teachers take *no* responsibility for this function.

A further interesting point that becomes evident when reading the case study is

“  
a consequence of  
this individualism ...  
seems to be  
increasing levels of  
demoralization  
”

**unambiguous:** clear, unlikely to confuse people



**Figure 2.1** A typical hierarchical pyramid – this is our diagrammatic representation of Thuthuka's organizational style

that 'juniors' in the hierarchy – teachers and learners – often take no notice of management's instructions. Although the principal and CSEM *expect* teachers to attend workshops, teachers often go shopping instead. Despite being *expected* to teach for a full day, teachers often spend much of it chatting in the staffroom. In other words, while principals are *given power* in hierarchies, this does *not mean that people within the organization will recognize or obey this authority*.

Schools – like all organizations – are complex. They bring together different sets of people, with different and conflicting *interests*. All organizations are *human constructions* – collections of human beings – and, although the *structures* for efficient work may be in place, the organization's *culture* may still prevent any efficient functioning.

*In order to understand organizations, we must realize that the **structure** – in Thuthuka's case, a hierarchy – is only part of what assists an organization to function. We must also explore the **organizational culture** – developed by individuals within the organization – and see how this impacts on the functioning of the organization.*

With these points in mind, let's go back to Thuthuka and develop our understanding of the dominant organizational styles in South African schools a little further.

Nomusa, who is studying a course at the local university, knows that the new 'buzzword' in school organization and management is 'learning organization'. She thinks this means – in simple terms – that the school as a whole dedicates itself to the *ongoing improvement* of teaching and learning. But Nomusa also knows that *learning organizations* are characterized by open, friendly and non-hierarchical relationships between teachers and management. This isn't the case at Thuthuka at the moment. Nomusa decides that a first step in changing Thuthuka is to get her group of four committed teachers to meet regularly and discuss ways to change Thuthuka. As their first task, she asks them to discuss how they understand relationships at their school. This is what they say.





Compare the views of these teachers with your answers to Activity 2. How do they compare?

### **The views of Thuthuka teachers on relationships at their school**

*'There seems to be some **distance** between the teachers and management,' says Thulani. 'We see this when one HoD says the teachers don't want to co-operate with her. The teachers also don't want to help the deputy principal in his task of disciplining. Although the principal may be approachable, the fact that he is very busy means there is little time for the teachers to talk to him.'*

*'Ja, and sometimes the learners show respect for the teachers; other times they don't,' Sipho adds. 'Teachers insist that the learners address them as "sir" or "ma'am". There seems to be great emphasis on formal **authority** in the school. However, teachers address one another using first names, which suggests that there is less distance between them ... they are equal in status and position.'*

*'The CSEM seems to have authority over the school in terms of deciding when events like athletics trials will be held. The SEM also seems to have authority over what happens in the school. And teachers don't feel free to make decisions in their classrooms in case he or the principal disagrees. The teachers also have to bow to the authority of the HoDs,' Sipho continues.*

*The conversation progresses. The group notes that HoDs are responsible for checking that the teachers cover the work in the syllabus. They are also responsible for ensuring that teaching and learning are happening smoothly in the school. But they don't have the authority to make changes to the structure of the timetable. Teachers are responsible for teaching in their classrooms, but their authority to make decisions is extremely limited. The deputy principal has the responsibility of getting learners into their classrooms and ensuring that there is silence during class time.*

## **Key characteristics of hierarchies**

As the Thuthuka teachers have noted, *roles and responsibilities are clearly defined* in hierarchies, and they are *divided in terms of position and status*. There are *strict procedures and rules* that specify which people carry out which tasks as laid down by the school. The *lines of authority flow downwards*, and never upwards.

This seems to suggest that it is not easy for teachers or learners to have their voices heard or for teachers to participate in decision-making. However, this may not be true in every school with a hierarchical structure. In some schools, the *style* of management and leadership may encourage a greater degree of involvement in decision-making through frequent consultations with teachers and learners, even though the structure is hierarchical. However, hierarchies in some schools may be implemented so badly – or with so little consultation – that the whole system of organization may break down as people who feel excluded resist the authority of the head.

Thuthuka teachers are also puzzled about why their hierarchy has not developed an *efficient* system in which people follow instructions as expected. Obviously there are problems which go beyond the *structures* of the school. They argue that the demotivated attitude of teachers and learners may reduce their limited power in this hierarchy even further. Nomusa believes this is due to the 'don't care' attitude that has developed in the school over time. She feels that this attitude (or 'culture') of apathy, in particular, has to be tackled if they want to change their school.



Spend about 30 minutes doing this activity. You may want to discuss your observations with fellow students.

### **ACTIVITY 3: EXPLORING HOW HIERARCHIES AFFECT RELATIONSHIPS AT YOUR SCHOOL**

Think of a school you have experienced. Then:

- a** Write down ways in which clearly-defined hierarchies, and the division of responsibilities, rules and procedures, make it *easier* for your school to function efficiently.
- b** Write down ways in which these characteristics of hierarchical organization may have *inhibited* the school's ability to operate and innovate.

### **Possible strengths of hierarchical organizations**

Hierarchies – with their emphasis on clear lines of accountability and with a clear division of responsibilities – offer the chance for organizations to run efficiently and with a fair amount of transparency. This avoids the anarchy and chaos which could result when everyone does exactly what he or she pleases, and where no one takes responsibility for final decisions. Hierarchies also offer a set of clear procedures on how things should be done.

For example, think of trying to run the matric exams with no clear procedures. A teacher at one school might offer one exam on Monday, while the school next door decides to offer the same exam paper on Tuesday. School 1 gives the learners five hours to write the exam, while school 2 says it will use 'continuous assessment' and a short interview as their form of assessment. Finally, while school 1 might agree to have its learners assessed by a central body of markers, school 2 insists that its own teachers mark the scripts.

This lack of standard procedure would allow unequal standards and cause enormous frustration to the teachers involved: they would not know what to do next. But learners would also suffer: some would have plenty of time to write their exam while others would have to face an interview. How would you compare their performances?

So rules and procedures – for instance, various irritating forms from the department! – do serve a purpose. But more than simply providing a set of procedures, hierarchies also give people in organizations an idea of who is ultimately responsible for carrying out procedures (i.e. accountability). Again, consider a school that runs an exam which is an absolute disaster, but no one takes responsibility for this. How do you improve processes in such a situation? **Clear procedures** mean that people can be held accountable when things go wrong. For example, in one school where there is no electricity, a learner in Grade 11 has the responsibility of ringing the hand bell at the beginning of each lesson. If the bell does not ring, then the principal knows exactly who is responsible for this task and he can find out why the bell wasn't rung.

The **simple lines of accountability** in hierarchies should also provide **clear communication**. This, in turn, ensures that everyone knows their job responsibilities and what is expected of them. If, for example, five different teachers tried to co-ordinate the athletics club in a school, it would be a chaotic disaster. Both learners and teachers would be confused and people would not know who to listen to.

Finally, where **responsibilities are clearly divided according to posts** (division of responsibility), people can become experts in their jobs. This leads to greater effectiveness. For example, at Thuthuka School, the Head of the Humanities Department is also in charge of drawing up the timetable each year. She has learnt how to do this effectively and quickly over the last six years. If a new person were to do this each year, it would take a longer time to complete the task, and it would probably be done less well and less efficiently.

### **Some weaknesses of hierarchical organizations**

However, our own experience as well as the experience of Thuthuka teachers, raises two important problems with hierarchical organizations. First, hierarchies often don't function as well as they should. Some people might argue that the problem doesn't lie with hierarchies per se; but instead with **poor implementation** of the system. For instance, people might argue that Thuthuka's problem with discipline isn't the fact that this task has been given to the deputy principal alone. Instead, it means the deputy is not carrying out his function properly.

Second, while hierarchies are particularly good at keeping **stable** systems functioning, they are often too rigid in contexts which are changing rapidly – like South Africa at present. For instance, teachers are expected to **follow procedures** (rather than making their own decisions and possibly changing procedures), and to **follow instructions** from above (rather than taking their own initiative). This makes it difficult for institutions to take advantage of rapidly changing circumstances or to

**accountability:** division of responsibility, transparency

**innovation:** introduction of new ideas or practices



These are some of the strengths and weaknesses of hierarchies that we came up with. Can you do better?

Turn back to your answer to Activity 3 and reassess it in light of the new ideas you have learnt.

encourage innovation.

Here are two examples from a school where I taught a few years ago. The tender procedures that schools must follow when buying equipment – which *are important* to prevent fraud and corruption – also prevented my school from taking advantage of a special price offer on sports equipment. Ultimately, this meant that we could not afford to buy any equipment at all for our soccer team. Obviously this had a negative effect on the extra-curricular life of the school.

The hierarchical form of organization at this school also inhibited innovation in my teaching. It prevented me – an ordinary teacher – from developing a new course at the school because the tedious procedures prescribed that all new ideas first be approved by the principal and the CSEM. I wanted to introduce a course in Technology, but found the process of going through the different levels of approval so time-consuming and frustrating that I gave up. Thus, the school did not get the new course, and I felt increasingly depressed about my role at the school. It seemed that teachers were not expected to innovate or to show initiative.

# Why are hierarchical styles under attack?

## 2.3

### Introduction

We have seen that there are some advantages to schools being organized hierarchically. But we have already suggested that such forms of organization, while appropriate in certain circumstances, may not be appropriate in other circumstances. In particular, we suggested that two major weaknesses of hierarchical organizations are their inability to respond rapidly to change, and their limiting of innovation.

What if our society moved to a point where *change* (rather than stability) was its most dominant characteristic? Or where society valued people's ability to *think and innovate* more than people's abilities to follow orders simply and efficiently? Would hierarchical forms of organization still be the most appropriate way to organize work?

Let's see what experts in the field of *organizational development* think.



#### ACTIVITY 4: WHY DOES BUSINESS BELIEVE 'HIERARCHIES' ARE INAPPROPRIATE?

Turn to Part 1 (the beginning) of your audiotape. Listen to a number of South African organizational and educational experts as they explain the changes that are occurring in South African society and globally, as well as the implications of these changes for schools. Stop the tape when you hear an instruction to complete Activity 4. Make notes as you listen.

Then turn to and read the article by McLagan and Nel (*Reading Section Two, 'Organizations: The impact of global change'*). The article deals in more depth with the kinds of changes occurring in South African society, and makes suggestions about the new kinds of knowledge, skills and attitudes that learners require in order to live and work successfully in such a society.

Now answer these questions in your workbook:

- What kinds of knowledge, skills and attitudes do old hierarchical styles of schooling develop in learners? Do they fit in with the values that the writers and speakers argue are important in present-day society?
- What kinds of knowledge, skills and values (competencies) should 'new' schools develop in their learners in order to prepare them for life and work in the kind of society that is emerging?
- What characteristics should 'new' organizations have if they want to operate successfully today?
- Think about your own school. Do the writers' comments hold true for your school? Give an example.



This is the first activity in which you have to read and listen to the ideas of other people. Read and listen carefully. Do so more than once. And always try to link these new ideas with the ideas you have already learnt and to contexts with which you are familiar. Spend about 2 hours on this activity.

### What problems do hierarchical organizations pose in present-day society?

You will notice that all the 'experts' argue that society *has changed* and that old hierarchical organizations are not appropriate to this new 'age'. They assert that this new age – in the language of McLagan and Nel, the *Age of Participation* – requires structures that promote *participation* and *flow*. They also make an important point: that

**apathetic:** showing no interest

structures will ‘teach’ employees certain values. In other words, they argue that **structures** which provide opportunities for participation will create an **attitude** in favour of participation. However, organizations which **don’t** provide opportunities for participation might well create apathetic attitudes among teachers.

One problem with hierarchical organizations is that their emphasis on specialisms and authority creates **divisions (boxes)** between those at the top and others below them, as well as between people at the same level. There isn’t a sense that everyone is working together for a common purpose. Think of schools. Often teachers don’t co-operate with management; also, there is no sense that they are working together towards the same goals – or with one another. Teachers, for instance, don’t often involve themselves in team-teaching or consult with each other on learners’ progress.

Do you remember how the teachers didn’t help the deputy principal at Thuthuka in his task of getting learners inside the classrooms?

**First**, teachers **boxed** this function as his responsibility and were not prepared to assist. This is working against schools in contemporary society, according to the writers, because contemporary society requires an approach to work that **integrates** functions. The discipline function is not only about the deputy principal patrolling the gates; it is also about teachers teaching well, and being in their classes on time. The writers talk about a **team** approach to work, where teams are put together in order to achieve a particular task and then disband once this function has been achieved.

**Second**, in addition to hindering **participation**, this **boxing** of functions also makes the organization **inflexible** and **unable to respond to immediate needs or changes**. (Notice how the children call it a ‘sticky’ structure.) All the experts suggest that our new schools must be **flexible** enough to respond to the rapid changes that will occur in South African society in the future. The current **boxing** of functions and steep, hierarchical decision-making structures hinder teachers, especially junior teachers, when they try to innovate. The focus in hierarchical organizations is on **following procedures**, rather than on thinking of imaginative new ways of doing things. Again, the writers suggest that participation by all workers in decision-making, and putting together temporary teams to deal with situations as they arise (rather than hierarchical, boxed structures), would assist organizations to deal with rapid change and to innovate. (In schools, such task-based teams would probably include an HoD, some teachers and learners.)

**Third**, rapid change requires organizations that can **communicate quickly and effectively**. Hierarchical organizations make this difficult because messages have to pass through so many levels. They also hinder ‘bottom-up’ communication. This means that problems among ordinary teachers are rarely heard by management, and therefore generally remain unresolved. Hierarchical organizations could also lead to the principal feeling isolated because he or she is separated from the rest of the school.

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... rapid change  
requires organizations  
that can communicate  
quickly ...  
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## What values underlie the hierarchical model?

We have heard that organizational structures **teach** participants certain kinds of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Often these are similar to the kinds of values (or assumptions) that underpin the form of organization chosen.

McLagan and Nel state that there are a number of assumptions underlying the hierarchical model of organization. They say the model began as a consequence of Frederick Taylor’s attempt to find an **efficient form of work organization** in factories. Taylor had suggested this would be best achieved if organizations:

- were arranged hierarchically – with **clear lines of accountability and clear procedures**;
- **divided work into small parts and gave each part to specialists**: the functions of **thinking** (designing products, planning processes, etc.) and **doing** (physical work)

were separated (i.e. people should specialize).

Our schools provide many examples of this approach. Principals have enormous and often unquestioned power in schools. Till recently, learners have had virtually no access to decision-making. Procedures dominate decision-making, often manifested in the endless torrent of forms that teachers have to fill in. Seldom can quick, spontaneous decisions be made. Different subject departments work separately and, even within departments, different teachers don't really co-operate in their work.

The fact that we are part of a hierarchical organization means we 'learn' these kinds of values over time, simply by participating in the organization. We learn to operate as individuals, to respect authority, and to follow instructions (even if they don't seem to make sense), rather than to innovate.

However, as we suggested earlier (and the 'experts' agreed), these assumptions no longer hold in South Africa. Unlike the old system where teachers simply had to implement a syllabus which was given to them, our new educational policy suggests that teachers now have to:

- **participate in constructing curricula;**
- **participate in making decisions** about how schools are run;
- **think** (plan) as well as **do** (teach);
- **work with** other teachers in planning learning programmes, devising suitable materials, teaching, and conducting continuous assessment (work in teams, not as individuals).

This clearly suggests that schools need to be **structured differently** so that we begin 'learning' new kinds of values. This, in turn, will enable us to **teach our learners the new kinds of competencies** they require to live in this changed world.

## How do hierarchical structures impact on relationships, attitudes and behaviour in schools?

We saw that the four Thuthuka teachers are frustrated because their efforts to improve their teaching are being blocked. This 'blockage' is caused by inappropriate structures and teacher attitudes. Using the day at Thuthuka as an example (page 18), let's look more closely at how a particular kind of school organization may affect teachers' **attitudes** to learning and teaching.

- The school simply **accepts** the CSEM's decision about when to have the athletics trials, despite the fact that it negatively affects teaching and learning. The hierarchical structure has **developed an attitude** within the CSEM that he has the **right** to instruct without consultation. It has also created an attitude among his juniors – the principal and teachers – that they simply have to accept this decision. The structure has created an attitude – or 'culture' – of **instruction and compliance** rather than **consultation and debate**.
- Some teachers want to teach Geography and Biology in an integrated way, but are unable to do so because of the way the timetable has been structured. The timetable has also created an attitude or 'culture' at the school which suggests that its procedures should be **followed blindly**, rather than creating an attitude where teachers regard the timetable as a **flexible suggestion** about how time should be organized. This is evident in the attitude of the other teachers and the HoDs. Rather than think of ways in which this innovation could be implemented without impacting negatively on other teachers' programmes, they simply accept that it can't be changed. The school's inflexible timetable structure has created inflexible attitudes among teachers.
- Teachers have little say in designing the goals of the school, or in decision-making. This lack of participative decision-making structures leads to an attitude among many teachers that reflects a lack of concern. For instance, some teachers are thrilled about the athletics meeting because they can get out of a day of teaching



Turn back to the McLagan and Nel reading and re-read Figure 3.2 on page 23. This gives a summary of the key assumptions made by authoritarian (extremely hierarchical) and participative approaches to organizations respectively. It also lists some of the tensions that are emerging as we change our organizations.

(even though this might impact negatively on their learners' progress). Also, the lack of any proper policy about teachers attending staff development workshops means that those teachers who often go away to workshops are not accountable to their colleagues for what they have learned, or responsible to learners for setting work to do during their absence.

- Learners are threatening to boycott classes – which would lead to a loss of their own learning time – because they feel that staff and management do not take their views seriously. The lack of any good, participative decision-making structure through which learner grievances can be voiced, creates a feeling among learners that there is no partnership and no sense of co-operation in the school. This leads them to believe that it doesn't matter if their boycott destroys the school because they feel no sense of 'ownership'.



**Figure 2.2** A consequence of excluding teachers from participation in decision-making structures is the growth of an apathetic, 'don't-care' attitude among many teachers

It is becoming evident that changing school organization is about changed *attitudes (or cultures)* as well as changed structures. We can see too *that structure impacts on culture* but that *culture also impacts on structure* (for instance, a good participative structure can be destroyed by an apathetic or undemocratic culture among teachers, learners or parents).

Later we will learn more about the relationship between structure and culture, and how both are important in creating a school where teachers want to teach and learners want to learn.

## Conclusion

McLagan, Nel, Mbigi, and Mahanjana have raised a number of interesting challenges for teachers.

First, they all seem to suggest that one possible reason for the problems we face in our schools is that they simply don't 'fit' into the society developing around them. In other words, they are outdated.

Second, they also give some ideas as to why both government and business are currently spending so much time talking about the need for 'new' kinds of education, such as OBE, and new and more democratic organizational structures at schools. Clearly these new ideas are not simply some individual's 'bright new concept'. Instead, many of these changes are a consequence of the changes in society which, in turn, mean that learners who enter that society will need to have different kinds of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

So, South African schools – and many schools worldwide – tend to be hierarchical because they emerged at a time when societies were relatively stable and when work processes valued efficiency above creativity. These societal needs led to a 'family' of organizational and management theories known as *classical management theory*. We will learn more about this in the next part.

At the end of this section, we will briefly explore how South Africa's particular context of apartheid *deepened* the hierarchical nature of South African schools, causing most of them to be more *authoritarian* than the hierarchically structured schools in many other countries.

### What have we learnt so far?

- Most South African schools are currently organized as hierarchies. This means that:
  - decisions are made by people with more authority (the school's management) and handed down to those with less authority – the information flow tends to be top-down;
  - functions are clearly divided and allocated to different positions – people work in specialist positions and seldom co-operate with each other;
  - there are clear procedures according to which tasks are carried out – following these procedures efficiently is far more important than spontaneous innovation.
- Hierarchical forms of organization have some important benefits, and were developed in an era where stability and efficiency were regarded as the most important characteristics of organizations.
- However, the era in which we live has different requirements. Rapid change requires organizations which are more participative, more flexible and encourage innovation. Rapid change also requires individuals who take responsibility and who innovate rather than simply follow orders.
- This holds true for South African schools as well as for schools in other countries. New educational policies stress that teachers should be able to do *and* think, to participate in decision-making, and to co-operate with others in teaching.
- Finally, to effect change in organizations, we must create new *cultures* (i.e. teachers with new, improved attitudes to their work), as well as new *structures*.

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society ...  
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# 2.4

## 'Classical' management theory and school organization

### Introduction

So far we have relied mainly on our own *experiences* and those at Thuthuka School in our attempts to understand hierarchic forms of organization. We have also heard and read the opinions of business consultants and educationists who have argued that hierarchical forms of organization are inappropriate for future societies. But we also know that hierarchies:

- have worked, and continue to work well (and often not so well!) in many schools and businesses around the world;
- are still the most dominant form of organization in South African schools, and have 'formed' the attitudes of thousands of learners and teachers in these schools.

In this sub-section we'll learn a little more about some 'classical' management theories and their influence on the organization of schools. But, in order to make this *theory* useful to us as teachers wanting to understand and change the organization in which we work, we will first need to learn about how this theory – and all other theory – can be used *in practice*.

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... a clearer  
understanding  
of the themes which  
underpin practices  
helps us to understand  
and change the  
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### Using theory practically

We have already read a little about how the effects of political, economic and social forces shape business and education. But the explanations we give about *why* things are the way they are depend upon the *theories* we hold. For instance, McLagan and Nel make assumptions about how the world is changing and, because of these assumptions, they draw particular kinds of conclusions. In other words, they have a *theory* about change and society and this leads them to make particular kinds of statements. In general, a clearer understanding of the different theories which underpin different practices – such as hierarchical forms of school organization – helps us understand and change the institutions in which we work.

The *policy* which underpins the South African education system has shifted away from authoritarian thinking and hierarchical school organization to more participative, democratic thinking and organizational styles. This shift is clearly part of the political change away from apartheid towards a more democratic and equal society.

How do we understand this change? It is clear that a different set of assumptions – a different theory – underpins the new policies (and desired practices) from the set which underpinned our old way of practising education (and the way in which we organized schools). One new assumption, for instance, is that schools function better if all stakeholders are involved in decision-making. This is quite different from the old assumption that schools functioned best when only those with expertise and experience made decisions.

While we may *prefer* one of these positions above the other, this preference is not particularly important in academic study. It is far more important to *understand why* a particular practice emerges. In other words, we need to understand what assumptions are made by those who believe in participative decision-making, for instance, assumptions about people and authority that 'allow' them to justify their kind of organization above other forms of organization.

We have all experienced 'theory' that hasn't helped us. People often use the word 'theory' in a common-sense way to mean something that is opposite to 'practice'. A

driver could say, 'In **theory**, I can change the wheel of my car'. By this she means that, although she has read the vehicle manual and knows what steps to take in theory, in practice she has never actually changed a wheel.

But we will use the word 'theory' in a different way:

*Theory is a set of ideas and arguments that explains something in our everyday lives in a way which enables us to begin making changes to that 'something'.*

Read the following excerpt – 'Using theory to improve practice' – from Tony Bush's 1995 book called *Theories of Educational Management*. In this excerpt the author asks why teachers and managers so often reject theory as 'useless' and argue that their professions are 'purely practical affairs'. He suggests this is so because, often, theory is taught as an end in itself. Bush argues that theory is only useful when it 'explains practice' and 'guides action'.

In other words, he asserts, theory should always be learnt with the question 'So how does this help me improve my work?' in mind. It should never simply be memorized. Bush warns that if we don't have theory to guide our work, all we can rely on is our experience. And, of course, our experience is usually limited to one or two types of situation, which does not provide a reliable basis for making important decisions.

As you read, note in particular Bush's four reasons stating why theory is important. Is he right? Perhaps you are unwilling to make a decision about this yet, so keep his ideas in mind as you work through this module. Later, reassess your answer, and try to judge whether any of the 'theory' learnt here has been useful or not.

## Using theory to improve practice

### Arguments against 'theory'

Management is often regarded as essentially a practical activity. The determination of aims, the allocation of resources and the evaluation of effectiveness all involve action. Practitioners tend to be dismissive of theories and concepts for their alleged remoteness from the 'real' school situation. School and college staff have a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards theory. The teachers themselves commonly regard theory with a varying mixture of respect and suspicion: respect because it is thought of as difficult, and suspicion because its bearings are unclear on the detailed decision as to what to do next Monday morning ...

Hughes (1985: 3–31) concedes that links between theory and practice have been weak:

*Theory and practice are uneasy, uncomfortable bedfellows, particularly when one is attempting to understand the complexities of human behaviour in organizational settings ... It has been customary for practitioners to state the dichotomy in robust terms: airy-fairy theory versus down-to-earth practice.*

It is evident from these comments that theory and practice are often regarded as separate aspects of educational management. Academics develop and refine theory while managers engage in practice. In short, there is a theory/practice divide. Theory may be perceived as esoteric and remote from practice. Yet, in an applied discipline such as educational management, the acid test of theory is its relevance to practice.

### How to make theory useful

Theory is valuable and significant if it serves to explain practice and provide



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**alleged:** claim, declare; many people claim that theory is 'remote', but there is no reason why it has to be  
**ambivalent:** mixed opinions about something

**concedes:** admits, acknowledges, agrees

**dichotomy:** a way of seeing things as strictly divided into two quite different, separate, or even opposed groups or parts

**esoteric:** knowledge that is limited to a small number of people

**acid test:** a test that proves whether or not something is able to do what it is supposed to do

managers with a guide to action (...):

*Theories are most useful for influencing practice when they suggest new ways in which events and situations can be perceived. Fresh insight may be provided by focusing attention on possible interrelationships that the practitioner has failed to notice, and which can be further explored and tested through empirical research. If the result is a better understanding of practice, the theory-practice gap is significantly reduced for those concerned. Theory cannot be dismissed as irrelevant. (Hughes and Bush, 1991: 234)*

If practitioners shun theory, then they must rely on experience as a guide to action. In deciding on their response to a problem, they draw on a range of options suggested by previous experience with that type of issue. Teachers sometimes explain their decisions as just 'common sense'. However, such apparently pragmatic decisions are often based on implicit theories:

*Common sense knowledge ... inevitably carries with it unspoken assumptions and unrecognized limitations. Theorizing is taking place without it being acknowledged as such. (Hughes, 1985: 31)*

When a teacher or a manager takes a decision, it reflects in part that person's view of the organization. Such views or preconceptions are coloured by experience and by the attitudes engendered by that experience. These attitudes take on the character of frames of reference or theories which inevitably influence the decision-making process.

The use of the term 'theory' need not imply something remote from the day-to-day experience of the teacher. Rather, theories and concepts can provide a framework for managerial decisions:

*There is nothing more practical than a good theory... It can... help the practitioner to unify and focus his views on an organization, on his role and relationships within the organization, and on the elusive phenomena of leadership and achievement (Landers and Myers, 1977:365).*

Theory serves to provide a rationale for decision-making. Managerial activity is enhanced by an explicit awareness of the theoretical framework underpinning practice in educational institutions. As a result, some academics and practitioners 'now vigorously challenge the traditional view that practical, on-the-job experience on its own provides adequate management training in education' (Hughes, 1984:5).

There are four main arguments to support the view that managers have much to learn from an appreciation of theory:

- Reliance on facts as the sole guide to action is unsatisfactory because all evidence requires interpretation. Life in schools and colleges is too complex to enable practitioners to make decisions simply on an event-by-event basis. A frame of reference is needed to provide the insight for this important management task. (...)
- Dependence on personal experience in interpreting facts and making decisions is narrow because it discards the knowledge of others. Familiarity with the arguments and insights of theorists enables the practitioner to deploy a wide range of experience and understanding in resolving the problems of today. (...)
- Errors of judgement can occur while experience is being acquired. Mistakes are costly in both human and material terms. Resources are limited, but the needs of children and learners are even more important. In education we just cannot throw away the flawed product as waste and start again (Hughes, 1984:5).
- Experience may be particularly unhelpful as the sole guide to action when the

**pragmatic:** down-to-earth, practical

**frames of reference:** particular sets of ideas which provide a way of making sense of the world

practitioner begins to operate in a different context. Organizational variables may mean that practice in one school or college has little relevance in the new environment. A broader awareness of theory and practice may be valuable as the manager attempts to interpret behaviour in the fresh situation.

Of course, theory is useful only so long as it has relevance to practice in education. (...) The relevance of theory for the manager in education should be judged by the extent to which it informs managerial action and contributes to the resolution of practical problems inside schools and colleges.

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**organizational variables:** factors or characteristics which differ, or vary, from one organization to another

## But how do we make theory 'practical'? ask Thuthuka teachers

*In the fourth meeting of the Thuthuka group, when everybody is prepared to move on to the next topic, Thulani suggests that the staff should look at some management **theory**. This raises a big argument about theory and its usefulness for teachers in the classroom. Many in the group feel that theory is for academics at universities, and cannot offer anything to teachers who are dealing with real issues in their schools. They feel that experience is far more useful than theory, despite having read Bush's article.*

*Thulani agrees that Bush hasn't really given any examples of **how** to use theory. Instead he simply focuses on **why** theory is important for good management. 'But,' Thulani says, 'In my management course we learnt how to use theory to make "educated guesses". For instance, we now know that old-style hierarchic organizations believe that the following of procedures – and the efficient running of organizations – is extremely important. We could, therefore, take an "educated guess" that such thinkers would not be particularly interested in a junior person constantly presenting management with innovative plans for change.'*

*'In other words,' Thulani continues, 'we could use our theoretical understanding of old-style management to work out what is likely to be tolerated when we try to change, what is likely to be resisted, and why this is so. So, one practical benefit is that it gives us ideas as to how we should strategize change. And understanding "new" organizational theory will give us a set of indicators by which we can check our progress.'*

*The staff are not entirely convinced, but agree that Thulani should prepare a talk for the group on different 'scientific' management theories which, says Thulani, 'explain' the way in which Thuthuka is organized. With a fuller understanding, the group hope they may gain clearer ideas on what to change, and why.*

*Thulani's presentation is divided into two parts. First he looks at some historical facts about management theory, and then he looks at present trends. Here is a summary of his presentation.*





Thulani made extensive use of another chapter in Bush (1995), *Theories of Educational Management*, written by T. Barr Greenfield. If you are interested, you may want to read the chapter entitled 'Organizations as social inventions: rethinking assumptions about change'.

## 'Classical' management theories: how they can help us understand school organization

by Thulani Shabalala

### Some early management theory

Two thinkers - Taylor and Weber - probably had more impact on 'classical' management theory than anyone else. Most 'old-style' hierarchical organizations have been structured according to the principles developed by these two thinkers.

### Taylor (1911) and scientific management

Put very simply, the development of management theory stretches back to the last century. Industrialists wanted to increase their profits, so they had to produce goods effectively and efficiently. One way of doing this was to increase mass production through the assembly line. This meant setting up factories where every person did a different job. Instead of a single craftsperson making a complete shoe, for example, one person would cut out the leather uppers, another would cut out the sole, and another would stitch the shoe together.

One of the people who influenced early management theory was the American, Frederick Taylor. At the beginning of the 20th century, he developed his principles of 'scientific management' to improve production in American factories. He claimed that efficiency could be achieved by working out the best way to do a job scientifically. Each job was broken down into a series of small, related tasks. He thought there should be a clear division of responsibility between the management and the workers. Management should do all the thinking; they should set the goals, plan and supervise. The workers should not think at all; they should just do the tasks required of them. Scientific management became very well known, not only in industry but in the management of all kinds of organizations.

At the time of Taylor, the Western world was becoming an 'organizational society'. There was often conflict between people and organizations. Even though Taylorism increased wages - when workers maintained the strict standards which he set, many workers felt overwhelmed by the needs and demands of industrialists. One result of this approach was that skilled craftspeople (who were able to do tasks such as making a complete shoe) were replaced by unskilled workers (who did repetitive small parts of the task, like making shoe soles). To combat the range of human problems which arose, the first trade unions were formed to look after the interests of the workers.

### Weber (1947) and bureaucracy

Also at the start of the 20th century, Max Weber did important analyses of organizations, and developed a theory of bureaucracy. In his theory, Weber described the structure of large organizations - like government departments, schools, and hospitals - which were divided into offices, staffed by officials of various ranks. Bureaucratic organizations like these have clear-cut divisions of labour, a hierarchical structure of authority, and clear-cut rules and regulations. Decisions were made by seniors, without reference to others in the organization. In theory, people are selected and promoted according to what they can do, rather than according to class privilege or social connection. In this sense, Weber believed that bureaucracies promoted democracy: people were promoted on merit and not according to some other, less desirable criterion.

Weber stated that the growth of bureaucracies was inevitable for large-scale organizations. He believed that well-run bureaucracies were fairer, more impartial and more predictable than organizations which were run according to the whims of certain individuals. Before

this, Weber noted, people who owned businesses and factories employed their own relatives and friends, and ill-treated workers as they pleased. However, Weber acknowledged that bureaucracy had some major failings, especially its denial of democracy.

### **Some features of bureaucracy**

- A hierarchical chain of command. The bureaucratic organization is structured as a pyramid with the boss on top, who gives instructions to the next 'layer' of people, and so on. This chain of command brings order to large organizations.
- Specialization of jobs. The way to achieve efficiency is to divide the overall task into a number of smaller jobs. The manager makes decisions and assigns tasks in such a way that all the parts add up to a coherent whole.
- Written rules and policies. A bureaucracy is governed by rules which define the rights and duties of employees. The most basic rules concern who can give orders to whom.
- Standardized procedures defining each job. There are fixed ways which govern how people do their jobs. There are routine ways to deal with issues that occur frequently. This frees people in higher positions from constantly making routine decisions.
- Impersonal relations. Relationships are between one role and another, rather than between one person and another. The holder of a particular role is expected to carry out his or her responsibilities in a rational and unemotional manner, according to standardized procedures. This avoids favouritism.
- Limited responsibility. A consequence of these previous features, this tendency of bureaucracy often creates problems in education. It is reflected in such statements as 'I cannot stamp this for you/ give you what you want, etc. Mr Masinga can do it, but he is not here this week. Come back next week.', followed by the speaker putting the matter out of his or her mind, rather than taking some trouble to help the person making the request.

The bureaucratic model gained so much influence and support in the western world that other perspectives of management must always be understood in relation to it. You will notice that the 'hierarchical' model we have discussed so far is a combination of Taylor's 'scientific management' and Weber's 'bureaucracy'. A key common factor in these management styles is their focus on organizational structures and their neglect of the human dimension (culture).

### **A 'modern' response to early management theories**

Probably the most significant change in thinking about management fairly recently has been the increased focus on the people who make up organizations. Many theorists argued that the aim of Taylor and Weber - namely, increased efficiency - would not be met if managers did not take into account how their workers felt. Although there are many writers who made this point, I will mention only two.

Scientific management and bureaucracy were not the only theories of organization. Other writers in the 1930s, like Elton Mayo (1933), emphasized the human side of organizations. The 'Human Relations Movement' made an important contribution to organization theory. It stressed the importance of individuals and teams in making organizations work. It emphasized people's needs for self-fulfilment, job satisfaction, and a sense of belonging.

Another important management theorist who challenged 'scientific management' was Thomas Greenfield who wrote in the 1970s and 1980s. Greenfield (1985) stressed that organizations are made by human beings, and we cannot understand them unless we take individual beliefs and perceptions into account. Individuals may have different interpretations of the same situation. For example, teachers and learners have different perceptions of what happens in the classroom. Different

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teachers also have different understandings. Greenfield's view is that we cannot understand an organization like a school unless we understand the individual perspectives within it.

According to Greenfield, structure is a product of human interaction. Thus, schools cannot be changed simply by making structural changes. He wrote: 'We cannot solve organizational problems by either abolishing or improving structure alone; we must also look at their human foundations' (1973: 565).

### How I have used 'theory' practically

When I learnt about these theories, I became very excited for a number of reasons. First, I was able to understand that both Weber and Taylor were seeing organizations in a way that was appropriate to their times and which had particular purposes. This made me realize that any assessment of our school structure had to begin with questions about (a) whether it is appropriate to our age and society, and (b) whether it serves the purposes we want to achieve. For instance, I can now ask:

- Is our purpose primarily efficient production (one of 'scientific management's' key purposes)? If my answer was 'yes', then I could set about building an organization inspired by scientific management and Weber's notion of a bureaucracy. But my answer was 'no': educating children, while it must be done efficiently, is not primarily about efficient production. So I had to think again carefully about my key purpose, and then decide what would be the most appropriate structure to meet this purpose.
- Greenfield really excited me. For the first time I understood structures as human constructions. This really was a 'practical' discovery. It made me realize why so many good structures fail. Greenfield helped me understand that they failed because they were implemented outside the human beings in that school. To succeed with structural change, then, we must get people to understand that they are the various parts that make up school structures. This was very practical advice ... and it came from a 'theory'.



Note how Thulani writes this presentation. First, he clearly outlines the key points of the theories he has read about. Second, he explores key similarities and differences. Then, third, he explores some of their practical implications.

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## Thuthuka teachers react to the impact of 'classical' management theory

*Now the Thuthuka teachers can definitely see the influences of classical management ideas on the way their school is organized. 'We do have a hierarchical chain of command, because the SEM tells the principal what to do, he tells the HoDs, and they tell us. And the school also has very clear procedures for making decisions,' says Nomusa. 'Even if they are very inefficiently carried out at times,' she laughs.*

*'Yes, I can see some things are the same, but a school is definitely not the same as a factory or a business! We teachers do have some freedom about what we do in our classrooms. In other words, we are different from workers making shoes on a production line,' replies Sindi. 'Because of this, it is difficult to separate "doing" from "thinking" in schools, as scientific management suggested should happen in factories in order to make production efficient. And, although it does have some similarities with bureaucracies, I really think individual schools are too small to require bureaucratic procedures ...*

*'I think Greenfield has a point about the importance of taking an individual perspective,' adds Sindi. 'He talks of structures as human constructions. At school, that structure includes our learners who, unlike shoes on a production line, have feelings, misbehave and often respond unpredictably. So, schools are much more complex and human than factory organization. And I agree with Thulani: Greenfield's challenge to us is that we won't achieve change if we look only at structures ...'*

### What have we learnt so far?

- Theory is useful when it explains why organizations are arranged in certain ways, or when it helps us to make sense of the world in a more systematic way. It provides us with a different, more analytical lens through which we can see reality. It also provides us with a basis for change.
- The way in which schools are organized is not just a result of social, political and economic developments. Management and organizational **theories** have also influenced the shape of organizations. Of course, organization theories, particularly theories of bureaucracy, also help us to understand **why** schools are currently organized as they are.
- 'Scientific management' theories tend to emphasize the rationality, efficiency and effectiveness of organizational structures, whereas other theories stress the **human** side of organizations and the importance of individual beliefs and perspectives in developing healthy organizations.
- Bureaucracy, we found, works well for certain repetitive tasks and in stable conditions, rather than for tasks that require creative thinking and in situations of frequent change. New work organizations, however, function in societies that change rapidly and require workers who can **innovate**. It is thus becoming more and more important for people to think creatively and make good decisions, rather than simply to follow instructions.



## 2.5

# The importance of structure and culture in school change

## Introduction

In the '*Structures: flow, not boxes*' reading, the writers said structures *set the framework* for the culture of an organization. We know from our own experience, and from the happenings at Thuthuka, that the dominant *structures* found in South African schools have shaped the *attitudes* of teachers. Now Greenfield states that structure is a *product of human interaction*. We are beginning to see that, if we want successful change, we must work on this human dimension – the *attitudes* or dominant *culture*, as well as on changing structures.

So far we have been using the term 'culture' in a very vague sort of way. In this subsection we will explore:

- in more depth, what the 'culture' of a school actually is;
- how structure and culture impact on each other.



Spend about 50 minutes on this activity. We suggest you share your experiences of schools with other students. Debate why your respective schools *feel* different.

When you have done this, turn to Part 2 of your audiotape. This begins *after* the narrator asks you to complete Activity 4. Listen to Andrew Schofield, Mark Potterton and Penny Vinjevoold talk about their experiences of different school cultures and the difficulties in changing them.

### ACTIVITY 5: HOW DO DIFFERENT SCHOOLS 'FEEL'?

Think of two schools that you know or have visited recently. It is likely that these schools 'felt' different, even though they may have been built in a similar style and probably had similar management structures. In your workbook:

- Write down words to describe the way each school *feels* – does it feel 'friendly', or 'chaotic', or 'impersonal', etc.?
- Explain *why* you think each school 'feels different'. Has it to do with the way it is organized? Or with the kinds of teachers and learners it attracts? Or with the personality of the principal? Or something else?

## What is 'culture'?

'Culture' is a word that can be interpreted in different ways. Two of the most common interpretations are:

- Culture has *to do with art, music, dance* (for example, people who go to the theatre or listen to good music are often called 'cultured' people).
- Culture encompasses the *way of life of a particular group of people* (for example, in Chinese culture, people take off their shoes before entering a temple, based on certain beliefs about the temple being a holy place. In Zulu culture, children should not look adults in the eyes, based on a belief that children should show respect for the wisdom of the elders).

In this module, we draw strongly on the second definition of culture, but relate it to schools. In other words:

*Culture is the way of life of the people within a particular school. It refers to the underlying beliefs and assumptions, norms and values, relationships and interactions, shared by people in a school.*

Think back to Activity 5. You were asked to describe the different 'feelings' you experienced when you entered different schools. You may have noted that a particular school's 'feeling' was created by the way in which teachers *related* to each other, for instance. In one school, you may have found a very *relaxed, easy 'feeling'* created:

**norms:** shared beliefs about what is right and what is wrong, or the right or wrong way to do things

- by all teachers (Principal and HoDs included) addressing each other by their first names;
- by the interaction between teachers who talked to each other about work, shared resources, and worked together;
- by the relaxed dress code of the teachers (no ties or suits, for instance);
- by the bright and inviting classrooms and school premises, and so on.

When you walked into another school, you may have noticed that:

- teachers were formally dressed;
- all teachers addressed each other as *Mr* or *Ms* or *Dr*;
- the school (and staffroom) was silent.

These characteristics might have created a feeling of 'stiffness' or 'formality' within you. The point is that the culture of the two schools is likely to be quite different.

### How do cultures emerge?

Different kinds of 'school cultures' emerge through the different **beliefs and assumptions, norms and values, relationships and interactions** that are dominant in the particular school. David Hopkins, a British researcher studying school change, explains these various dimensions of 'culture' in a school as:

- **Observed behavioural regularities.** These describe teacher interaction in a staffroom – the language they use and the rituals they establish. For example, do teachers use first names or surnames when addressing each other? This would contribute to a more, or less, formal 'culture' being established in a school.
- **Norms.** These evolve in working groups of teachers in terms of lesson planning or monitoring learner progress. Do different subject teachers regularly discuss what and how they are teaching classes they have in common? Has a 'norm' of peer observation been established, or do teachers work absolutely independently? Does team-teaching occur naturally in the school? Depending on the norms which emerge in practice, either a **collaborative** culture or a very **individualistic** culture will emerge.
- **Dominant values.** These are espoused by a school in its aims or 'mission statement'. Does the school commit itself to sporting excellence, or high matric pass rates? Is its emphasis on art and culture, and on developing the 'whole' person? Depending on the choice, the school will develop either an 'academic' culture, or a 'sporting' culture, or some other kind of culture over time, which will attract some kinds of learners and put off others.
- **A philosophy.** For example, this guides the dominant approach to teaching and learning of particular subjects in a school. Does the school encourage group work, or experiential learning? Or does it assume classroom-based, teacher-centred teaching, like Thuthuka does? Depending on the dominant philosophy, the 'culture' of one school will differ from another.
- **The rules of the game.** These must be learnt by new teachers in order to get along in the school or their department. They are very important. Often these rules are at odds with the written-down, **formal** rules of a school. So, for instance, many teachers at South African schools feel that the way to succeed is **not** to be critical or innovative. Instead, they should obey and, more importantly, not 'rock the boat'. Depending on the 'rules of the game' that emerge in one school or another, so the 'culture' of those schools will vary.
- **The feeling or climate.** This is conveyed by the entrance hall to a school, or the way in which learners' work is displayed (or not displayed). Many schools are characterized by empty walls, unkempt passages and gardens, and so forth. This creates a 'feeling' of neglect in teachers, learners and visitors, and probably influences the way in which people behave. In other words, the feeling or climate influences the culture of the school.

In reality, school cultures are formed by a **combination** of many of these components. In most cases, cultures are **unspoken**: they are '**felt**' rather than spoken, but



This classification is found in Hopkins, D. 1994. *School Improvement in an Era of Change*. London: Cassell. The classification, however, was first used by Edgar Schein in Schein, E. 1985. *Organizational Culture and Leadership*.



Re-read your answer to Activity 5. Were any of the dimensions of culture identified by Hopkins evident in your school? What sort of culture was created in the school? (Later you will read an article by Hopkins which will deepen your understanding further.)

they act powerfully on participants' behaviour. In other words, you are likely to find the 'culture' of your school in those actions and beliefs that are '**taken for granted**' – that most staff believe are simply the '**natural**' way of doing things.

So, to succeed in changing a school, you must demonstrate that these taken-for-granted actions and beliefs are **not** the only way of doing things. You need to provide examples of how things can be done differently, and what benefits such change will bring to the school.

Cultures are not always positive. You are no doubt aware of the calls for restoring a 'culture of learning and teaching' in South African schools. And you may have heard of people suggesting that, in order to do this, the current 'culture' of apathy, or 'irresponsibility', or 'laziness', needs to be destroyed. Two school-change researchers – Davidoff and Lazarus (*in The Learning School, 1997:18*) – describe how 'culture' can work negatively as well as positively:

*Where there is a culture of malaise at a school – of teachers arriving late, not preparing lessons adequately, resenting being at school after the last bell has rung – the way teachers think about and value their teaching will be affected. It will affect the way in which people relate to each other, the way meetings are run, the way information is shared, the way school is managed.*

Davidoff and Lazarus refer to components of school culture that we have already mentioned – the way teachers **think about and value** their teaching, the **way people relate** to each other, **the way meetings are run**.

### **Living in different cultures**

**Culture is the way people make sense of their daily lives.** But we all live in more than one culture. For example, we may be part of a **student culture** while we are at college and, at the same time, be part of a particular **ethnic culture** and, at the same time, participate in **cultural activities** or belong to a particular **religious group**, and all along also be a product of our **school culture**.

The descriptions and examples we have read about Thuthuka tell us about that **school's** culture. By examining the **observable practices, behaviours** and **habits** of a school, we can come to understand the culture of a school. But we also need to explore how a deeper level of **underlying beliefs and assumptions** – which often emerge **outside** school – impacts on the culture of a school. For instance, traditional rural people may believe that it is 'natural' for younger people to show respect for older people. This belief is likely to shape the way teachers operate in schools too, regardless of what official policy might say.

The deep underlying belief that this is the 'natural' way of the world is the reason why people who hold this belief are shocked when they meet people who do not share this belief. We do not always think about these beliefs – they are simply taken for granted – and the belief only becomes visible when challenged by another set of firmly held beliefs.

## The relationship between structure and culture in school organization

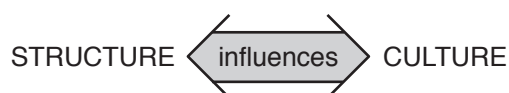
Now that we have a clearer understanding of what we mean by 'culture', let's look at the relationship between structure and culture. McLagan and Nel suggest that **structure influences culture**, that the structure of a school **creates the framework** for values and relationships (in other words, the culture of the school).

This implies that the teachers, managers and learners in a school structured in an authoritarian and hierarchical way, will learn to relate to each other in an authoritarian way. For example, they would argue that a rigid timetable doesn't allow teachers to plan together or to team-teach and, in **structuring time in this way**, creates a 'mindset' (a **culture**) among teachers which encourages **individualistic** teaching (rather than collaborative teaching) of **separate** subjects (rather than integrated learning areas). We can explain McLagan and Nel's understanding of the relationship between structure and culture in the following diagram:



**Figure 2.3**

However, other writers see this understanding as too simplistic. The next reading – by David Hopkins and others – argues that the relationship between structure and culture is a **two-way** relationship. In other words, while structure **does** influence culture, it is also true that culture **constantly influences** structure. The writers argue that the relationship is 'dialectical' – **structure and culture constantly interact with each other and each constantly changes the other**.



**Figure 2.4**

But let's read the explanation of this relationship by Hopkins et al. Their reading starts with a problem:

*'How do we, as school change agents, begin changing schools? In particular, do we begin by changing structures or by changing cultures?'*

Ultimately they seem to suggest that it's not an **either/or** question; instead, one has to work on **both**. However, we think Hopkins et al. lean towards a preference for work on changing **structures** simply because they see this as a more concrete (and thus easier) way to change cultures. They seem to argue that, because work on structures is practical, it is visible to people, whereas work on culture is often invisible and thus it is more difficult for people to see the benefits.

The writers draw strongly on their experience, but then 'theorize' this experience so that it is applicable more widely (i.e. so that you can make use of their findings). Notice how they develop 'models' to:

- explain the different kinds of relationships between structure and culture that



Now that you have learnt a little more about the relationship between structure and culture in school change, we suggest you rewind your audiotape and re-listen to Part 2.



How do you think the three South African school organization experts in Part 2 of the audiotape would answer this?

- they found in the different kinds of schools they worked in;
- suggest that our strategy for school change will differ, depending on the kind of relationship we find in the school in which we are working.



This is a time-consuming but important activity. Spend no less than 3 hours working through it.

**continuum:** the *kinds* of cultures in different schools are not completely different; rather, they vary *by degrees* from one another, from 'stuck' schools to 'moving' schools



## ACTIVITY 6: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN 'STRUCTURE' AND 'CULTURE' IN SCHOOLS

Turn to page 51 in your Reader and read the article titled 'Culture and structure in school improvement' written by David Hopkins and his colleagues. This reading is more complex than those you have read thus far, so read carefully and read it more than once. Before you begin reading, have a look at the questions we want you to answer below. This will focus your reading.

- The writers distinguish between the *appearance* of change and the *reality* of change. What is the difference? Can you provide an example from your own experience – in schools or other organizations – which illustrates this difference?
- The writers use a 'model', developed by Rosenholtz, to explain differences in school cultures. But, they argue, school cultures aren't as simple as this. Instead they provide another model – developed from their own experiences of school change – which includes a *continuum* of cultures. What are their four 'cultures'? What is the relationship between work on cultures versus work on structure in each? Provide examples of your own to illustrate the four kinds of schools.

## Using the 'continuum' to analyse two South African schools

To explain the ideas of Hopkins et al. further, let's try to use them to explain the events in two case studies of fictitious schools.

### Case study 1: Mfundwenhle Primary School

At Mfundwenhle Primary School, the timetable allows for 30 minute lessons. During this time teachers usually teach from the textbook and learners copy notes from the board. Teachers often complain about the short amount of time given to each lesson and argue that they teach in this way mainly because they have a lot of work to get through in a short time. They have never tried possible alternatives to this structural arrangement. The way in which they teach has become the taken-for-granted and accepted way of doing things (it has become part of the school's culture).

Then the teachers attended a few workshops where they were introduced to the notions of 'integrated' teaching, learner-centredness and group work. After the workshops, the teachers decided to try out some of these things. They started to get their learners practically involved in doing things in the classroom. But they soon realized that they needed longer periods than 30 minutes if they were to succeed.

We can see here that the teachers were thinking differently; they wanted to teach differently, and so the timetable needed to change. At first they found it difficult to convince management that the lesson times should be an hour long instead of the usual 30 minutes. The more committed teachers decided to combine classes and to use double periods whenever possible. Gradually they persuaded the management committee to give them a chance to try this out with the junior classes in the following year. The timetable was changed accordingly, and the teachers did good work which impressed the principal and the management team. The follow-

ing year, the whole school used a new timetable where six 1-hour lessons replaced the old twelve 30-minute periods.

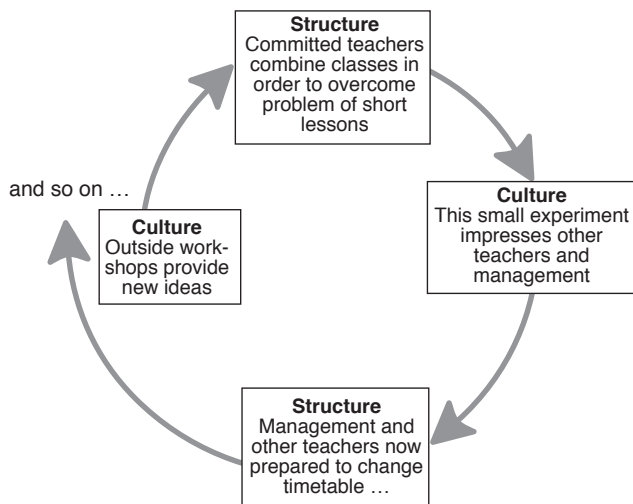
**Analysing Case study 1**

It seems that this school has achieved a sensible balance between work on structure and culture. It is certainly not a school characterized by too much innovation (a ‘wandering’ school) or no change (a ‘stuck’ school), or by living on its past glories (a ‘promenading’ school). We would argue that it is *most like* a moving school (even though some may argue that it falls short because it doesn’t have a *systematic and ongoing* process of reflection and change in place).

The way change occurs seems to fall within what the article calls *spontaneous change* – the teachers themselves take the initiative – but may well take on other characteristics as the school change deepens. You could argue that a change in the culture of teaching (committed teachers combining classes and using double periods, then attempting this with junior classes), finally prompts a change in the structure (‘the following year, the whole school used a new timetable ...’). A change in thinking about teaching and learning – through the workshops *and* the practice of these new ideas in the school where possible) – began changing the taken-for-granted ideas about teaching. Later – much later – the structure of the school changed.

What you should notice is that this school still hasn’t drawn up a new set of *priorities (framework)*, or a *strategy* for ongoing change. It has also not yet done much about changing *roles and responsibilities*, but there has been a change in the *ways in which teachers work*.

We could demonstrate this kind of structure-culture relationship in another diagram:



**Figure 2.5** A diagrammatic representation of the relationship between structural factors and cultural factors in the change process at Mfundwenhle

This depicts a very different, and more complex, relationship between structure and culture than that suggested by McLagan and Nel. It is a good example of a dialectic relationship in the sense that structure changes culture which, in turn, causes more change in structures, and so on ...

It also provides some interesting – and early – pointers as to how we begin changing schools. Usually, schools focus on changing structures because it *seems* easier to do so. But this example suggests we must also change culture *as we work on chang-*

*ing structures*. Otherwise, we could get an *appearance* of change but not the *reality* of change (to use the language of Hopkins et al.).

Hopkins et al. refer to schools that are 'renewing at the *organizational* (structural) but not at the *classroom* level' (which is most dependent on the changed attitudes of teachers, or a new culture). In other words, schools create the *spaces* to make change *possible* – for instance, they may well introduce 1-hour long lessons. However, because teachers are still caught in old cultures of 'teacher-talk' understandings of teaching, they do not *make use* of the spaces created for possible change. Instead, you may find them complaining that lessons are now too long!

Let's look at another example of change.

## Case study 2: St Mark's Secondary School

Following the stipulation of the South African Schools Act, St Mark's Secondary School introduced a new governing body with a representation of parents, principal, learners, teachers (called 'educators' in the Act), administration and other support staff (called 'non-educators'). In line with the principle of decentralizing decision-making powers and co-operative governance, parents are in the majority. Learners' views can be aired through their representation on the governing body.

In reality, however, the governing body has only had three meetings since its inception, and only three of the seven parent representatives attended the meetings (which are generally held directly after school at 2.30 p.m.). So the principal and the management team of the school feel they have been forced to continue making and implementing crucial decisions about the future of the school.

Although learner representatives attended all three meetings, there is growing dissatisfaction among the learners that nothing has changed. They say they seldom get agendas or minutes before meetings and so have to attend 'unprepared'. There is a simmering strike around the issues of the use of school funds, the irrelevance of the curriculum, and the lack of teacher commitment. At the last meeting, two parents argued vehemently against the learners' suggestions that two underqualified teachers be fired. They also didn't agree that the lunch break be extended by 15 minutes. The parents' view was that these matters should be decided by the principal and staff, and not by the learners.



This activity is an important application of some of Hopkins' ideas. It is a tough activity which requires you to use the theory you have learnt. Don't rush. Look back at how we analysed Case study 1, re-read Hopkins, and listen to Part 2 of your audiotape again. Then do this activity. Discuss your ideas with fellow students. Spend about 2 hours on this activity.

### ACTIVITY 7: ANALYSING THE CHANGE PROCESS AT ST MARK'S

- a Draw a diagram (see the example on page 43) that represents the relationship between structural and cultural factors in the changes at this school.
- b Explain why you think problems seem to be emerging in this school. (Go back to Hopkins. How would he characterize this school?)
- c What would you suggest teachers in this school do in order to ensure that the desired change occurs? Are you able to represent this diagrammatically? (Again, see whether Hopkins is helpful.)

### Our interpretation of Case study 2

What we observe at this school is a change in *structure*: a governing body has been established. This is a consequence of change in the school's *framework* (a new vision). But the old way of making decisions – the old 'culture' or, in Hopkins' language, *ways of working* – still continues. Although *structurally* the governing body is in place, the *way in which it functions* has not brought about any major observable change.

The ways in which the teachers, parents and learners *think about* the purpose of

education – in particular their roles in its management – have not changed. Another problem is that parents and learners may not have the *skills* required for democratic participation. So there is an *appearance* of participative governance, but this has not been carried through to a *reality* of change. Hopkins talks of *roles and responsibilities* as being partly cultural and partly structural. This is clearly evident here. In a sense, the principal has not really allowed parents to fill their new role by scheduling meetings at a time when parents are at work, and by not providing documentation so that people can prepare for meetings (structural issues). It is also evident that neither parents nor learners clearly understand their new responsibilities (a cultural issue) or have the skills to participate in democratic structures. This is a good example of how we need to work on culture – changing attitudes towards democracy and the skills of democratic participation – among management and parents.

### **Our advice to St Mark's**

This is the advice that we would give to the school: run an educational programme with all stakeholders on the role that governing bodies play in schools. This could form the basis of a process that will lead to a school mission statement and plan (a setting of agreed-upon priorities to which the governing body will generally work). The programme should also focus on how to participate effectively in democratic structures.

This programme would be a mix of cultural and structural intervention, acting to change ways of thinking about the organizational roles of all participants (a cultural intervention), as well as setting a *framework* and giving skills for participation (making it possible for stakeholders to take on their new *roles and responsibilities*). But the suitability of the *time* when meetings are held and the *venue* of meetings for parents should also be investigated (a structural intervention). Immediately set about allocating clear practical roles and responsibilities to parents and learners so that they can see how this new structure benefits them in practical terms (and to reassure the principal that it is not a threat to his or her position). Providing good documentation is also important in a form that can be read by newly-literate parents. These actions would also be structural interventions.

Our diagram would be similar to that of the first case study. In other words, it would reflect the fact that structure and culture continually act upon each other in a spiral that constantly re-evaluates and adapts actions embarked on by the school.

### **What have we learnt so far?**

- When we talk about school organization, we refer to the way in which the school is structured, *as well as* the norms and procedures which regulate behaviour and action within the school (the culture).
- Culture refers to the ways in which schools come to do things: the taken-for-granted beliefs and assumptions that are shared by people in the school. The practices in the school are usually reflections of these assumptions.
- Culture and structure are interdependent: they have a dialectical relationship. In order to bring about positive change in schools, it is vital that we examine exactly how structure and culture are related in a particular school, and then work on both as we attempt to change the way in which the school is organized. Otherwise, we may get the *appearance of change* without any *real change* taking place.



We will spend more time looking at the importance of focusing on both structure and culture in Section Four when we examine the processes of change in more detail. But it is very important that you feel confident that you understand sub-section 2.5 before you move on.



## 2.6

# Why are many South African schools hierarchical and authoritarian?



**legitimacy:** acceptability to the general population in terms of an appropriate social arrangement

## Introduction

Up till now we have used our experience to suggest that South African schools are hierarchical and authoritarian, and have implied that these characteristics need to be changed. But we require more support for this argument than just our experience.

Luckily, Sindi – a Thuthuka teacher – has read a report on school management written by a government task team in 1997. The report, entitled ‘Changing management to manage change’, asks the question: *Why do we have the schools we have and why should we change them?* These are some of its answers:

- Apartheid education lacked legitimacy which led to a crisis in South African education. This crisis manifested itself in poor educational management and the collapse of the culture of learning and teaching.
- Teachers and principals were *controlled by the rules, systems and procedures* of a hierarchical and centralized education system. For example, governance structures, the curriculum, finance, teacher appointments, and language policies, were all dictated from the top. Thus, teachers and principals were mere administrators who could not respond to the needs of their schools and communities.
- Public administration was characterized by an approach which led to a *rule-driven, secretive* and hierarchical management structure. The structure and culture of management were authoritarian and non-consultative.
- Managerial training and development were inappropriate and characterized by the collection of qualifications and certificates. The courses attended by teachers and managers had little relevance to issues in schools. Little attention was paid to the transfer of knowledge gained in such courses to the institutions and classrooms in which the teachers worked.

## Thuthuka teachers begin discussing South Africa’s educational history

*Somehow word had gone round Thuthuka that the four teachers we have already met (Thulani, Sindi, Nomusa and Sipho) were discussing some serious school-related matters. This had raised curiosity and three other teachers joined the discussions. We meet them in the staffroom during their lunch hour.*

*Sindi begins the discussion with a provocative comment: ‘OK, so the report tells us the obvious: we all know our schools were authoritarian in the past. But can anyone tell me **why** on earth our schools were organized in this hierarchical way in the first place? I’m a little confused because we now know that bureaucracies and hierarchies were not apartheid inventions. So why aren’t South African schools simply typical of schools worldwide? Aren’t all schools hierarchical and bureaucratic?’*

Sindi has already partly answered herself: yes, schools worldwide were influenced by ‘classical’ management theories which stressed the benefits of hierarchical and bureaucratic organization. As the staff had noted earlier, Thuthuka also manifests some of the characteristics of this management style in the way it is run. So, **one**



In Section Three we will look in more detail at this report, and at the *contexts* which might influence the way schools are organized in the future. We will also examine the current economic, political and social contexts shaping South African education.

*reason* for South Africa's hierarchical and bureaucratic schools could be ascribed to the influence of management theories and styles that were dominant worldwide in the last few decades.

But that doesn't give a full answer. It doesn't address the second part of Sindi's question: namely, are there other *uniquely South African* factors which make our schools *different* from those in many other countries? In order to answer this question, let's look briefly at the *context* which gave rise to the educational policies of the past. We will look at a simplified version of the history of education in South Africa.

## The historical context of education in South Africa

Formal schools have existed for less than 200 years. Before the Industrial Revolution in Britain, there was no such thing as education for everyone. Upper-class children in Europe were usually educated at home by tutors. Then, in the nineteenth century, there was an increase in schools for the 'masses'. One reason for this was the rapidly changing society. Industry needed people who were socialized into the new ways – particularly the attitudes required for repetitive factory-based work, and who had learnt the skills required to use the factory machines. As the Industrial Revolution spread to other countries, mass schooling developed alongside industrial development in Western society.

In pre-colonial Africa, schools (as we know them now) also did not exist. Children learnt what was important from their parents and elders in the community. When the Dutch colonized the Cape in 1652, very few schools were established. Children of the Trekboers learnt to read so that they could study the Bible, but there were no formal schools. An increase in schools only really occurred when the British administration took over after the Anglo-Boer War in 1902. Compulsory education was introduced for whites, but not for blacks. Many of the white people who were migrating to the towns were poor, unskilled, unemployed and Afrikaans-speaking. Schooling was seen as one way of bringing them into the rapidly industrializing society.

Until the 1950s, the education of black children was the responsibility of the church, through mission schools. These schools often had inadequate facilities for all the children who wanted to attend. So, even before the National Party came to power in 1948, education in South Africa was unequal and segregated. In terms of organization, though, there was little indication of large bureaucracies controlling education. Education was administered by a number of different bodies with little central control. School management, however, was authoritarian and hierarchical.

### ***Bantu Education is introduced***

In 1953, Bantu Education was introduced when H F Verwoerd was the Minister of Native Affairs. Most mission schools were closed down in favour of government schools which were to provide a limited curriculum to 'teach the Africans to accept their proper place'. Verwoerd created centralized control over 'black' education by moving it from the provinces to a national Department of Native Affairs. By 1956, the majority of black children who wanted education had no alternative but to attend Bantu Education schools.

While Bantu Education is often criticized for its underlying 'philosophy', it should be noted that schools *for all South Africans* underwent both philosophical and organizational changes when the National Party took power. The National Party took its inspiration from a conservative Calvinist reading of the Bible and believed that schools – for both whites and blacks – should instil *respect* for *Christian values* and for *the nation* in learners. They believed that adults – particularly Afrikaner adults – had the right and duty to *mould* younger children into adults with *these particular moral beliefs*. They had this right, they believed, because children were born inherently sinful – they quoted the biblical story of Adam in justifying this – and had to be socialized into goodness.

“  
... because the  
purpose of schools  
during apartheid was  
to mould  
citizens with  
values appropriate to  
apartheid, schools  
were tightly controlled  
by government ...  
”

With these as key educational beliefs, it is not surprising that the entire system was revamped as a larger, centralized, hierarchical and authoritarian system. In a sense, apartheid perceived God to be at the top, a white nationalist government below, and then principals, teachers and other adults below this. The role of teachers was to accept the instructions of the government (which, it was believed, represented God), and to do their duty by instilling these values in those below them.

Black people (and many white groups, such as Jewish people) were regarded as less than 'adult' in the sense that they had not been moulded into a Christian National view of life. This gave the National Party government the right to act as 'custodians' (carers) of black people, and so to impose a particular view of life – a culture – on them. Black people were educated only minimally so that they could be used as semi-skilled labour on the mines and in the factories. Another key motive for expansion was Verwoerd's belief that he could control black people by 'socializing' them into accepting apartheid values. One of the biggest ironies of apartheid education, however, is that it was the first mass provision of education for black children. Schooling for black children expanded rapidly, although it was vastly inferior to that provided for white children.

So, because the purpose of schools during the apartheid era – for both white and black children – was to mould them into apartheid citizens with the values appropriate to this kind of society, all schools were tightly controlled by the government. The education departments, of course, were hierarchically structured. This, and their increased size, led to massive bureaucracies with clear procedures being defined for virtually every action (most vividly represented by the forms teachers constantly fill out!). Inspectors from the various education departments (of which there were 19, divided according to race, province, and homeland) would visit schools to see whether they abided by the rules. And principals and teachers followed orders. Learners were given no power to decide on schooling because, it was assumed, they were too immature to do so.

### ***Protests and unrest: challenges to an authoritarian system***

Despite this tightly controlled system, the level of anger and frustration at the inequalities and oppressive nature of South African education increased until June 1976, when learners in Soweto protested against the use of Afrikaans as a language of instruction in black schools, and against Bantu Education in general.

These uprisings soon spread across the country. The government realized that its schooling system had lost its legitimacy – in other words, learners no longer trusted it and, thus, it had lost its ability to 'socialize' learners into apartheid values. They realized that some form of change was inevitable and responded by replacing the Bantu Education Act of 1953 with the Education and Training Act of 1979. African education was put into the hands of the new Department of Education and Training (DET).

But very little actually changed. In particular, schools were still authoritarian, and principals still looked to the DET for instructions. In Hopkins' language, there was the appearance of change but not the reality of change.

Dissatisfaction with Bantu Education continued, and the education ministry was forced to introduce further changes. A semblance of democracy was introduced when schools were allowed to have School Committees and, later, Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSAs) and Student Representative Councils (SRCs). Although these structures had limited powers, they were nevertheless an indication of a shift in thinking and of the growing influence of democratic forces.

School boycotts and disruptions to black education continued through the 1980s. The government responded by setting up the De Lange Commission. It recommended a single department of education for all, equal educational opportunities, and a greater emphasis on technical education. This last recommendation stemmed from the need for South Africa to develop better expertise in the field of technology, to assist the economy. But resistance to apartheid and apartheid education continued. In the late 1980s, a strategy to make schools 'ungovernable' was launched

by learners.

In a sense, this resistance was developing a *culture* among learners (and, increasingly, teachers) which would make it impossible for apartheid *structures* to work. At the start of the 1990s, the apartheid government – in its dying days – set out new policy proposals in the Education Renewal Strategy and the Curriculum Model for Education in South Africa. However, these policy proposals were overtaken by South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994.

## What can we learn from our educational history?

The first rather obvious point is that our schools are structured in the way they are because of globally dominant *ideas about school management*. But this gives only part of the answer. The other part – which explains why our schools differ from those in many other countries – is that our particular history (and the beliefs of dominant groups in our history) also had an important role to play in shaping the kinds of schools we have. This also suggests that we need to examine carefully how changes in global and national belief systems – and economic and social systems – may impact on the way in which we organize schools in the future.

Second, the history of educational change in South Africa is an interesting example of how a system that was *structured* as a tightly controlled, hierarchical and authoritarian structure *wasn't able to do its job* efficiently, that is, to *control* people. While, initially, the desired *culture* of subservience among teachers and learners might have been achieved, ultimately an alternative *resistance culture* had been built by learners, *despite the existence of authoritarian structures in schools and society*. This culture – and the actions which flowed from it – managed to destroy the old structures and old cultures.

However, we now sit in a post-apartheid South Africa with a historical challenge: we destroyed the authoritarian structures and cultures of apartheid. But, in so doing, we also badly damaged the *culture of teaching and learning*. How do we rebuild *both* a new educational culture and new organizational structures to sustain our hard-won political democracy? As we have learnt so far in this module – and no doubt have noticed from our own experiences – *simply* resourcing schools better, or creating new policies and structures (like SRCs, or PTSA's, for instance), is not enough.

We need to build new cultures too, and this is a long and difficult job. In Sections Three and Four we will attempt to answer this question in terms of how *school organization* theory can assist us. Other modules – in particular *Being a Teacher* – address the question of building a new culture of teacher professionalism more fully.



This South African history section draws strongly on Christie, P. 1985. *The Right to Learn*. Johannesburg: Sached/Ravan.

## What have we learnt so far?

- Classical management theories and bureaucratic patterns of organization were not the only influences that shaped the hierarchical structures of South African schools. Particular cultural forces in our history, especially the beliefs and attitudes of dominant groups, shaped our hierarchical organizations in uniquely authoritarian ways.
- In the first half of this century, the provision of schooling already discriminated between white and black; state resources were spent on compulsory education for whites, while the education of black children was left to the church. Both state and church schools, however, exhibited the hierarchical and relatively authoritarian structures typical of schools in many countries.
- Later, under the apartheid government, the ruling group's self-constructed role of 'guardianship' underpinned all state schooling:
  - All children were seen as essentially immature (even evil), and in need of moulding to a particular vision of 'adulthood'.
  - Black people, old and young, were seen as subject to the 'guardianship' of the white Afrikaner.
  - There was a heavy emphasis on control, obeying orders, 'policing' by superordinate officials, and dependence on the part of school staff – a culture of control and compliance.
  - The system was both highly centralized (especially for blacks) and fragmented (19 education departments).
- Significantly, this highly authoritarian and even repressive system gave rise to an alternative culture of **resistance**. Attempts to reform the system failed to withstand the new culture of refusal, aimed at making the system 'ungovernable'. However, in the process of destroying apartheid structures and culture in the education system, the 'cultures of teaching and learning' were also badly damaged.

## SECTION THREE

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# New contexts, new policies: new schools?

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# Changes in the South African context

## 3.1

### Introduction

Thuthuka teachers nod vigorously when Sindi comments, 'Wow, the apartheid system of education was oppressive. Thank goodness those days are over.'

'Yes, but we know they aren't really over. A particular culture remains. As a consequence, we know the difficulties we still face in our schools. And we also know that people continually criticize South African schools for not being able to meet the economic and other needs of the "new" South Africa,' adds Thulani.

'But what are these "needs" everyone talks about? Are they different from those of the past?' Sindi asks.

'I think they must be,' says Nomusa. 'For instance, I know that I want my child to be computer literate. And I want her to be able to show initiative because, it seems, permanent jobs in big companies are no longer guaranteed for school-leavers. In other words, she must be able to make work for herself ... to be self-employed. I think we need to find out more about the **demands of this new context**,' says Nomusa.

So, the Thuthuka teachers go off to do more 'research'. Thulani finds an article by a South African journalist which he thinks may provide interesting information about what the new government regards as important policy priorities, and what new educational legislation is being drafted to address these needs.



### ACTIVITY 8: EDUCATION'S ROLE IN A CHANGING SOUTH AFRICA

Turn to Karen MacGregor's article – entitled 'South Africa: juggling education and economic development' (Readings, Section One, 'South Africa: New plans for new contexts'). This provides us with an overview of the contextual needs which are driving (or should drive) new educational policies in South Africa. Read MacGregor's article. When you have finished, answer the following questions in your workbook:

- How is South Africa changing – politically, economically and socially? What are the different kinds of knowledge and skills that learners need to live and work successfully in this new context? How do these changes impact on the *kinds of education* that schools must offer?
- What are the *organizational implications* of these changes? In other words, how will you have to change the way your school operates (and the way you work) in order to meet these new needs?



This activity should take you about 90 minutes. Think of MacGregor's ideas in relation to those expressed by speakers in Part 1 of your audiotape, as well as those expressed by Nel and McLagan in Reading 3.

### Changes in South Africa's economic context

MacGregor suggests that the context we live in has undergone significant changes in recent years – economically, politically and socially – and that these changes are driving the new educational policies emerging from government. But, says MacGregor, many of these 'contextual circumstances' are not entirely of South Africa's making. So, while the political imperative to **democratize** after apartheid is a choice made by South Africans, many of the **economic imperatives** are driven by global factors over which we have little choice.

**imperative:** an urgent need

What are the key economic forces driving new education policies? MacGregor mentions three: **globalization, unemployment and new technologies**.



MacGregor's – and the new government's – suggestion that we have no choice over these economic circumstances is a controversial position opposed by, for instance, trade unions and the South African Communist Party. An acceptance that the government has no power over these circumstances allows it to enact policies based on the need to be globally competitive. This often means a cutback in social spending priorities like education.

## Globalization

Since South Africa's democratic elections in 1994, we have re-entered the world economy. The economy of the country, therefore, has to develop and grow at a rate that is comparable to that of other countries of the world. The quality of the goods we produce should match that of other countries so that we can compete with them.

MacGregor's article states that, currently, South Africa is rated 93rd out of 178 countries on the United Nations Human Development Index. We need to develop economic capital (money and physical resources), as well as skilled 'human capital' (people with skills and education). The latter demand is an important educational responsibility.

This suggests that our current system isn't producing people capable of competing – in terms of producing high-quality goods cost-effectively – with their counterparts in other parts of the world. Many would argue that this is the reason for the renewed *emphasis on Mathematics, Science, Technology and business-related learning areas*, and for introducing OBE, with its focus on educating people to *think critically*, and to *do* things (rather than just *know* things).

## Unemployment

MacGregor's article states that South Africa is 'a country with one of the highest unemployment rates in the world'. Estimates are that for every ten matriculants in 1996, only one was employed. How should the education system respond?

First, it is obvious that industry cannot accommodate all the learners from the schooling system. This means that the informal economy – small businesses – must become increasingly important. As a consequence, schools cannot simply give learners the skills and attitudes to work *for someone*. They must now give learners the skills and attitudes *that enable them to start their own businesses* and, in this way, provide employment for themselves and others.

This probably explains the increased *emphasis on life skills, business education, and skills such as innovation, risk-taking and problem solving* in the new curriculum.

## Information technology and the information explosion

MacGregor begins her article with a story about a three-year-old girl who is confidently playing computer games. Computers have completely revolutionized the way in which we work. Through the Internet, more information is available to people than ever before. If your computer is linked up, you can connect with the worldwide network of information within seconds.

Furthermore, information and knowledge are 'exploding'. In the fields of science and technology, in particular, 97% of all human knowledge has been discovered in the lifetime of many people reading this guide. New information is being generated (and old information becoming obsolete) by the hour. This means that memorizing information is no longer the most important aim of learning. Rather, it is vital for learners to develop the *skills of using technology to access information*. Education should help young people to *understand and organize information and to use it to solve problems*.

It is logical, therefore, that the new policies should make frequent reference to ideas like 'lifelong learning', 'thinking skills', 'independent study' and 'portfolio assessment'. A society in which there are rapid changes in information, and where information is easily available, requires different skills from societies of the past.

This is probably another reason for the move towards an outcomes-based curriculum. Put simply, the new curriculum focuses on what learners can *do* with what has been taught, rather than on memorizing the information the teacher has taught. It is not enough for the teacher to say, 'I taught my class about the external structure of the plant'. He or she needs to ask, 'Can learners use what they know about the structure of a plant to identify different plants? Do they have the skills to find and organize new knowledge in this area? Can they use this knowledge to solve problems?' It becomes vital for learners to *demonstrate* that they are *able to solve problems, think critically, be creative, analyse*



*information and use technology*, because these are the skills needed for our economy to grow and our society to develop.

*The teacher's role in the new curriculum changes too.* The role of the teacher as the expert who transmits information and content to learners is no longer adequate (new information technologies often do this much better). Now it becomes vital for teachers to *plan meaningful learning activities* that give learners the *opportunity to use* their knowledge to *solve problems* and to *develop relevant skills and attitudes*.

Increasingly the teacher's role is managerial. Teachers need the skills to *manage people*, both in working collaboratively with other teachers and in managing learners. They also need to be able to *manage knowledge*.

## Changes in South Africa's *political* context

As mentioned earlier, many of the economic changes in South Africa have global dimensions. But since South Africa's first democratic elections, there have also been enormous political changes that are specific to this country. The emphasis has been on getting rid of the legacies of apartheid, in particular segregation and inequality.

In many cases, legislation has been enacted to put in process the *racial integration of institutions* and to *equalize opportunities*. The Bill of Rights, for instance, enshrines the principles of equality, non-racism and non-sexism. One of the key features of the South African Schools Act of 1996 is the integration of 19 education departments into one national, and nine provincial, departments. And the Schools Act also promises nine years of compulsory schooling for every child.

But there is also an emphasis on *deepening democracy*. One example, for instance, is placing school governance in the hands of the school community – the parents, educators and learners. This signals a move away from the highly centralized and tightly controlled system of the past.

The shift towards giving schools greater control over their own resources has been happening in other countries, such as Australia, Britain and America, for a number of years. So, even here, global trends in modern political thinking about democracy, equity, justice and decentralization are influencing our educational policies and practices.

Aside from new structures, schools are also central to building a new culture of tolerance in South Africa. One way in which this will be achieved is through *building more democratic and participative structures* – from schools to national parliament. Another way will be through *teaching learners the skills and attitudes* that will enable them to participate critically in our new democracy.

This might explain new learning areas, such as 'human rights education'. But it also explains why the new policies suggest that *all teachers should participate in management and constantly learn themselves*. Later, when we talk about schools as 'learning organizations', we will expand on this idea.

## Changes in South Africa's *social* context

The new curriculum encourages learners to develop *attitudes* of tolerance and understanding for people who are different from themselves. The *social aim* is to change people's attitudes away from the prejudice and stereotyping of the apartheid era.

In addition, it reflects a global move towards a world in which the spiritual aspects of our existence are valued rather than simply our rational, thinking abilities. There is also a global concern about issues like environmental degradation which are becoming as important as an ability to make money or invent new things. This might explain the emphasis on *holism*, and on *educating the whole person*, in new policies. It also partly explains the shift in school organization literature towards holistic thinking, and the increasing emphasis on the role that people play in shaping organizational structures.

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Increasingly the  
teacher's role is mana-  
gerial. Teachers need  
the skills to manage  
people and to manage  
knowledge  
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## 3.2

## Changes in the organizational context

## Introduction

As we have seen, many of the current changes occurring in South Africa are a consequence of changes in global contexts. Our next reading explores changes in the world of work, and their impact on the organizational structures of our schools and what we teach in them. In many ways, its argument is similar to that in the article by McLagan and Nel that you read earlier. But this next reading, 'Why bureaucracy no longer works', provides more detail about:

- how the *nature of work* is changing;
- why bureaucratic and hierarchical organizations are *no longer appropriate organizational forms* through which to do this work.

The article, written by an American couple, takes changes in *business* structures in the USA as its focus. As you read, think carefully about how appropriate the article is to schools in South Africa. In other words, *apply* the writers' ideas to your own work situation.



Set aside about 2 hours to complete this activity. We suggest that you re-listen to Part 1 of your audiotope and re-read Reading 3 before you do this activity.

### ACTIVITY 9: THE CHANGING NATURE OF WORK – IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION?

Turn to Pinchot and Pinchot's article titled 'Why bureaucracy no longer works': (Readings, Section Two, 'Organizations: The impact of global change'). You should find many of the issues – particularly the descriptions of bureaucracies – familiar to you by now. Now answer the following questions in your workbook:

- According to the Pinchots, how will you have to change the *way you work* in future? Are these changes similar to those suggested by *Curriculum 2005* or the South African Schools Act? (Don't simply summarize the reading. Apply the ideas to your school, and provide South African examples to illustrate your answers.)
- The table titled *Revolutionary change in the structure of our relationships* (last page of the Pinchot and Pinchot article) outlines seven features of bureaucracy and how these define the nature of our relationships at work. For each of the seven features, write a brief description (in a phrase, or a sentence or two) of how the relationships at your school will be likely to change if the Pinchots are correct.

### Changing societies: what are the implications for schools?

*When the Thuthuka teachers meet again, there is a new person in the group. It is the deputy principal, known to everyone as 'The Rake'. Many teachers are surprised to see him there, and a bit nervous that he will dominate the discussions. They also fear that they will not be able to speak their minds because he is a 'figure of authority'. However, The Rake thanks the teachers for allowing him to join their discussion group. He says he is just as eager as they are to work in a school characterized by good inter-personal relationships and a sense of purpose.*

*'This is a side of The Rake I've never seen before,' whispers Siphso to Nomusa. 'I hope he really is here on that basis rather than as a bureaucratic senior,' she replies under her breath.*

*Thulani starts the discussion by saying he hopes everyone has read the article by the Pinchots. About half of the teachers nod that they have, and the others shake their heads. The group goes on to discuss the article. Towards the end of the discussion, Sindi produces a summary of the main points she has picked out of the article.*

## The changing nature of work: implications for my school?

Notes by Sindi Nxumalo

What I found most interesting was the suggestion that most new work was going to be 'knowledge work'. The Pinchots describe 'knowledge work' as work that relies on reading, planning, problem-solving, or entrepreneurial skills. They say this kind of work requires individuals who are good at information gathering and teamwork, are imaginative, prepared to take risks and experiment, and who are self-directed. The Pinchots argue that unskilled manufacturing work - which requires workers with the ability to do repetitive, routine tasks - is employing fewer and fewer people because computers do this sort of work much better than human beings. The challenge for us is to prepare to carry out the functions that machines/computers cannot do.

This change in the nature of work has significant implications for our school. If you think of it, Thuthuka doesn't teach or even encourage characteristics like curiosity, collaboration (teamwork), experimentation, risk-taking, and the ability to care. Instead, we teach what the Pinchots say most schools do: blind obedience, working to the bell, the ability to sit still for long periods, to do mindless repetitive work, and endure boredom. But while these characteristics may be useful to workers destined for lives in manufacturing industries and bureaucracies, they are not the kinds of skills and knowledge that will prepare our learners to live and work in contemporary society, or to change our old society.

Even the way we work and relate to each other - the way our school is organized - is outdated. It discourages teachers from working in ways which would make both them and their schools successful today. The Pinchots present a familiar argument: contemporary society is characterized by rapid change and huge amounts of information (which is also changing constantly). This makes current work patterns - where people are responsible for one function or task, which they do alone - unsuitable. Simply put, individuals cannot keep up with the complexity of the knowledge required to do particular jobs. This leads the Pinchots to a number of suggestions regarding work:

- Tasks will increasingly be performed by project teams. This allows different specialists to share their knowledge in order to develop the best (and a holistic) solution to a particular problem. So, for instance, a team could draw on the expertise of psychologists, managers and a subject expert to solve discipline problems, rather than leaving them all to The Rake!
- These project teams will be temporary, and will change as the challenges facing schools change. So, instead of permanent job functions - like 'principal' - temporary project teams will be established to raise funds, or run an adult education course, or deal with school fee problems instead of leaving all this to the principal.
- Because the environment in which we work is becoming increasingly complex - with huge amounts of information to become familiar with, it is likely that there will be much more co-ordination and discus-

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**Knowledge  
work ... requires individuals who are good  
at information  
gathering and teamwork,  
are imaginative,  
prepared to take risks  
and experiment, and  
who are  
self-directed**  
”



Again, we'd like you to notice *how* Sindi writes her 'notes'. First, she accurately summarizes the Pinchots' main argument. But then – and this is important – she *applies* their ideas to her own situation.

Try to model the way these teachers develop their arguments in your own essays/presentations.

sion between peers rather than having managers instruct project teams. This 'top-down' management is simply not efficient because managers cannot be expected to keep up to date with all aspects of schools.

- Finally, the Pinchots argue that the rapid changes in knowledge and society require workers who are multi-skilled. They say that we will need to be able to move between jobs – and understand a little about other people's jobs – in order to work efficiently. This seems to support the current emphasis on lifelong learning, and on schools needing to reflect constantly on their work and learn from their mistakes.

The Pinchots believe that bureaucracies are too rigid and rule-bound to operate successfully in this new kind of society. The reliance of individuals on rules and procedures will hinder their abilities to innovate, work in teams, care for others, and take advantage of opportunities that present themselves.

## Thuthuka teachers think about the implications of these changes for their school

*There is heated debate among the teachers about ideas in the article. The Rake says he finds it interesting that new organizations still need rules and someone who makes decisions. What is different, he says, is the **nature of these rules** and the way **in which authority is achieved and then used**.*

*'Yes,' says Thulani, 'teachers need to be given more flexibility to innovate within the school, and to make decisions about their own teaching and the way in which the school is run. The challenges are too big and the situation is changing far too rapidly for all decisions to be made by principals and the department. We all need to be able to talk about things and contribute our ideas. This will encourage teachers to take "ownership" of schools: they will be more imaginative, more motivated and ultimately more responsible.'*

*The Rake agrees: 'Yes, it would also give the school the capacity to take advantage of new opportunities ... to be more "competitive". At the moment the head is simply too busy with day-to-day management issues to think about the future of the school. I think a small development committee – made up of teachers with skills in this area – could begin thinking about our future direction and start giving our school a distinct identity by offering new and interesting programmes. We could also branch out and offer programmes in areas where there is a need, like adult literacy training – and thereby earn some income for our school.'*

*Nomusa – who was involved in a Learning Area Committee – suggests that the new outcomes-based curriculum already reflects many of the changes that the Pinchots mention. 'It's based on the principle that teachers are curriculum developers and not simply implementers of a syllabus. Teachers are regarded as people able to make choices and design appropriate learning activities,' she says.*

*'But it also suggests that because of the increasing complexity of the curriculum – for instance, I can't be expected to know everything about **all** of the subjects that make up my learning area – teachers must work together in teams so that they can share their expertise in different subjects,' Nomusa continues. 'This means that we will need to be "multi-skilled". We **do** need to know a little about the other subjects in our learning areas so that we can develop a good, integrated curriculum. In addition, we need to learn more about designing learning materials, about computers, about ...'*

*'OK, OK, you're terrifying me,' says a teacher who has just joined the group. 'I think you are right about Curriculum 2005 ... it does say all these things. But I really do think that this means we have to begin learning ourselves. And I think I'd need help from other teachers in this school too.'*

## Conclusion

It is evident that the world in which we live is changing significantly. And, as the Thuthuka teachers realize, these changes are reflected in the changes that *Curriculum 2005* proposes for South African education. Schools prepare young people for the kinds of roles they have to play in society. If these roles change, then obviously our curriculum needs to change too.

But we also know that organizations take their particular form from the needs of society at particular times in history. So, while bureaucracies and hierarchies may have been appropriate in stable societies that required the efficient performance of repetitive tasks, they are not appropriate in contemporary societies. This suggests that South African schools also need to reassess the way in which they organize their work and the kinds of relationships they encourage. As we have seen, many of the suggested innovations of *Curriculum 2005* cannot be implemented because of the way Thuthuka is organized.

### What have we learnt so far?

- Schools don't exist in a vacuum. They are meant to prepare learners for the challenges of life – economic (including work), social, political and cultural. As these *contexts* change rapidly, new demands are placed on the education system that cannot be ignored.
- We examined the following important trends and forces that are shaping educational policies and impacting on schools in South Africa:
  - *Global economic competition* – more South Africans need to be more competent, particularly in more economically productive areas such as science, technology and business, but also in creative and critical thinking and problem solving.
  - *Unemployment* – new technologies, which are leading to increased levels of work automation, mean that labour-intensive enterprise and the capacity of big business to create jobs are waning. Schools will have to equip learners with the attitudes and skills to start and run businesses of their own.
  - *New technologies, especially information technology* – knowledge is widely available, but also becomes rapidly obsolete. People may find themselves de-skilled more than once in a lifetime, and need to be equipped to adapt, to access and organize information, and to think for themselves throughout their lives.
  - *Political needs in post-apartheid South Africa* – for example, preparation for participation in democracy, promoting tolerance of differences, eliminating racist and sexist attitudes and other prejudices and stereotypes, equity and social justice, and respect for the shared environment.
- There have been changes in organizations to meet the demands of these new contexts, in particular a move away from bureaucratic organizational structures:
  - a move *away from* over-specialization and isolated functioning of employees, rigid bureaucratic lines of command, decision-making only in the hands of management, and top-down co-ordination;
  - a move *towards* cross-disciplinary teamwork, multi-skilling, flatter hierarchies, more participative decision-making, and co-ordination among peers.

These changes have implications for the *curriculum* and *teaching* in schools, as well as for their *organization*.

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 ... the increasing  
 complexity of the  
 curriculum requires  
 that teachers work  
 together in teams ...  
 to share their  
 expertise  
 ”

# 3.3

## Organizing South African schools: what do new policies say?



### Introduction

As stated in the MacGregor reading, the Department of Education has issued a series of new education policies, all with the broad aim of redressing the legacies of apartheid. But there are *different* legacies – inequality, a lack of democracy, and an education out of touch with global conditions. Thus, the many different policy proposals aim, in different ways, to:

- equalize education provision;
- democratize decision-making;
- prepare South Africans for life and work in the 21st century.

We will not explore the policies in detail. Our interest is in suggestions about new ways in which schools should be *organized and managed*.

### Some key policy changes

*Thulani has been scrabbling in his briefcase while the discussion about the Pinchot article has been going on. He is sure he received a document from the department in which many of the ideas that are emerging about 'new' schools have been summarized. Eventually, he finds it. He rushes out to photocopy a couple of pages which he asks the staff to read. Here they are ...*

#### Four key shifts in thinking about school management

- The success of schools will be measured by what they achieve (by their 'outputs'). No-one will be interested in whether the school is neat, or quiet, or newly painted. Instead they will ask things such as: 'What are its results? Do many learners drop out of the school? Are learners displaying lifelong learning qualities?'
- The school will need to provide evidence that it is achieving good educational standards. It must write down what its desired outputs are. It might say: 'The pass rate for our school-leaving class must be 80%', or 'Our choir must involve 40 more children than last year', or 'The number of Grade 7 pupils doing Science must increase to 30 next year'.
- The school must then decide how it will achieve its desired outputs, and also set in place a process where it continuously assesses and reassesses its progress towards achieving these outputs.
- The school must involve as many educators, learners and parents in this process as possible. There is a simple reason for this inclusive and transparent process: if everyone has discussed the school's desired outputs and all agree with them, then everyone is more likely to be motivated to participate in ensuring that these are achieved.

*But Thulani found another part of the booklet even more interesting. It suggested that the ways of thinking and the assumptions underlying OBE also informed the new approaches to school organization and management.*

### **OBE and participatory management: the similarities**

Consider the following:

- OBE says an educator's success will be measured by learner outcomes; participatory management says a school's success must be measured by its learning outputs.
- OBE says educators must provide evidence for learning success by defining performance indicators; participatory management says schools must do the same.
- OBE says educators must continually assess their own and their learners' progress; participatory management says schools must continually assess or evaluate their progress towards their desired 'outputs'.
- OBE says teaching should be learner-centred, and that outcomes and performance indicators must be made known to learners; participatory management talks of a people-centred approach with pre-defined and transparent performance indicators.

A first tip, then: if you understand the 'paradigm shift' – the change in ways of thinking – in teaching, you can apply these to management as well.

*The final section that Thulani photocopies from the document summarizes the key changes in the way 'new' organizations are being organized. He wonders whether these are, in any way, the features of a 'learning organization' ... something they are hearing a lot about, but of which they still have only a hazy understanding.*

### **Changing schools: from 'top-down' to 'participatory' management**

#### **1 Principals lead rather than instruct**

*Principals who operate as leaders realize that their status as 'principal' is dependent on the support of their staff. In other words, their status depends on their ability to lead and motivate their team of educators so that they make changes. In the past, most of us simply respected and obeyed school managers because of their high status rather than their ability to lead and get things done. There was often a 'them' and 'us' attitude.*

*In 'new' schools, the principal must be seen as leading learners and educators (...) to achieve desired outcomes, rather than as instructing them.*

#### **2 The decision-making hierarchy becomes flatter**

*In the past, decisions were made at the top and then passed down through a clearly defined hierarchy: the principal, to HoDs, to educators, and then to learners. There are a number of problems with this hierarchical style: it is undemocratic and does not fit well with the new democracy in South Africa; decisions often get lost or are misunderstood as they are passed down the hierarchy, which means things often don't get done or get done badly; it creates a 'don't care' attitude among many educators and learners because they have no power to shape the school (...) This makes it difficult for change to occur.*

*'New' schools should be trying to reduce the rungs on the hierarchical ladder to produce flatter, more open, and more participative structures. This will allow better information flows, and creates an atmosphere in which all members feel a sense of 'ownership'. This, in turn, makes it easier for managers to lead rather than instruct.*



These three excerpts are adapted from an official Department of Education 'training' booklet, titled *Curriculum 2005: Implementing OBE 3 – School Management* and published early in 1998. Note how (and in which ways) the department shares the views expressed by McLagan and Nel, and the Pinchots, about the nature of 'new' organizations. Also note down how you may be required to change the ways in which you work.

**aspiration:** a strong desire to achieve something important

### 3 The roles we play in schools become more flexible

*Our country is changing rapidly. But many of our schools still lock educators into very fixed roles and responsibilities.*

*'New' schools require a much more flexible structure so that they can adapt to change. This would mean making it possible for an ordinary teacher to do some public relations work for the school because that teacher is good at it, and because the desired output of a better school image is more likely to be achieved if he or she does it rather than the principal. Likewise, the principal may teach Maths because, in this way, the school's other desired outcomes – better Maths results – may be achieved. Roles and functions need to be reassessed so that individuals have the capacity to respond quickly to changing situations and new demands.*

### 4 Responsibility is shared: we can't simply blame the principal

*The move towards a more flexible and less hierarchical structure means that responsibility is shared. Effective teamwork is the hallmark of successful learning organizations. When teams can be brought together to serve the needs of the moment more quickly, then more effective results can be achieved. Tying down individuals into separate and independent areas of responsibility can inhibit the capacity of an organization to respond successfully to sudden change.*

*If a 'culture' of teamwork and brainstorming has been developed at a school, it is likely that the imagination and creativity of people will be much greater. The task teams that work together are far more likely to solve particular problems imaginatively than if a single individual – perhaps the principal – is held responsible for doing this.*

### 5 Leadership is about empowering participants, not wielding power

*Some schools invest too much authority and control in too few people. Creating a collaborative management culture requires that those in senior management positions learn to see their leadership role as that of empowering others in the organization, rather than controlling them.*

*Leadership then becomes a process of building and developing participation and collaboration. In other words, good principals acknowledge that they don't know everything, draw on the expertise around them, and actively develop this expertise.*

### 6 Developing rather than delivering expertise

*Schools create processes and structures that develop this expertise, rather than having a few (usually management people) continue to deliver their own expertise. In order to make best use of the expertise in schools, a system of staff development is vital. There are at least three necessary kinds of development process:*

- *In OBE schools, all members of the school have a management role. This requires an effective system of staff appraisal and high quality staff development policies that match the needs and aspirations of both individual staff and the organization as a whole.*
- *In a rapidly changing environment, educators will have to update their professional and subject content knowledge regularly so that they can continue to develop appropriate and useful learning in their learners. (...)*
- *Educators may also be asked to play an entirely different role. For instance, there may be no demand for a Biblical Studies teacher, but a great demand for teachers of Computer Literacy. Good schools will develop processes and structures which encourage the development of flexible educators who can teach well in different areas.*

### 7 Commanding respect through stature, not status

*Principals and teachers in 'new' schools command respect without having to use their*



*status in a threatening way: respect (and authority) is achieved through the stature of the teacher or principal. In old-style schools (or companies), status was entrenched through certain privileges, like company cars, or special parking, or names on the doors of senior managers. Such distinctions between 'the management' and 'the workers' created mistrust and resentment.*

*New schools, like other organizations, should try to move towards a system where an individual's position in the hierarchy is not the only basis for respect. Instead, this respect will be gained by demonstrating to other teachers and learners that they are worthy of it because they can get things done.*

#### **8 Emphasis is on effective schools, not simply on efficiency**

*In the past, many schools and classrooms were efficiently run. In other words, they were neat and quiet. But strangely, many still produced poor matric results or had high drop-out rates. In other words, the schools weren't educationally effective. They were not producing desired learning outcomes or outputs.*

*In recent years, an emphasis has been placed on the effectiveness of schools as learning organizations. This involves a commitment to continuous development and improvement, and a constant striving for small but significant improvements in a process which involves everyone in the school. A school's success will be measured by its meeting pre-defined and measurable performance indicators that must be related to its key function – educating young people.*

#### **9 Creating a culture of learning rather than controlling behaviour**

*In the past, some school managers assumed that educators (and learners) in the school would not be able to work without constant direction and supervision; without tight control. In 'new' schools, the approach should be to ensure that the agreed-on outputs are being achieved by entrusting educators and learners to work towards these without constant supervision.*

*The task of school managers – who include principals, HoDs and ordinary educators – is to create and develop such a culture that enables committed educators and learners to do their work. However, such a culture should also have mechanisms for dealing with the few individuals who don't do their job. But decisions to 'reprimand' should be agreed upon by educators, and should always include suggestions as to how that educator could improve. In other words, it's about creating a system where good teachers are rewarded and poor teachers are held accountable. But rather than the latter being through the reprimand of the principal, it should be through a system which makes it 'natural' to work hard and work well.*

*The Rake found this 'list' interesting and suggested it was a good 'checklist' for Thuthuka to use when evaluating how well the school was transforming itself. But he also suggested that the staff look at another Department of Education document on school management and change in order to deepen their understanding of how to go about transforming Thuthuka.*

## A new school organization and management policy for South African schools

Up till now we have questioned whether the old hierarchical and bureaucratic ways of organizing schools are the most appropriate for our new circumstances. We argued that hierarchical organization is an increasingly inefficient and inadequate method, given the new challenges we face. The new government regards a transformation in the way schools are organized and managed as **crucial**. But:

- What do they say about the way schools should change?
- What implications do the new policies have for individual teachers, and for the schools in which they work?

The best place to find answers to these questions is in the policy documents themselves. We will concentrate on **one** of these documents. During 1996, the national Department of Education established a task team to review South Africa's educational system and to make recommendations to improve the management of education. It produced a report called 'Changing management to manage change'. The vision of the report is of a more participative and less hierarchical form of school management. Before you turn to the Reader to read an excerpt from the report, however, take a look at the cartoon sequence on page 65, taken from the report:



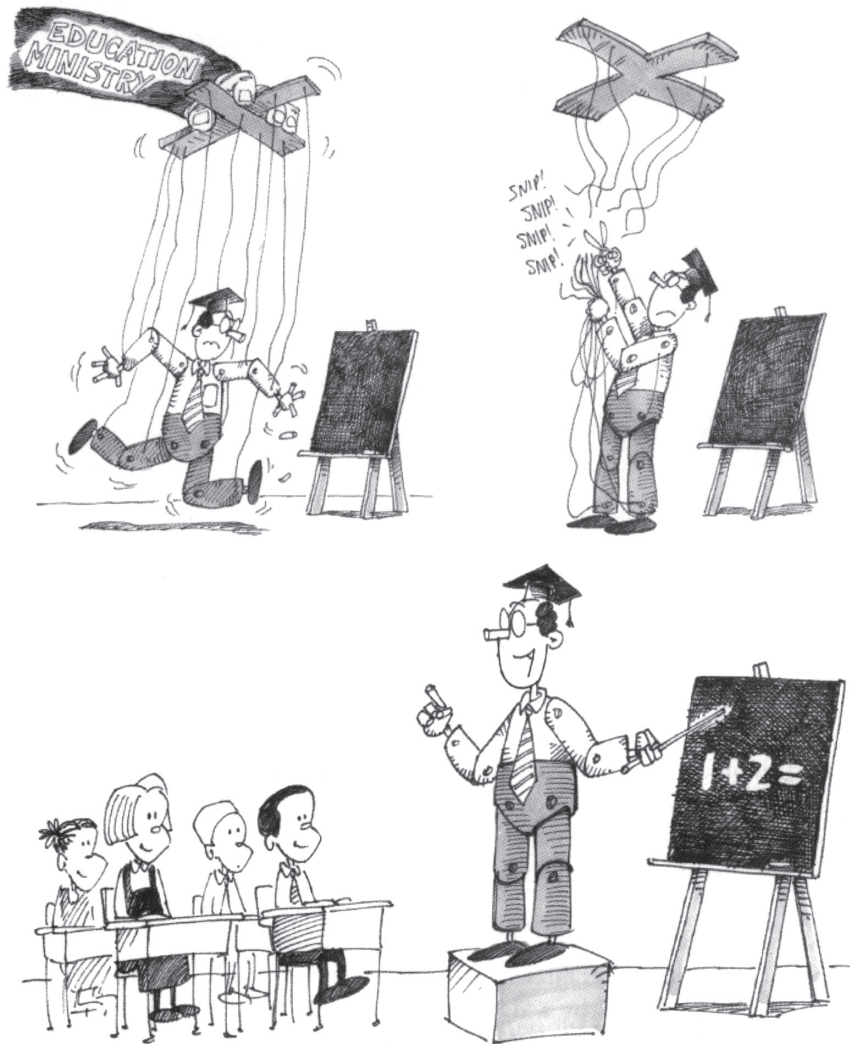
Don't spend more than 20 minutes on Activity 10. Discuss your impressions with fellow students.

### ACTIVITY 10: ANALYSING THE CARTOON

The first two scenes in this cartoon sequence are self-explanatory: they suggest that teachers, who were government puppets, have now cut themselves free. What is interesting is the third scene. Here the 'liberated' teacher is standing on a pedestal, teaching in a way that is no different from the past. What is the cartoon sequence suggesting, do you think?

## Be careful of changing structures without changing cultures!

The Thuthuka teachers have some fun analysing this cartoon sequence. There is an interesting debate and discussion as they think of examples to show how teachers – at their schools, and sometimes including themselves – have been puppets, even though they pretended they were in charge and completely in control. But let's hear from the teachers. Here is Sindi's interpretation of the cartoon sequence:



**Figure 3.1** Principals and teachers have consistently been at the receiving end of top-down management instructions. The challenge now is to create a new culture and practice of teaching and learning. (Source: EMD Task Team/Dept of Education, Pretoria)

## An analysis of the cartoon sequence

by Sindi Nxumalo

Scene 1 shows the teacher under the direct control of the Education Ministry. The teacher represents all teachers who are puppets of the system and have very little control over their work. For example, the curriculum is planned centrally by the ministry; teachers receive top-down orders, and are required simply to implement and administer the curriculum. The ministry decides and prescribes, and the teachers do exactly as they are told.

In scene 2, the teacher cuts himself loose from this top-down control. For the first time, teachers can stand on their own feet. Now, at last, they have freedom to design and structure their work in the best way they can. From now on, the ministry will set only broad guidelines. This enables teachers to become real professionals, to take control, and to make serious decisions about their work. They are no longer puppets!

The third scene is the most interesting, however. Clearly, the same teacher – who has wanted and gained freedom from top-down orders – is depicted. Thus, we would expect him to be more sensitive to the needs of the learners as well. But, instead, he has placed himself on a pedestal (making him superior to the learners). He still perceives himself as the giver of information, and the leader of instructional activities. He could have used this opportunity to become a mediator and a guide, encouraging the learners to be active, but he has not done so. Instead, he plays the old role of active teacher with passive students.

Sindi thinks the point being made is similar to the point that Hopkins et al. made about the link between culture and structure. These writers argued that change is often characterized by a change in structures (the appearance of change), without any change in the culture of the organization (the reality of change). Sindi suggests that the task team cartoonist is warning teachers that the recommended new structures might lead to the *appearance of change* only, unless they change the way they teach and relate to each other, that is, begin changing the *culture* of South African schools. She convinces the others that because the teacher continues to teach in the old authoritarian, teacher-centred way, even though he now has the freedom (more open structures) to design and develop curricula and teach differently, he hasn't yet understood the real meaning of the changes that have taken place. The work on the teacher's attitude is still incomplete. The teachers also feel that this cartoon sequence has a similar message to the one conveyed by the experience of St Mark's School (see page 44).

In a way, the next cartoon sequence, shown on page 67, also deals with the problem of changing schools. In particular, it asks the question: 'How effective are school management training courses in improving management practice at schools?' What do you think the cartoon sequence's answer to this question is? Can you think of a caption for the cartoon which appropriately reflects what it is saying about management training?



As you look at this cartoon sequence, do you:

- notice that scenes 1 and 3 are identical except for the fact that, in scene 3, the principal's office now has a diploma hanging on the wall? What do you think the cartoonist is suggesting by this?
- see the mark the principal has achieved (in scene 2)? What do you think the principal has learnt? Has anything changed as a result of the principal's management course?

**Figure 3.2** Management training. (Source: EMD Task Team/Dept of Education, Pretoria)

The Thuthuka teachers also enjoy discussing this cartoon sequence. Here is Thulani's interpretation of it:

## Analysing the 'management training' cartoon

by Thulani Shabalala

The first scene shows the principal reading the newspaper in his office, with his feet on the desk. Outside, the learners are behaving in an undisciplined way, the school building is in disrepair, and the teachers are completely demotivated. They are just standing there, watching the children being destructive and making no attempt to change anything.

The principal then decides to go on an education management course

where he learns about teacher motivation and student discipline. He gets his diploma (with an A+ mark!), but it seems his learning doesn't give him any ability to address the problems in his school. Even more problematic is the fact that the course, quite clearly, has not changed his attitude to his job: he is still reading newspapers while the school falls apart outside!

Why is this so? I think the cartoonist suggests that it has to do with at least two issues. First, the course was an old-style 'teacher-talk' training session. While this may sometimes be necessary in education, it would seem that management courses must include activities in which the principal practises some of the ideas he is being taught. Otherwise, he will not be able to make a difference when he returns to the school. The course also needs to deal with his attitude to his job. Despite all the knowledge, he will not improve management without the will to change things.

Second, I think that he is ineffective in dealing with the school's problems because he attempts to do so alone, rather than as a team with other teachers. He seems to manage (or not manage!) as an old-style principal who is isolated in his office, rather than as a 'hands-on' principal who consults and works with teachers and learners to solve problems.

Perhaps the course and the principal treat the school's problems in little bits, rather than trying to get a 'whole' picture. This would result in their addressing obvious issues - like learner discipline - rather than asking questions such as, 'Why are learners undisciplined? What impact does the way in which the school is managed, or how teachers teach, or learners' family backgrounds, have on learner behaviour?'

I would give it a caption something like: 'In the past, the content, methods and location of education management development have mostly been inappropriate'.

Both of Thulani's ideas - the need to work as a team, and the importance of *examining the possible relationships between aspects of a bigger problem* - could be described as characteristics of what people call *holistic (or systems) thinking*. The task team's report, generally, takes a holistic approach to school organization. Later in this section, and then in Section Four, we deal with holistic and systems thinking in more depth.

The 'Changing management to manage change' report is, as you may suspect, critical of the traditional, hierarchical management that is characteristic of so many South African schools. Instead, it favours more democratic and participative ways of organizing schools. This involves changing the structures of school management, as



Compare this new structure with the earlier cartoon of a hierarchical structure (page 21). Notice that both have pyramid shapes with someone clearly in charge. The difference is that the second pyramid is *flatter* (indicating that more people share decision-making powers), and the people in the bottom half *support* the leader (rather than be crushed by the leader!).



**Figure 3.3** A 'flatter' pyramid which encourages participation

well as changing the culture and ethos in schools. The task team argues that schools should manage themselves as far as possible, and that decision-making should involve all staff and stakeholders. In effect, they argue for 'flatter pyramids', with responsibility shared in collaborative ways by more people.

Figure 3.3 represents a 'flatter' pyramid which encourages participation. But note that participative organizational styles do not mean anarchy and no leadership. Instead, 'flatter, more participative' structures mean that leaders **consult** and **seek the support** of a wide range of stakeholders when making decisions. But they still mean that decisions **must** be taken!

The task team recognizes that changes of this sort are difficult to achieve in that they have to do with **changing cultures** and not simply school structures. Here are two quotations from the task team report:

*The task of **instilling the new attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding** is at the heart of the challenge we face in transforming governance and management. The task may be daunting, but it is not impossible.*

*What we are proposing represents a radical **culture shift** for schools and their established ways of working ... Clearly most schools presently have only a limited awareness of the potential for planning which could be done at the school level, and they generally lack an understanding about the skills required.*

Now that you have dipped into the task team's report – and understand some of its thinking about school management and change – we'd like you to deepen your knowledge by reading a chapter from the report, and by listening to Nomlami Mahanjana, the director of human resources development in the Department of Education.

### ACTIVITY 11: READING THE TASK TEAM'S REPORT

Turn to and read a chapter from the report entitled 'A new plan for South African schools' (Readings, Section One, 'New Plans for New Contexts'). Once you have completed this, turn to Part 3 of your audiotape (which begins *after* the narrator asks you to complete Activity 5) and listen to Mahanjana explain why the report was written. Also, note the criticisms voiced by school management expert Stella Kaabwe. Then answer these questions in your workbook:

- a Who bears primary responsibility for bringing about change at school level?
- b What is meant by 'school self-management'?
- c What does the task team mean by 'schools as learning organizations'?
- d What 'capacity building' is required at school level? Who should help the schools to build that capacity?

## Understanding the 'Changing management to manage change' report

The task team report gives a picture of how schools of the future should be managed. It suggests that all management activity in South African education should aim at creating an environment for more effective teaching and learning. This would include better teaching of learners, as well as schools that considered learning, reflection, and the capacity to innovate, as ongoing features of their own existence. Better learning, then, becomes the criterion for judging the quality of educational management. In other words, management is not an end in itself.



Think back to the work we have done on the relationship between structure and culture in the process of changing schools. Does it sound as if the task team – from what you have seen in the cartoons and read in these two quotations – would agree with the approach to the structure/culture dialectic we have taken so far?

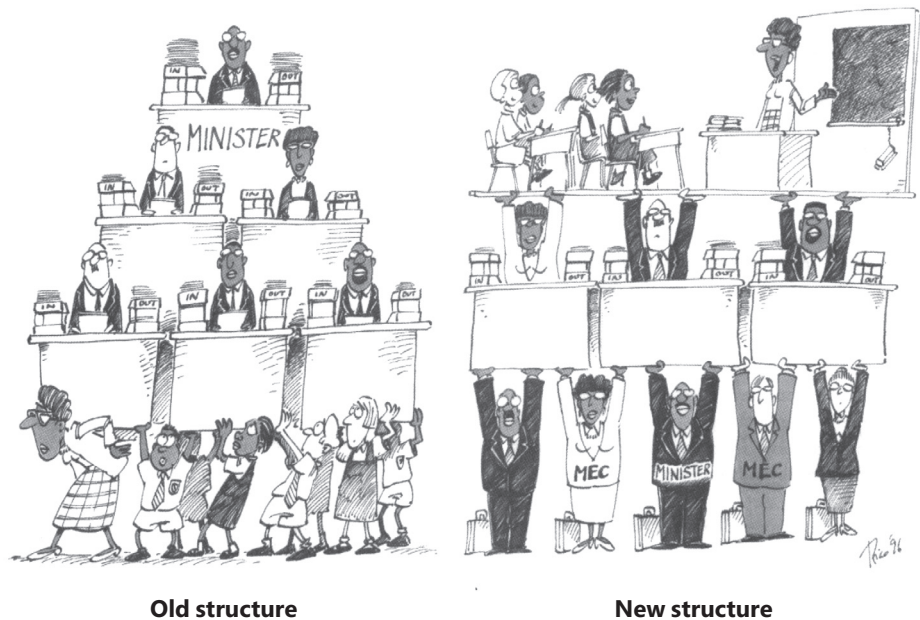


This activity should take no more than 1 hour.

In order to achieve this, the report advocates giving schools a great deal more decision-making power. Each school, and the teachers in it, should be the centre of educational activity and the focus of change. Schools should no longer be the recipients at the bottom of the education system hierarchy, as was the case in the past. But this 'flatter' hierarchy requires that schools introduce better and more democratic internal school management and teacher self-management processes, rather than relying on directions from above. Essentially, its vision is that

*schools, as the centres of teaching and learning, must be placed at the centre of education management, rather than at the bottom of a hierarchical and bureaucratic management pyramid.*

We have mentioned that the suggested changes in authority structures in schools could be represented by a move from steep pyramids to much flatter authority pyramids. But there is an associated shift evident in the way schools relate to departments. As the cartoon below suggests, the department should support schools – provide the *foundation* for good schooling – rather than crush schools with a top-heavy bureaucracy and ministry.



**Figure 3.4** Schools, as the centres of teaching and learning, must be placed at the centre of education management, rather than at the bottom of a hierarchical and bureaucratic management pyramid

Part of this transformation must be the development of each school as a *learning organization*. This includes ideas such as:

- schools developing clear 'values' and 'missions' which will drive their progress (rather than these being dictated from above);
- schools operating in a participative and collaborative way, both in relation to the national department and the staff at schools (who should all be involved, in some way, in managing the school);
- schools creating processes and structures (and a culture) that make ongoing reflection and discussion about their performance – and then action to improve performance – part of their normal functioning.

But the report warns that neither changing organizational *structures*, nor retraining principals and deputies in management, is enough to ensure that necessary transformation takes place. They can result in the mere *appearance* of change rather than in real, lasting change. What else is needed, then?



- Changed norms, values and attitudes on the part of the teaching staff. This is not easy to achieve: many will be unreceptive to new ideas. Most people think in a fragmented way about problems, and look for single solutions. They tend not to think about individual problems as related to larger problems.
- A commitment to change, and the competence to manage change in practice (i.e. not just theoretical knowledge of management 'recipes') on the part of principals and deputies.
- Drawing on all possible sources for support: other schools, other levels of the education system, parents, business, NGOs and teacher organizations. This will assist where schools simply don't have the current capacity to deal with all the proposed changes.

## Disputes about the way forward at Thuthuka

*'So what do we do, now that we've read the report?' asks Thulani.*

*Sindi suggests, 'We need to take all principals and HoDs and train them in participative management skills. After all, the problem is that these people were never trained for leadership positions. When they do get some training, it is generally irrelevant, and there is no follow-up that could help them with implementation.'*

*'In addition, the department should appoint good quality teachers and all the 'dead wood' should be encouraged to take severance packages. Teachers should be re-trained, and those who continue to teach badly should be fired. Unless we have strict rules – and an effective mechanism of ensuring that these are adhered to by everybody – we cannot hope to restore the culture of learning and teaching,' Sindi continues.*

*Thulani agrees. 'You know, we sit here for long hours thinking about how we can make this school a better place for all of us, and in particular for the learners. But it will all come to nothing because of the type of teachers we have here. Can any one tell me why other teachers won't join this group, even though we have invited them almost every day?'*

*'I sometimes don't blame the teachers, though. It is these hooligan learners we have to deal with who make some of us lose hope and give up,' argues Nomusa.*

*A lot more is said. Here is a taste of some of the comments:*

- *'Lack of discipline is the cause of the destruction of the culture of learning and teaching. We need to go back to basics. Learners should be learners, and unless we emphasize and enforce respect, we may as well forget it.'*
- *'Abolishing corporal punishment, inviting illiterate parents who know nothing about education to dictate to teachers, and allowing the state to shirk its responsibility in the name of decentralization, is a recipe for disaster.'*

*At this point, The Rake intervenes. 'I can understand that changing this situation seems impossible. The situation feels so overwhelming. But perhaps we are getting stuck too quickly. If we persisted with ideas on how to change, we would feel less pessimistic. We should do this as our next step. But first, there's another thing that strikes me about the points we are making. Each of us seems to pick out one point – poor discipline, disinterested teachers, or illiterate parents – and to see it as the root of all problems. In my experience, that's seldom the case.'*

## The dangers of 'atomistic' thinking about change

What The Rake goes on to describe is the dangers of 'atomistic' thinking. This is a kind of thinking where we see problems in isolation, rather than as part of a whole. This, he argues, has led Thuthuka teachers to regard the training of managers, the quality of the teachers, and poor discipline, for example, as separate events, rather than to explore possible *relationships* between each of them.

**atomistic:** fragmented; the characteristics are not linked or related to one another



Holistic or systems thinking is a vital ability for those people interested in change to schools and organizations. Thus, we deal with it in far more depth later in this section, and then again in Section Four.

For instance, one teacher says the 'dead wood' teachers are the cause of poor quality teaching. The effect of such atomistic thinking might be a decision to fire these teachers. But what if this doesn't lead to better teaching? What if:

- the **cause** is more complex? Perhaps it has to do with poor management **and** dead wood teachers **and** undisciplined learners **and** a lack of parental involvement;
- the **effect** – firing the 'dead wood' – **causes** new problems? Perhaps other good teachers would be angry because their friend had been fired, or start to feel insecure because they may be fired, or learners might feel insecure because of the changes at the school.

As an alternative to this approach, the report proposes that change agents should follow a **holistic** approach to changing schools. Holistic approaches focus on the whole school, in particular on how the different functions of the school (teaching, discipline, management, etc.), and the different players (teachers, learners, parents, managers, etc.), **work together and influence one another**. Holistic thinking is similar to the dialectical thinking we spoke about when considering the relationship between structure and culture.

Holistic thinkers don't simply see problems – like ill-discipline – as having one **cause** or one **solution**. Instead, they would argue, it is necessary to explore the many possible causes of ill-discipline, and attempt to understand how they relate to each other. The 'solution', then, is to create an environment which makes ill-discipline unlikely, and to constantly reassess our 'solution' and make adaptations where necessary.

## What have we learnt so far?

- We learnt that the Department of Education expects the style of school organization and management to change in key ways:
  - from managing organizations to leading people;
  - from vertical hierarchy to flatter structures;
  - from fixed occupational roles to more flexible roles;
  - from individual responsibility to shared responsibility;
  - from wielding power to empowering organizational members to take decisions;
  - from delivering expertise to developing the expertise of organizational members;
  - from expecting status to provide authority to realizing that authority emerges from stature and performance;
  - from managing efficiently to managing so that schools are educationally effective;
  - from attempting to control behaviour to creating a learning culture.
- In addition, a department task team repeated, but added more depth, to a number of these points:
  - Management is not an end in itself: it should aim at creating an environment for more effective teaching and learning.
  - Each school, and the teachers in it, will be the centre of activity and the focus of change: they will no longer be the recipients at the bottom of the education system hierarchy.
  - Increasing school self-management and teacher self-management

require 'flatter' hierarchies, both in the education system and within schools, and support rather than instructions from above.

- Neither changing organizational **structures**, nor retraining principals and deputies in management, is enough to ensure that necessary transformation takes place. Instead, they can result more in the **appearance** of change rather than real, lasting change.
- Changing the culture of the teaching staff is not easy to achieve because many will be unreceptive to new ideas. Most think in a fragmented way about problems, and look for single solutions. They tend not to think about individual problems as related to larger problems.
- All activity in the school should be driven by the values and mission of the school, on the basis of all participants feeling 'ownership' of the school's mission. This requires encouraging all staff and other stakeholders to participate and collaborate in decision-making and problem-solving.
- The school needs to see itself as a 'learning organization', managing change as an ongoing process, and supporting individual development **and** its collective learning.

## What makes a school 'good' or 'effective'?

# 3.4

### Introduction

The task team's report, 'Changing management to manage change', frequently refers to the need for 'effective' schools or 'quality' schools, but it never really explains what is meant by 'effective' or 'quality' or 'good'. In order to change schools, we need to know:

- **what** makes schools good or effective – the kind of schools we want;
- **how** we might go about changing our schools to become such institutions.

#### ACTIVITY 12: 'GOOD' SCHOOLS I KNOW

Think about two schools that you would consider to be 'good' (or 'effective') schools.

- a** First, describe four characteristics that you think make these schools 'good'.
- b** Second, explain why you think these are key features of a 'good' school.

In order to make this activity 'real', we suggest you think of the kind of school to which you would want to send your own child. Otherwise, draw on your experience as a learner: what did you like about your school and what did you wish your school offered you?



This activity should take you about 30 minutes.

## Two approaches to defining a 'good' school

*While there is some agreement, in most cases teachers list entirely different characteristics when describing what they think is a good school.*

*'I think a good school is one with a high matric pass rate, with good facilities, and highly qualified teachers,' says Nomusa.*

*Sipho disagrees. He says he attended a school in a rural area which had very poor facilities (no electricity or library, for instance) and poorly qualified teachers, but it had an atmosphere in which teachers and learners worked hard and produced interesting and innovative teaching (and fairly good matric results).*

*'So, Nomusa, I think a good school is one with motivated learners and committed teachers,' argues Sipho. 'Obviously good resources and qualified teachers are important, but I think an atmosphere which motivates teachers and learners is more important. I remember feeling encouraged by the fact that my own teachers were constantly meeting to discuss how to improve the school as well as improve themselves. I think this motivated learners like myself to achieve good results.'*

*'But would you send your children to this school?' asks Thulani provocatively. 'I know your kid is at Wildwood, a former Model C school with qualified teachers and good resources.'*

*Sipho responds immediately. 'That's true. But you also know that I pulled my kids out of another former Model C school – which even had a huge computer centre – because there was such tension there. Kids seemed demotivated and undisciplined, and teachers disinterested. So Thulani, as I said, resources are important but **not** as important as relationships and the atmosphere within the school.'*

How does your choice of features of a good school compare with these? If your features are different, don't be dismayed. In fact, just as Nomusa and Sipho prioritize different features, so do the many research studies worldwide on the issue of 'good' schools. In an attempt to make sense of the many different responses, writers have divided the research into two broad categories:

- A **school effectiveness approach** which generally uses **quantitative** methods, for instance the 'counting' of resources or qualifications, to develop criteria that characterize schools defined as effective because of their good results. It focuses on what **inputs, such as adequate resources and qualified teachers**, are needed for schools to produce **desired outputs or end-products**.
- A **school improvement approach** which is more action- and development-oriented. It uses more **qualitative** research, such as interviews and classroom observation, to explore the **processes of teaching, learning and change**. School improvement studies tend to define learning more broadly than as merely good results: they talk of educating a whole person. There is often an assumption that improved teaching processes are all that are needed to produce quality learning.

You will notice that Nomusa emphasizes the importance of the **resources** – the inputs – required in order to achieve a particular end-product, which she measures in terms of matric results. Sipho, however, argues that a **good atmosphere and motivation** – the processes of schooling – are the characteristics of a 'good' school. He seems to define a good school as one with happy, hardworking, and motivated learners rather than as one that simply has good matric results.

As you will notice, the way we define 'effectiveness' depends on what we see as valuable in schooling. Nomusa's criterion of a 'good' school is one which produces good matric results, while Sipho suggests that a 'good' school is one which encourages and supports learning and motivation. A businessperson's definition of a good school may be one that produces high pass rates in Maths and Science: in other words, a school that prepares learners for the workplace. However, parents might value a school which develops their child's interpersonal skills and curiosity about learning.

This shows that schools can be judged on a number of **different criteria**. Before we make judgements about what makes a school 'good', we need to know what



Into which category of thinking do your ideas in your answer to Activity 12 fall? Do they focus on results, and on the need for resources and facilities to help achieve them, or on the need for dedicated and creative teaching? Are matric results the best way to judge the quality of a school? Is it legitimate to say that you will focus on making internal processes better, even if the matric results remain very bad?

*criteria* we are using. In order to do this, we will explore the two approaches to researching schools mentioned earlier: school effectiveness and school improvement research. While we will distinguish between the two approaches, we must emphasize that they are not mutually exclusive: we can learn from both.

**mutually exclusive:** here this means that if one theory is true or valid, the other theory cannot be (the writer is saying this is *not* the case here)

## What does school effectiveness research say about 'good' schools?

Research on school effectiveness began in the 1970s, when researchers in Britain and the USA noticed that some schools achieved better student results than others. Based on this criterion – *good student results* – they called these schools 'effective schools'.

But what was it about these schools that 'caused' them to produce good learner results? School effectiveness researchers hoped that if they could isolate the characteristics which made these schools 'effective', then other schools could be made more effective by developing the same characteristics. So, their next step was to carry out large surveys on the schools they had described as 'effective' to see what features these schools had in common. They assumed that there was a link between these characteristics and the good learner results all these schools had produced.

Many different lists of characteristics were drawn up by different researchers, but most lists showed similar characteristics. Here is a list of the features which a large number of effective primary schools had in common. It is taken from a book by Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore (1995):

- professional leadership (which includes building participation by teachers)
- shared vision and goals
- a learning environment (a structured day, time-on-task, etc.)
- concentration on teaching and learning
- purposeful teaching
- high expectations (expecting the best from teachers or learners)
- positive reinforcement (rewarding good work among teachers and learners)
- monitoring progress (setting criteria and monitoring these)
- learner rights and responsibilities
- home-school partnership (good links with parents)
- a learning organization (staff development; focus on reflection).



These research findings can be found in Sammons, P., Hillman, T. and Mortimore, P. 1995. *Key Characteristics of School Effectiveness Research*. London: Institute of Education.

Two other useful summaries of effective schools research are Brighouse and Tomlinson. 1991. *Successful Schools: Education and Training Paper No 4*. London: Institute for Public Policy Research; and Reid et al. 1987. *Towards the Effective*

### What did Thuthuka teachers think of this list of features of 'effective' schools?

*Nomusa points out that this approach supports her initial views, but Thulani is prepared to argue against the effective school researchers. 'Don't you think this might be a problematic way in which to define a good school?' he asks.*

*'But what other way is there, except through comparing test results?' responds Nomusa. 'We know that results are important to parents who are looking for a school for their children.'*

*But Thulani persists, 'Yes, but I think that effectiveness is **much more** than simply good test results. The school Thandi goes to also teaches children to think critically and creatively. So I do want a school that produces good results, but I know that this is often only a measure of a learner's ability to remember large amounts of information.'*

*While the Thuthuka teachers cannot agree on whether the criterion of matric results is a valid one or not, there is no disagreement about Mortimore's characteristics of effective schools. All the teachers agree that a school which had these characteristics is likely to be a good school.*

*But they do have a problem. As Siphon puts it: 'I have two difficulties. First, it's all very well to tell us what an effective school must have in place. But this tells us*

*nothing about the dynamics of the school. It tells us nothing about the processes, the culture, the feelings, within the school. Surely these have an impact on schooling? And second, it gives us no idea about **how we can get our school to develop these features.***

*The Rake makes another point (which again reveals his holistic thinking): 'It seems to me that a lot of the features on Sammom et al.'s list aren't really separate. They happen together. If there is "professional leadership of the staff by the head", this is likely to be based on having a "shared vision and goals". If there is "a learning environment", this is likely to involve "purposeful teaching" or "setting high expectations". So I think **these features interact with each other. We cannot think about them separately.***

“  
... school  
effectiveness research  
tells us what an 'effective'  
school is, but not  
how to change  
schools ...  
”

## Some weaknesses of school effectiveness research

As Nomusa (and even Thulani) point out, school effectiveness researchers may be correct in using learner results as an indicator of how effective a school is. But as Siphos and Thulani say, this is a **very limited view** of 'effectiveness'. It doesn't focus on things which cannot be measured, such as the **quality** of teacher-learner interaction, the learning of interpersonal skills, or happiness. And, crucially, school effectiveness research gives 'ineffective' schools no idea of the **strategies** they could use to become effective. The Rake also puts his finger on a key weakness of much of the school effectiveness research: it tends to see different features **in isolation** from one another, rather than holistically.

So, while school effectiveness research has provided important insights into what good schools are, there have been criticisms similar to those made by the Thuthuka teachers. Critics have argued that school effectiveness researchers tend to:

- define 'effectiveness' **too narrowly**;
- define it mainly **in terms of results or outputs**;
- assume incorrectly that weak ('ineffective') schools could be improved by **developing the same characteristics** as effective schools;
- neglect to explain **how we make change happen** (i.e. they tell us **what** an 'effective' school is, but not **how** to change);
- treat complex institutions like schools too simplistically; the characteristics given in lists are misleadingly simple, and don't begin to explain how they change as they interact with one another in particular schools;
- ignore the importance of different **contexts** (for example, developed or developing countries) and the way they might affect a school's ability to function.

In response to these criticisms, researchers have attempted to find more sophisticated answers to the question, 'What makes schools "good"?' Let us compare Sammon et al.'s results with those from more recent school effectiveness research in Africa.

## School effectiveness research in developing countries

Here is a *summary* of the characteristics of effective schools in developing countries, based on the work of two researchers, Levin and Lockheed.

### 'Effective' schools in the developing world

#### Necessary inputs

- *Curriculum*: The curriculum content needs to be relevant to the experience of learners, properly sequenced, and appropriately paced.
- *Instructional materials*: Where textbooks are available and are used by teachers, learning is greater.
- *Time for learning*: Time on task, as well as repetition, promote learning.
- *Teaching practices*: Effective schools encourage active learner involvement, including dialogues and debates among learners and teachers.

#### Facilitating conditions

- *Community-school relationship and parent involvement*: Schools are more effective when the community contributes to the school and participates in school activities. The school, also, contributes resources and programmes to the community.
- *School-based professionalism*: The principal has a crucial role in school effectiveness. Also, teachers play an important role in shaping the school. At the same time, effective schools take steps to improve teachers' skills and knowledge. Teachers' autonomy must be balanced with their accountability; the school and the teachers are jointly responsible for producing good results.
- *Flexibility*: Effective schools are able to adapt to local needs and conditions, especially in terms of making curricula relevant, making adjustments to level and pace, organizing flexibly to make the best use of resources, and being flexible in teaching methods.

#### The will to act

- *Vision*: For schools to be effective, there needs to be a commitment on the part of government, political parties, business, parents, and learners to a vision of excellence.
- *Decentralized solutions*: Effective schools need to have a high degree of autonomy, while being accountable to parents and the local community. Responsibility shifts from central bureaucracies to the school level.



This summary is based on research findings in Levin & Lockheed. 1993. *Effective Schools in Developing Countries*. London & Washington, D.C.: Falmer Press.

### ACTIVITY 13: COMPARING 'EFFECTIVENESS' RESEARCH FROM DEVELOPING AND DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

- Read through the lists compiled by Sammon et al., and Levin and Lockheed carefully. Write down all elements they have *in common*. (Sometimes the same point is explained in different words, so be careful!)
- List any differences between the two lists.
- Suggest which characteristics emerge as common to 'good' schools, regardless of context.



This activity should take about 40 minutes. Re-read your answer to Activity 12 before you tackle Activity 13. If you have the video, you may want to watch from the beginning to the title 'The school-as-organization approach'.

### Thuthuka teachers' responses

These questions lead to a lot of discussion and debate at Thuthuka. A number of teachers say, quite categorically, that research from 'elsewhere' – like Sammon's research – isn't relevant to South Africa. But when the group analyses the two lists more carefully, they find that while there are important differences – which reflect the different educational priorities of different contexts – there is also a great deal of overlap.

Of particular interest to Thulani is Levin's and Lockheed's third category of features – titled 'The will to act' – which is not mentioned at all in school effectiveness research in the developed world. The teachers wonder why this issue is important in schools in developing countries.

'Maybe this is because in so many schools in the developing world there is a sense of lethargy,' suggests Sipho. 'Teachers often feel that someone else – the government, for instance – should do things for them. Perhaps in developed countries teachers have been given a great deal more control – through decentralization – and also have a better attitude. In other words, perhaps "the will to act" is simply assumed to be in place in schools in developed countries, while it still has to be built in developing countries.'

'Hmnn, that's interesting,' comments The Rake. 'Maybe that's what the COLTS campaign in South Africa is all about ... it's about building the "will to act". It also reminds me of that Hopkins article where he argues that changes to **structure and culture** are necessary. The will to act seems to have both structural and cultural implications: more responsibility and power needs to be given to schools, but we also need to inculcate in teachers an attitude which allows them to use this more responsibly. For instance, they need to be able to develop a "vision" for their school, and then have the "will" to work towards it.'

But Nomusa wants to move on. She notes more 'significant' differences between the lists.

'First, one of the differences is that the availability of textbooks is seen as a crucial indicator of an "effective" school in developing countries, but it isn't mentioned in the research from developed countries. Again, this is probably because **all** schools in developed countries have textbooks, so these are not a factor!' says Nomusa. 'Second, the issue of "flexibility" – of adapting the curriculum to local needs – is regarded as an important indicator of an "effective" school in Africa, but isn't mentioned in Sammon's research. Perhaps this is important in Africa because things change so rapidly, and because our conditions are so diverse ... which may not be the case in Britain, for instance.'

The discussion continues for some time. The teachers note that, in the developing world, the involvement of the community is much more important than in the developed world (where 'outside involvement' is limited to parents). They also suggest that some features which seem not to apply to both developed and developing countries are, in fact, common but are simply expressed differently. An example is Sammon's reference to 'purposeful teaching'. This is picked up by Levin and Lockheed in a number of places – for instance, in the references to a curriculum that is 'properly sequenced and appropriately paced'; and to 'time on task'.

After further discussion, the teachers agree that the context in which schools operate can make a difference, but that many issues – such as the involvement of learners, teachers and parents in decision-making; committed teachers and structured learning time; good leadership by the principal (expressed under 'school-based professionalism' in Levin's and Lockheed's list); and ongoing professional development for teachers – are characteristics common to 'good' schools around the world.

The teachers also agree that schools in developing countries face enormous difficulties (such as shortages of learning resources and few classroom structures), which often makes it easier for teachers simply to accept the situation rather than to change it. In these situations, the problems seem so large that people simply give up: teachers may not know **what** or **how** to change things, or there may be little support

**lethargy:** apathy, an inability to move oneself to act

**COLTS campaign:** Campaign to revive a Culture of Learning and Teaching in Schools



for change. So it is often easier to say, 'That is just how things are.'

'Yes,' says The Rake, 'that is exactly our difficulty, but it also points to the reason why Levin and Lockheed say that the "will to act" is so important in the developing world context. It seems that those schools where heads and teachers (and learners and parents) have overcome this defeatist attitude, have moved beyond simply asking for more resources. They are now working together to make changes – and are beginning to deliver good results.'

'So, are you saying that a lack of resources is not the biggest factor inhibiting change? Are you saying that a bigger factor is the attitude of stakeholders?' asks Thulani.

'Well, I think the research suggests this,' responds The Rake. 'But do you know what I like about Levin's and Lockheed's list? It is the fact that they group factors – they start seeing these characteristics as linked. While Sammon's list is completely atomistic, Levin and Lockheed suggest that, for instance, necessary inputs include structural things – like the availability of instructional materials and relevant curriculum – as well as cultural issues – like "time on task" and interactive learning. In other words, it's not an "either/or" question. To develop effective schools we need better resourcing, but this alone will not bring about a good school. We also need better teachers, and better attitudes among teachers ... and this we can begin working on at Thuthuka right now.'

But how do schools begin the process of change that The Rake is talking about? While Thuthuka teachers now have some guidelines on *what* to change if they want to make their school an 'effective' school, school effectiveness research has offered them very little on *how* to change their school (except that The Rake will ensure that all their planning is holistic!).

We will now turn to the other group of researchers mentioned earlier, called 'school improvement researchers'. This group has developed a different approach to answering the question: 'What makes a school "effective"?' They suggest that what actually happens inside schools and classrooms is what makes the difference between 'good' schools and 'bad' schools. But even more importantly for the Thuthuka teachers, they offer some help on *how* to change a school. Let's have a look at this research.

## What does school improvement research say about 'good' schools?

School improvement research starts from the basic assumption that teaching and learning are the main activities of a school. Therefore, efforts to improve schools must have an impact on the teaching and learning in the school. In other words, the organization and management of a school only exists so that learning and teaching can happen effectively in the school. These researchers say that there is absolutely no point in a school having an efficient administration – for instance, a school which is quiet, which runs on time, where all paperwork is efficiently filed, and where all teachers are in their classrooms teaching – if all this efficiency does not improve the school's teaching and learning.

Likewise, they argue that quantitative factors – like a school with good resources and qualified teachers – do not necessarily produce good education. And they also suggest that good results are not necessarily an *indicator* of good education.

In Section Four we introduce you to a number of school change case studies that illustrate 'school improvers' at work. The video also provides local examples of school change processes that are informed by 'school improvement' research. But, increasingly, researchers are arguing that these two approaches are *not* contradictory. In fact, they argue, the approaches are complementary.

Let's see what two school improvement researchers, Heneveld and Craig, say. This overview of the findings of school improvement research is based on material found in their book *Schools Count* (1996).



The *Sunday Times* newspaper runs an annual top schools survey in South Africa. Although controversial – some argue that it promotes unhealthy competitiveness – the survey is interesting in that it highlights schools that produce very good education despite having very poor resources.

**incremental:** increasing by stages, not all at once



Heneveld and Craig's findings are based on original research found in a 1996 World Bank report entitled: 'Schools count: World Bank project designs and the quality of primary education in sub-Saharan Africa'. But the idea that the two research approaches are 'growing together' is increasingly popular. You might want to read Reynolds et al. 1996. *Making Good Schools: Linking School Effectiveness and School Improvement*. London: Routledge.

## What is a 'good' school? The findings of school improvement research

The school improvement approach aims to bring about valuable changes in *student learning outcomes*, in *teachers' skills and attitudes*, and in the *organizational functioning of schools*. While this approach draws on the school effectiveness approach, it emphasizes the *processes of change* in a school rather than the relationship between inputs into a school and its outputs.

The strength of school improvement research, we believe, lies in its concentration on *how change occurs* in school systems. This research tends to be *holistic* and *action-oriented*. In other words, it often proposes *improvement strategies* that seek to *achieve long-term goals*. Some school improvement researchers argue that change should be slow and incremental, while others urge dramatic restructuring. In either case, the key themes identified by the main researchers on school improvement include:

- the importance of effective leadership;
- the importance of shared vision-building and support for school improvement strategies throughout the organization and, ideally, at both school and district levels;
- the importance of active initiation and participation by all stakeholders;
- the importance of changing behaviour and beliefs as well as structures;
- the importance of collaborative planning and decision-making;
- the importance of organizational policies that support action and press for continual improvement;
- the importance of staff development and assistance in developing resources;
- the importance of monitoring efforts towards accountability and improvement;
- the importance of recognizing when jobs are well done.

After working in developing countries (Bangladesh, Colombia and Ethiopia), Per Dalin and colleagues published their findings which showed that the results of school improvement efforts in these countries were not very different from school effectiveness results. In schools adopting a school improvement approach, the following characteristics were evident:

- the in-service training process is well-implemented, regular, relevant and practical;
- the school works actively on the adaptation of the curriculum and the production of local teaching-learning materials;
- the principal is motivated, plays an active co-ordination and support role, is an instructional leader, works closely with teachers, encourages teachers, and shares responsibilities;
- there is a team spirit in the school where teachers co-operate, student attitudes towards the reform is positive, and teachers help each other with teaching problems;
- supervision is regular, shared between the supervisor and the principal, and is a combination of pressure and support;
- the school experiences more success, more positive students, teacher co-operation, professional exchanges and extra resources;
- the school gets more support from the community; parents are more interested in the schooling of their children; the community gives material support and financial support.

In the end, Heneveld and Craig conclude that the two approaches to school change – school effectiveness and school improvement – should be integrated in a way that they complement each other.

## What are the weaknesses of school improvement research?

We have already looked at some criticisms of school effectiveness research. School improvement research also has its critics. In particular, these critics suggest that:

- School improvement research is often not as rigorous or objective as school effectiveness research. The critics argue that this is because the school improvement approach usually relies on interviews and observations, while school effectiveness research collects data like exam results, the number of books available in a school, and the amount of time teachers spend in classrooms. They argue that this quantitative research is more objective than school improvement research (which is largely qualitative).
- School improvement research often concentrates its attention *inside* schools, without locating these schools in their broader contexts. Critics suggest that it does not really address the question of *why* there are differences in quality *between* different schools. They say school improvement researchers seem to assume that 'good schooling' always means the same thing, and that it is available to everyone. They do not question what 'quality' is, and why some schools have it and others don't.

**rigorous:** careful, systematic and precise  
**objective:** not influenced by personal feelings

But, despite these criticisms, school improvement approaches are currently probably more widely used by people attempting to change schools than school effectiveness research. This is largely because school improvement approaches tend to focus more on *how* we improve schools and on the importance of human agency (as opposed to resources) in changing schools. School effectiveness research is still used in large policy studies, and does provide useful information about the characteristics of effective schools.

**human agency:** the ability of people to achieve the goals and results they desire

In fact, as we have suggested, the two approaches are 'growing together'. In other words, both approaches have learnt from each other and have thereby improved their research methodologies. A 1996 publication – *Making Good Schools: Linking School Effectiveness and School Improvement* by Reynolds et al. (London: Routledge) – includes a number of studies in which writers show how the two approaches are growing together. Stoll et al. provide an interesting comparison of the two traditions, shown in Table 3.1 on page 82, in the same book.

**Table 3.1** The separate traditions of school effectiveness and school improvement

School effectiveness	School improvement in the 1980s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on schools</li> <li>• Focus on school organization</li> <li>• Data driven, with emphasis on outcomes</li> <li>• Quantitative in orientation</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge about how to implement change strategies</li> <li>• More concerned with change in learner outcomes</li> <li>• More concerned with schools at a point in time</li> <li>• Based on research knowledge</li> <li>• Limited range of outcomes</li> <li>• Concerned with schools that are effective</li> <li>• Static orientation (school as it is)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on individual teachers or groups of teachers</li> <li>• Focus on school processes</li> <li>• Rare empirical evaluation of effects of changes</li> <li>• Qualitative in orientation</li> <li>• Concerned with change in schools exclusively</li> <li>• More concerned with journey of school improvement than its destination</li> <li>• More concerned with schools as changing</li> <li>• Focus on practitioner knowledge</li> <li>• Concern with multiple outcomes</li> <li>• Concern with how schools become effective</li> <li>• Dynamic orientation (school as it has been or might be)</li> </ul>



## Looking for better schools in South Africa

We will now examine a South African study which has used elements of both approaches in order to find what makes a school effective. The study refers to 'good' schools as 'resilient' schools.



This activity should take about 45 minutes. As you listen to Potterton and Vinjevoold talk about the two projects, try to link the way they go about identifying 'top' or 'resilient' schools with the processes and criteria used by the school effectiveness and school improvement approaches that you have learnt about.

### ACTIVITY 14: THE SEARCH FOR BETTER SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

Before you start reading, turn to Part 4 on your audiotape, which begins just *after* the narrator asks you to complete Activity 12. Listen to Mark Potterton, one of the researchers, and to Penny Vinjevoold, a researcher in another South African investigation – The Top 100 Schools Project – as they explain:

- how the researchers went about identifying 'good' schools;
- what they discovered about the characteristics of 'resilient' and 'top' schools.

The excerpt begins with Andrew Schofield explaining how he understands the differences between school improvement and school effectiveness research approaches. As you listen, note any points of interest in your workbook. In particular, note any concrete examples that Potterton or Vinjevoold may provide to illustrate the differences between the approaches.

### *The 'resilient schools' research*

In 1997, Christie and Potterton carried out a study on schools in South Africa that were managing to continue to operate in difficult circumstances while schools around them were breaking down. To identify these schools, the researchers did *not* use the criterion of test results. Instead, they state: 'Our criteria for identifying schools were deliberately vague: we asked individuals and organizations to recommend schools that they thought were operating well under difficult circumstances ...' The researchers drew up a list of questions and interviewed principals, teachers and, where possible, learners. The aim was to draw out patterns of what was common in all the 32 schools they studied. Although this study aimed to identify 'effective' schools in South Africa, it did not rely on 'school effectiveness' research alone. In fact, the qualitative methodology used (visiting schools, conducting interviews, and observing school processes, rather than counting or measuring inputs), and the study's emphasis on processes rather than exam results, indicate – arguably – that this research project was closer to the school improvement approach.

We'd now like you to read the summary of Christie's and Potterton's major findings (Readings, Section Four, 'Strategies for school change'). Then complete Activity 15 in your workbook.



This is a long but important activity. We are now asking that you 'integrate' the different ideas you have learnt and begin building your own 'theory' of what makes schools 'good'. Spend about 2 hours on this activity. We suggest you re-listen to Parts 1-4 of your audiotape before you begin.

### ACTIVITY 15: SOUTH AFRICA'S MOST 'RESILIENT' SCHOOLS

- a** Look back at the following:
- Sammon's list of characteristics of effective schools (page 75);
  - Levin's and Lockheed's list of effective school characteristics in developing countries (page 77);
  - Heneveld's and Craig's list of key themes identified by school improvement research (page 80);
  - Dalin's list of results on school improvement research in developing countries listed in the Heneveld and Craig excerpt (page 80);
  - Christie's and Potterton's list of characteristics of resilient schools (Reader, pages 94–99).

Note the points which you think are similar in each list. What does each list have that is different from the others?

- b** In the introductory paragraph to their research report (not included in the reading), Christie and Potterton write: 'This should not be read as a checklist of discrete characteristics that could be unproblematically transferred from school to school.' Think of the criticisms of both school effectiveness and school improvement research. How does the comment by Christie and Potterton relate to the criticisms of this research?

### **Thuthuka teachers' responses**

*After some discussion, the Thuthuka teachers are able to identify many similarities. In fact, they find more similarities than differences. Thulani sums this up by saying, 'I really think that Heneveld and Craig have a point when they say that school effectiveness and school improvement research are 'growing together'. We should use these approaches together, and draw strengths from both.'*

*Here are some of the teachers' comments:*

- *Sindi is struck by the similarity between Christie's and Potterton's '**sense of responsibility**', and Levin and Lockheed's '**will to act**': 'It seems to me that they are saying the same thing,' she says.*
- *The Rake notes the importance of good **leadership**. 'Although this can mean different things to different people, all the approaches mention the importance of the principal. But leadership also seems to include communicating with teachers, building a vision with them, and involving them in decision-making ... not simply handing out orders!'*
- *Sipho picks out a number of points on **teaching and learning**. 'It's clear that all of the lists have teaching and learning in a central role. Sammon's term – "a work-centred environment" – sounds good to me. There is also mention of the importance of time for learning. All the lists expect a lot of the teachers. I agree with the point that we should pay attention to involving learners more actively.'*
- *Nomusa comments, 'The South African study mentions that schools should be **safe and orderly places** for teachers and learners. This is not mentioned in the other studies, possibly because schools in other countries are not faced with violence and criminal elements as South African schools are.'*
- *The Rake sums up by pointing out the importance of **parent and community involvement**. 'This accords with my own experience that a school can never operate effectively if it doesn't have some parental support. In fact, good relations with the community around the school are essential.'*

## What have we learnt so far?

- Since directionless change may be worse than no change at all, we looked to the findings of two key research approaches to give us a more precise sense of what a 'good' school might be.
- In answer to the question, 'What makes a school "good"?' we have seen that schools can be judged on a number of different criteria. Before judging that one school is 'good' and another is 'not good', we need first to reach agreement on the criteria for judging.
- The *school effectiveness* approach uses quantitative research methods to isolate the key characteristics of schools defined as effective because of their good results. It focuses on what 'inputs' are needed for schools to produce the desired outputs.
  - We found that research findings in developing countries like South Africa are similar to those in developed countries. But some factors – such as the involvement of the community, the provision of instructional materials, and the 'will to act' to effect improvements – are necessary to the production of good results in developing countries. In developed countries, however, these are either not as necessary, or are taken for granted.
  - Weaknesses of the approach are its narrow definition of 'effectiveness'; its failure to explain how to *bring about* change; and its oversimplified connection between certain key factors and success.
- *School improvement* research uses more qualitative research methods, such as interviews and classroom observation, to understand the *processes* of teaching, learning and change which these researchers believe are the key criteria of 'good' schools.
  - This approach argues that some of the factors identified as necessary for 'school effectiveness' do not *necessarily* result in better teaching and learning.
  - This approach has been criticized for not being as objective as the school effectiveness approach. However, it has also been criticized for focusing too much on processes within schools, without attempting to see these in the broader context of factors outside the individual schools which impact on quality.
- School effectiveness research and school improvement research have tended to use different criteria and different approaches. We need to understand both approaches, and to integrate their findings in ways which will help us to change our schools.
- The South African 'resilient schools' research has combined some of the techniques of both approaches in its attempt to avoid some of the weaknesses inherent in both.

# Developing schools as 'learning organizations'

## 3.5

### Are 'learning organizations' and 'effective' schools the same kinds of organization?

*'We now have a fairly good idea of the kinds of features "good" or so-called "effective" schools seem to possess,' says Nomusa. 'I like that ... because it gives me some idea of what I should aim my change efforts towards ... it gives me a vision of what Thuthuka could be. But I am a little confused. The government and other people have said we should aim to be a "learning organization". Is this the same thing as an "effective school"?' she wonders aloud.*

*All the Thuthuka teachers have answers for Nomusa! Thulani is convinced that 'learning organization' is simply another name for 'effective school'. 'After all, every bit of research we have read says "good" schools prioritize quality teaching and learning,' he says.*

*Sipho disagrees: 'Sure! But that is so obvious! I think learning organizations must mean more than this. I remember the new department report on management saying something about learning organizations making change part of their organizational ethos. But what exactly does that mean?'*

*'I see I was right!' says Nomusa. 'We don't really know what learning organizations are! I think we need to read a bit more about them to see whether they are similar to "effective schools".'*

*The Rake agrees: 'I think there is a point in what Nomusa is saying. If I have to convince the management team of this school about the need for change, I need to be very clear about the kind of school I want Thuthuka to be. At the moment, if I were asked to describe a "learning school", I couldn't offer much more than Sipho and Thulani.'*

*'I don't know,' says Jabu (a new member of the Thuthuka study group) impatiently. 'I'd rather do something practical ... like visiting a school we know has transformed itself – Zizamele Secondary School, for instance. What if one or two of us visit Zizamele? There we could get firsthand information on how the teachers turned their school into the success it is today. I mean, we all remember that a few years ago they were even worse than we are.'*

*After a some debate, the group agrees that the two options – visiting the school **and** reading further – should be done at the same time. 'Remember the Bush article we read earlier?' says Sipho. 'He argued that we need to use our own experience, and the experience of others, but that this won't give us the full picture. For instance, Zizamele is only one of many schools that have changed. So why don't we use the theory we have of effective schools, and the little we know about learning organizations, as a tool to analyse **how** Zizamele has changed?'*

*This time it is The Rake who has been searching in his briefcase during the conversation. 'I think that's the best idea. I came across what I think is another good explanation of a learning organization from a book by Davidoff and Lazarus called The Learning School. They say it is:*

***an organization which is constantly and systematically reflecting on its own practice, and making appropriate adjustments and changes as a result of new insights gained through that reflection. In this way we are talking about professional teacher development (with the emphasis on 'people' change) and organization development (organizational change) in order to equip the school as a whole to become more effective in its purpose and goals.***

## Planning the school observation

*The Rake offers to make arrangements with the principals of both schools, and Thulani and Nomusa are chosen to undertake the mission. They prepare for their two days away from Thuthuka by setting work for their classes, and their colleagues help them to draw up a roster for supervising their classes in their absence. A week later, Thulani and Nomusa present the group with a suggestion as to how they will 'analyse' Zizamele.*

*'We don't just want to say things like "this is nice", or "that is bad". So we have drawn up a kind of checklist in which we have attempted to synthesize the different lists of "good" school characteristics. We have also listed the few features we know that learning organizations have. We plan to use this as an "observation schedule" at Zizamele,' says Thulani.*

*'Did you find that any of the features from the school effectiveness lists clashed with any of the points in the school improvement lists?' asks Sipho.*

*'We expected to find some disagreement, but we didn't. In fact, the lists overlapped, as we saw before. However, we **did** find differences of emphasis, and each list seemed to fill gaps in the other. I think that reducing all that research to simple lists probably makes the school improvement studies seem a lot more similar to the effective school research findings than they really are – after all, they are based on qualitative research that focused on processes. But, for our purposes, that didn't seem to matter – we wanted to make up a good list of qualities that we've discovered from a range of perspectives – and that's what we ended up with.'*

*'What about the "learning organization" stuff?' asks Jabu. 'You seem to have found something to write about that already.'*

*'Just what we could glean from the paragraph in the Education Department report on change management (Readings, Section One), and from the quotation that The Rake gave us,' replies Thulani.*

*'Here is a copy of the list we will take with us to Zizamele. Although all our points are drawn from the combined lists of Sammon, Levin and Lockheed, Heneveld and Craig, and Per Dalin et al., in writing out our list we have made sure that some of our Thuthuka concerns get a mention,' Nomusa concludes.*



Think about the relationships that have developed among the members of the Thuthuka group. In what ways does the deputy principal exercise leadership in the group? In what ways is information shared in the Thuthuka group? How does the Thuthuka group encourage participation without becoming anarchic?

Now think of your own participation in different teams, groups and meetings. What roles do you tend to play in each of these situations? Do your roles change as the situations change?



As you can see, this observation schedule is incomplete. As you proceed – and learn more about learning organizations – you may want to complete the final column. But why not use this schedule to 'check' your school?

## Observation Schedule or Checklist

<b>Effective schools</b> (characteristics from school effectiveness and school improvement research)	<b>Learning organization characteristics</b>	<b>Zizamele characteristics</b>
<p><b>Management:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The principal has autonomy to act and take initiatives</li> <li>• Purposeful leadership – commitment to a clear vision</li> <li>• The ability to get the whole school to share this vision</li> <li>• The principal delegates responsibilities where possible</li> <li>• Leadership works closely with teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treat change as an ongoing feature of school's identity</li> <li>• Organization, staff and curriculum development important</li> <li>• Aimed at improving effectiveness – in coping with change, making best use of resources, etc.</li> </ul>	



<b>Effective schools</b> (characteristics from school effectiveness and school improvement research)	<b>Learning organization characteristics</b>	<b>Zizamele characteristics</b>
<p><b>Teachers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual teachers have some professional autonomy in their teaching (accountability too!)</li> <li>• Teachers share responsibility for, and collaborate in, vision building, decision-making and problem-solving</li> <li>• Teachers' skills and knowledge are improved – by means of well-planned, regular, relevant and practical staff development</li> <li>• The above is ensured by encouragement, supportive structure, opportunities and flexibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports individual and group learning, and innovation</li> <li>• Ongoing, systematic reflection on own practice</li> <li>• Learns from reflection – actually makes changes</li> <li>• More participative and inclusive decision-making structures</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Teaching resources and teaching environment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum actively adapted by the teachers, relevant to the learners' experience, jointly planned, appropriately sequenced and paced</li> <li>• All possible steps are taken to ensure that the necessary textbooks are available and used</li> <li>• All stakeholders committed to a structured school day/ to time on task</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Teaching:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should be intellectually challenging</li> <li>• Should include active involvement and participation of the learners in lessons</li> </ul>		
<p><b>School ethos:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive ethos focusing on success, and recognizing work well done</li> <li>• Active participation of all stakeholders</li> <li>• A work-centred ethos</li> <li>• Policies and structure that support initiative and improvement</li> <li>• Flexibility – active commitment to adapting policies and procedures etc. to local needs and conditions; rigidity frowned on</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Parents and community:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School engages with parents and community</li> <li>• Two-way support and sharing of resources, facilities and programmes</li> </ul>		

<b>Effective schools</b> (characteristics from school effectiveness and school improvement research)	<b>Learning organization characteristics</b>	<b>Zizamele characteristics</b>
<p><b>Supervision and monitoring:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seen as important, and should be regular – thorough record-keeping too</li> <li>• Aimed at improvement, not a bureaucratic end in itself</li> <li>• Shared, including responsibility for performance</li> <li>• A combination of pressure and support</li> <li>• Departmental support emphasized – a high degree of autonomy and responsibility for each school</li> </ul>		

*The two researchers enjoy their visit to Zizamele, but it is two weeks before they are able to catch up and present their report to the group.*

## The school observation report

### Zizamele: an observation

by Thulani Shabalala and Nomusa Ngubane

#### Introduction

We were impressed by the order that prevailed at Zizamele. We arrived at 10:30 a.m. and the atmosphere was relaxed, warm and inviting, but it was obvious that everybody was busy. Although there were a few learners outside the classrooms, it was obvious that they were there for a reason. A sense of purpose permeated the whole school.

We met with Mr Dlamini, the principal. He seemed prepared for our visit and we were received with the same pomp and ceremony that our school reserves for the likes of the superintendent! Even before we started on our list of questions, he explained his school's mission. Later we were to hear the words, 'In our school we are committed to succeeding, we work collaboratively, and we constantly evaluate our school's progress ...'

Mr Dlamini introduced us to one of his HoDs, Ms Madlala. When we asked her what a learning organization was, she looked at us in some surprise and apologized that she couldn't really define exactly what is meant by a learning organization.

But she said she could describe what the school did, and we could decide for ourselves whether it was a learning organization or not. She explained that in their school the principal and his deputy are called 'head teachers'. She seemed to place much importance on this fact. It was not until later in the day that we were to understand why. She added that all the management team members understand their role as co-ordinating and motivating rather than controlling staff. Using herself as an example, she showed how, although an HoD, she sometimes took a secondary role when another member of the department with more experience and expertise took over the leading role. 'This is prac-

**permeate:** spread through every part of

tised at all levels at all times,' she claimed. 'Since we started seeing our roles in this way, a lot has changed. Staff are more likely to take initiative, and interpersonal relations have improved dramatically. I now look forward to each school day with enthusiasm.'

### **The development process**

Having noticed that there was relative order and discipline, even in classrooms where there were no teachers at the time, we asked Ms Madlala how they managed this. 'With difficulty,' she laughed. She then explained the process the school had gone through. 'First, we went through a long process of involving everyone in the school in developing a mission statement, and then committing all school members to work towards achieving its goals. Second, we began developing a culture within the school where all teachers and learners were disciplined, but not by management ... we emphasized self-discipline. Obviously people do overstep the mark at times, but then other teachers or learners remind you that your freedom is not unlimited and carries responsibilities! You see, if you have committed yourself to achieving educational excellence - rather than being told you must do this or that by seniors - then you will work hard freely. That is why you will find learners and teachers hard at work all the time.'

Ms Madlala explained that the change didn't occur immediately, but that the inclusive process in drawing up the mission statement, the ongoing work to popularize the mission (it was on every wall in the school!), a small group of determined and innovative teachers, and an equally determined and decisive principal (or head teacher!), made things happen. 'It took time, and it taxed us emotionally, but I think it was worthwhile,' she told us.

### **Difficulties faced by the school**

Thulani asked for a copy of the mission statement, but Ms Madlala said it wouldn't help us much. 'The most important part of a mission statement is the process the school goes through in drawing it up. A document alone can't bring change. The problem is that in the end it requires a real change of mind-set and a change in power relations. Many people resist this as they fear change, particularly if it will make them lose their status and authority. Even with us, the battle is not over yet, and I doubt if it will ever be,' she told us.

Later Thulani's attention was drawn to a big notice on one of the doors: 'THINKING IS WELCOME AND WANTED HERE'. Without uttering a word, he pulled out his pen and wrote this in his diary. It had suddenly struck a chord in his mind. At break time, we got an opportunity to chat to two other teachers (Ms Mzolo and Mr Masuku) and some learners. Although these two teachers were not quite as openly enthusiastic about the changes in the school, they did not contradict any of the things said by the first two. There was general satisfaction with the way in which the school was managed. They kept coming back to the point that the staff took important decisions jointly, and that their leaders were very supportive and always willing to give them opportunities to prove themselves. 'You can do any creative thing you like in this place, and you will be given credit for it as long as it improves learning. In fact, there is so much going on that almost every staff member - with the exception of the Big Five of course - is a leader of some team or other,' said Ms Mzolo. 'But this doesn't mean that "anything goes". Ultimately the head teacher must take decisions, even unpopular ones!' Nomusa wanted to know who the Big Five were. Mr Masuku responded almost immediately, 'They are the ever-indifferent critics of everything and everyone. We have five of them here. Don't you have them in your school?'

### Changing the attitudes of teachers

**debriefing:** here it refers to a meeting where all participants and other interested people look back on a past action and discuss what happened and what was accomplished

The short silence which followed was broken by a learner who came to ask for Mr Masuku. He jumped up and apologized as he hurried away. We heard that Mr Masuku was going to a meeting with the other three Maths teachers. For the past few days, the Maths teachers had been observing each others' lessons in their free periods, and they had agreed to meet briefly during break to plan the debriefing meeting of the whole department to be held after school. We learnt that this was quite a common practice at Zizamele. All departments planned their work together; teachers sat in on one another's lessons; and, at times, they invited colleagues from the local college of education and the university. What really surprised us was that we found learners being given a chance to evaluate their teachers.

Nomusa told Ms Mzolo that at Thuthuka some of us don't even speak to other staff. She joked that absenteeism would increase fourfold if someone suggested that we start visiting each other's lessons! Ms Mzolo replied that the 'family atmosphere' and 'teamwork' took time and effort to build. 'In fact, there is still some resistance but as people realize the benefits of working together they join the "family". The main thing is that we emphasize learning in this school. Actually, the whole school is committed to lifelong learning, and as teachers we all keep learning every day. We believe that sharing is growth, and being open to new suggestions is development,' Ms Mzolo told us.

Thulani's last question was about dealing with the irresponsible type of teacher who always had a reason not to be in class. Ms Mzolo said that the mission was each teacher's conscience; it was their 'remote control'. 'If colleagues transgress often, they get a fresh copy of the mission statement in their pigeon-holes. And they never know who slipped it in there! If this is ignored, the case is raised in our fortnightly meetings, and no one wants that because staff come down quite hard at that level. We would all do anything to avoid that.'



This activity should take about 1 hour. Its main aim is for you to *practise* using theory to *analyse* a practical example, namely, Zizamele Secondary.

#### ACTIVITY 16: ASSESSING ZIZAMELE'S 'EFFECTIVENESS'

Using Nomusa and Thulani's checklist or observation schedule, and their report on the visit to Zizamele, devise your own way of determining whether Zizamele:

- a** displays characteristics of an 'effective' school;
- b** provides examples of the characteristics we might associate with a 'learning' organization, as far as you can judge at this point.

A quick way to do this is to write a number next to each example that you identify in the report (pages 88–90), then write that number in the 'Zizamele' column of the observation schedule (page 86–88). For instance, near the beginning of the report, we read that most learners were in their classrooms, which reflected the sense of purpose felt throughout the school. Here you might jot down a '1', then transfer this to the Zizamele column of the checklist, next to the item which refers to the leadership getting everyone to share the leading vision of the school. But you can also write '1' next to the last item under 'Teaching resources and teaching environment'.

- c** When you have gone through the entire report carefully, examine your observation schedule (or checklist):
  - to see if there are characteristics which do not feature at Zizamele;
  - to see whether (assuming that Zizamele is a 'learning organization') there are specific ways in which a 'learning organization' may be more than what we expect of an 'effective' school.

## Lessons from Zizamele Secondary School

Did you notice that Thulani and Nomusa concentrate on the structure, the value system, and the culture of Zizamele in their report? The structure seems to be 'flat' and participative rather than hierarchical (but the head still makes decisions!), and teachers work in teams rather than as individuals receiving instructions from above. The school culture seems to be characterized by more freedom for everyone, but also more emphasis on each person's responsibilities. People are internally controlled and self-disciplined, rather than being subject to external, forced control. Everybody – except, perhaps, the Big Five – values commitment to performance, openness with information, shared responsibility and rights, and lifelong learning. It seems to be common practice that the people who are involved in the doing, also make important decisions about their work.

However, it is evident from the discussions that the changes have taken time. They have not necessarily been easy and there is still resistance from some staff members. In the discussion, there was also mention of the fact that change implies a change in power relations, and this challenges the status and authority of some. All these factors would slow down the process, and we can conclude that change is a slow and, at times, painful process. The teachers did not expect there ever to be a stage when they would say that theirs is a perfect school. They shared a desire to *continue* learning, improving and innovating.

Features like this indicate that, at this point, Zizamele may have moved quite a long way towards being what we understand as a learning organization. There seems to be a focus on dynamic, forward movement, on constant reflection and a conscious openness to innovation. This is not necessarily true of all 'good' schools, democratic though they may be.

In a way, one of Ms Mzolo's responses provides a definition for a learning organization. She said:

*The main thing is that we emphasize learning in this school. Actually, the whole school is committed to lifelong learning, and as teachers we all keep learning every day. We believe that sharing is growth, and being open to new suggestions is development ...*

It would appear that *a learning organization is one that is committed to lifelong learning, and is open to new ideas*. Teachers at Zizamele sit in on each other's classes. Sharing and continuous evaluation have become the accepted way of doing things. The school, as well as most of the individual teachers in it, is committed to a set of outcomes, and it constantly assesses and reassesses its journey to this destination. Even mistakes made in this journey are treated as educational!

But let us not forget the need expressed by the Thuthuka teachers to find out what light *theory* can shed on their, and our, growing understanding of the learning organization.

## Learning more about 'learning organizations'

### ACTIVITY 17: THE FIVE DISCIPLINES OF A LEARNING ORGANIZATION

Peter Senge is probably the most significant contemporary writer on 'learning' organizations. You are going to read an excerpt from his best-selling book called *The Fifth Discipline* (Readings, Section Two, 'Organizations: The impact of global change'). But first turn to Part 5 of your audiotape (the first excerpt on side 2 of the tape) and listen to a number of South African experts explain what they understand by the concept 'a learning organiza-



Turn back to the Reader (page 51) where Hopkins et al. describe various types of school culture. Which of the four types of school culture seems closest to the 'learning' school?



Activity 17 requires you to read a complex reading. Take your time and read it more than once. Add these new ideas to what you already know about learning organizations, and to what the speakers say in Part 5 of your audiotape. Spend about 2 hours on this activity.

tion'. As you listen and read, make notes in response to the following questions:

- a What does Senge's view of learning organizations add to what you have already learnt about them?
- b How are Senge's five disciplines similar to, and different from, the characteristics which emerged as critical to 'good' or 'effective' schools?
- c How would you use Senge practically to begin transforming your school?
- d What similarities do you notice between Senge's ideas and those of the South Africans you listened to on your audiotape?

### ***What Senge's theory tells us***

Do you remember Ms Madlala saying that she did not think 'the battle' (to transform Zizamele) would ever be over? When we first read that, we may be inclined to think her remark pessimistic, but now Senge helps us to see that never being able to say that I – or my organization – have 'arrived' (at the end-point of enlightenment) reflects a dynamic, open-ended attitude to learning, development and the ongoing change that has become part of the pattern of our lives today.

Senge's strongest point is one already made by The Rake: think systemically! He warns about the dangers of breaking the world into separate elements to understand it. Instead, he suggests that we should continually ask questions so that we can find the (often-tangled) roots of problems, not just the symptoms. You will find excellent examples of this on page 110 ('The five whys') and page 112 ('Solving the problem of absenteeism systemically'). But Senge goes further than this. He suggests that even when we think we have found the roots, we must not stop thinking. Instead, we should continuously reflect on the wisdom of our action and assess how it is impacting on other parts of our school. In Section Four, we will introduce you to a simple action-reflection model which will assist you in implementing this kind of process in your school.

### ***The five disciplines***

Senge's systemic thinking also emerges in his suggestions about how to implement the five disciplines of a 'learning' organization. He says we should not implement and assess each discipline separately. Instead, they must work as a whole. This would suggest that there is little point in having a 'shared vision', for instance, if we don't have the 'personal mastery' to work through difficulties towards achieving this vision, and the teamwork and ongoing reflection to assess whether we are on target.

But probably our favourite demonstration of Senge's holism is the point he makes about how we should work towards organizations in which the combined intelligence of the whole is **more** than the sum of its parts, not less ... He warns, though, that very often organizations filled with intelligent people tend to do very stupid things!

And we would add a further warning to this. One of the unintelligent things that organizations sometimes do is to try to apply a theory such as Senge's (or a list such as Sammon's) as a 'recipe' to direct their own organizational development. No single 'formula' could possibly fit the very different structures, cultures and histories – and changing circumstances – of schools in widely varying contexts. Such a simplistic approach, like trying to model our practice on that of some other institution (remember Ms Madlala commenting that it wouldn't really help Thuthuka much to have a copy of Zizamele's mission statement?), is unlikely to help schools respond energetically to local circumstances, or to produce lasting change. On the contrary, Senge suggests that it is through constant reflection on our actions, and learning from our mistakes, that we are much more likely to build an 'intelligent' organization.

Reflection on our own practice, and learning from our mistakes, does **not** mean that we should not consult research and theory for the insights they make available.

**simplistic:** over-simplified, failing to reflect the complexity of reality

The lifelong learning, personal development and organizational development encouraged by the learning organization need not only be experiential. Tapping into other sources of knowledge and insight to keep ourselves alert as educators is one of the best ways of preventing the 'hardening' of our mental models, the acceptance of narrow formulas as cure-alls, and plain inertia.

### What have we learnt so far?

By their very nature, schools that are 'learning organizations' will vary greatly. But they all tend to have most of the following characteristics:

- A shared commitment to a common vision, or mission.
- Part of this mission will be an active, supportive commitment to lifelong learning, not only for the learners, but also for the teachers (professional development) and for the school as a whole (organization development), to equip it to become more effective in achieving its mission.
- Openness to new ideas from within the school community (including teachers, learners, and other stakeholders), as well as from management and the education department.
- A 'flat' organizational structure that is more flexible and participative than hierarchical. Management see their role as co-ordinating and motivating, rather than controlling – they may even be subordinate to more junior staff in areas where the latter have greater competence.
- Staff may take initiatives, and tend to work in teams rather than as individuals acting on instructions from above. Thus, teachers have more autonomy – to be creative and generate new learning for the school – and more responsibility.
- Teachers are not 'checked on' all the time, but tend to be driven by their own commitment to performance and to shared goals. Indeed, they help one another to monitor and evaluate their own progress in practice.

## 3.6

## Tutor-marked assignment 1



## Understanding schools as learning organizations

As a first tutor-marked assignment, you should **use** the knowledge you have acquired about learning organizations as a **tool** to analyse Thuthuka School. The key question to answer is this:

*To what extent does Thuthuka demonstrate the characteristics of a learning organization, and what are three important changes it needs to make to move towards being a learning organization?*

We'd like you to answer this question in the following way:

- a** First, draw up a checklist (as Thulani and Nomusa did) of what you believe are the most important characteristics of a learning organization (including ideas you have gained from reading Peter Senge).
- b** Second, add a column to your checklist in which you list some of the actions and processes you would expect to find in a school that demonstrated a particular characteristic.
- c** Third, analyse how Thuthuka meets these criteria by giving it a score of between 1 (doesn't demonstrate these characteristics) and 5 (does demonstrate these characteristics) for each characteristic you have identified. Add a short comment as to why you allocated the particular score.

Here is an example:

Characteristic	Indicators of the characteristic	Does Thuthuka demonstrate this characteristic?
Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• regular school development meetings</li> <li>• more decision-making given to staff</li> <li>• significant amounts of team-teaching</li> </ul>	2 (some evidence, but seems confined to small group of teachers)

- d** Finally, using your analysis as a basis, and with reference to readings you have done, write a two-page letter of advice to The Rake suggesting the actions Thuthuka should take to transform itself into a 'learning' organization. (A tip: pay particular attention to the readings by Hopkins, Christie and Potterton, and Senge.)



# SECTION FOUR

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## Changing schools

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# Understanding change: first ideas

## 4.1

### Introduction

In Section Two we looked at ways in which South African schools have been organized until now. We found that, traditionally, South African schools were hierarchically structured organizations in which key decisions were taken by people at the top and communicated down to ordinary teachers. There was a high level of work specialization and little collaboration, and there was little or no communication between peers.

In Section Three we found that changing global and local contexts, as well as new government policies, suggested that South African schools would have to change. The new vision of schools is characterized by less hierarchical structures, more participative decision-making, more flexible job functions, a great deal more teamwork, and a commitment to ongoing personal and organizational development. Our analysis of school organization research revealed that there is a great deal of commonality in what different researchers regard as 'effective' or 'good' schools. We also noticed that there are many similarities between the characteristics good schools are regarded to possess, and those seen as important in new South African education policy. Finally, we explored the concept of a *learning* organization – a popular form of this new organizational vision which is used within both education and business.

This information has given us a fair idea of what our school could or should be like. But we still have only a hazy notion of *how we can go about changing* our present organizations. In this final section of the module, we will explore the concept of change. We will begin our investigation into how change occurs by reading a case study of an enterprising school principal who has to implement *Curriculum 2005* in her primary school.



### Case study: Advanced Primary School

Ms Zondi has been the principal of Advanced Primary School for many years now. Most teachers respect her because she is well-organized, but some have criticized her for wanting to 'do everything herself'. Although she has learnt about the importance of delegation in the management courses she has attended, she still finds it difficult to entrust teachers with responsibility because she feels they 'won't do things right'.

At a principals' meeting, Ms Zondi heard about the launch of Curriculum 2005. Being organized, she immediately invited a departmental official to visit her school and speak to her 18 teachers about the new curriculum. Ms Zondi told her teachers that they had to attend the meeting – scheduled for the following Tuesday – because it would give them important information about how they would have to change their classrooms. Most of the teachers were pleased that teaching would finish early, but were rather nervous about the meeting: it wasn't usual to have an outside person addressing them in their school, and they were also not used to discussing their own teaching with other teachers.

However, the next Tuesday the staffroom was full. Ms Majozi (from the department) began by handing out a pile of notes to each teacher. She said there was a lot to learn about Curriculum 2005, so she would briefly summarize the notes she

“  
*... teachers  
 said they  
 taught the learning  
 area called  
 ‘Communication’, but  
 what they  
 did in their  
 classrooms still resem-  
 bled what they had  
 done when teaching  
 the subject ‘English’ ...*  
 ”



Spend a few minutes thinking about why Ms Zondi's attempt to change the school's curriculum went wrong. What could she have done differently?

was handing out, but expected staff to read them more thoroughly at home. She invited them to ask questions, and then began explaining why South Africa needed a new school curriculum, and what the key changes would be. For the next hour, the teachers heard phrases like ‘focus on skills, not content’, ‘allow learners to work co-operatively’, ‘design meaningful learning activities’, ‘allow learners to discover knowledge for themselves’, ‘make sure learning occurs in groups’, and ‘assess your learners through portfolios, projects and oral tasks, as well as using written tests and exams’.

Ms Majosi's input was very entertaining. She spoke well, and told a number of funny stories. But the teachers felt quite confused. They were not sure what a number of Ms Majosi's terms meant in practice. For instance, many felt they were already engaged in ‘meaningful activities’ and teaching children skills! So what did Ms Majosi really mean? And some wondered how changes like ‘discovery teaching’ or ‘group work’ were possible, because they had so few resources, and very little space in their classrooms. But, despite the confusion, most teachers were too nervous to ask questions because Mrs Majosi seemed to be so knowledgeable – and in such a hurry. In fact, she had so much to say that there was no time left for questions. She apologized for this, and then rushed away to another appointment. The teachers left the school feeling quite overwhelmed.

Ms Zondi, however, felt happy: her teachers told her that they had found the talk ‘interesting and enlightening’. Her opinion was that the talk really had covered all the things the teachers needed to know, and that her school was now ahead of other schools in the area. In her pleasant way, she told the teachers that she would be ‘looking out’ to see that they were changing the way they taught. This made the teachers feel even more overwhelmed, and increasingly nervous.

The main topic of discussion among the staff over the next week was Curriculum 2005. Some teachers began complaining that it was ‘unfair’ for Ms Zondi to expect them to change. ‘I've been teaching for more than ten years, and the methods I've been using are fine. Very few learners ever fail. Why must I change?’ said one. ‘What nonsense this new curriculum is!’ said another. ‘How am I expected to try out all these fancy ideas and still get the Std 5s ready for high school?’ ‘The department and Ms Zondi should try this group work themselves and see what a waste of time it is,’ complained a third. Yet another teacher added: ‘I have tried using different assessment methods before. But my learners don't take these methods seriously because they say the marking is biased ... they say it's just my opinion.’

By the end of the week, the attitude among the majority of teachers towards Curriculum 2005 had turned very negative. Teachers were talking more and more about how OBE had ‘failed elsewhere’, about how the department was ‘out of touch with reality’, and about how Ms Zondi – whom they used to like – was actually lazy and authoritarian. Some teachers were suggesting that OBE was simply a way of getting rid of teachers!

However, there were a few teachers who were trying to make some of the changes. But they were struggling. They found they didn't have enough books for learners to do their own research, that learners often don't take group work seriously, and that school periods were simply too short for learner-centred activities. They were also angry at Ms Zondi because she was always ‘too busy’ when they asked her for assistance. Still, after a couple of months, some of the wording in the school's curriculum and even in teachers' work-plans did reflect OBE language. So, for instance, teachers said they taught the ‘learning area’ called ‘Communication’, but what they did in their classrooms still closely resembled what they had done for years when they had taught the subject ‘English’.

Ms Zondi was happy ... until she did her surprise ‘inspection’. She found that very little had changed, although many teachers talked positively about the ‘new

methods' when they were talking to her. Feeling quite angry that 'all her efforts' had simply been ignored by 'ungrateful teachers', she called a staff meeting. Only half the staff attended, most of whom said they agreed with the new methods and were trying to implement them. They said it was the other teachers – 'those who never attended meetings' – who were the cause of the problem.

## Analysing the school's approach to change

Before we can begin making suggestions about what we think went wrong, we need to *understand why* Ms Zondi (and the teachers) thought and behaved the way they did. A good place to start is to examine their underlying beliefs, or the 'mental models' (to use Senge's language) that they had about their school and about how change should happen in the school.

### *Ms Zondi's approach to change*

- 1 She heard about the new curriculum and wanted the teachers in her school to know about it.
- 2 She called a one-hour staff meeting (at relatively short notice) and invited an outside expert to tell teachers about the new ideas.
- 3 She was happy with the input, which was both extensive and entertaining.
- 4 She told teachers that she expected them to change their teaching methods.
- 5 She was angry when the teachers did not change.

What were Ms Zondi's *assumptions* about change? She assumed that if teachers *heard about new ideas* from an outside expert, and if she *instructed them to change*, then they would change their teaching practices. She realized that teachers needed to be given time to ask questions and, when they didn't do so during the meeting, she was convinced the new ideas had been understood and accepted by her staff.

Ms Zondi understood change as a simple, linear process: she believed that if she followed the correct steps, change would happen as she planned it. She believed that teachers would, to a large extent, welcome these new methods and want to make the changes in their classrooms. After all, they had all suffered under Bantu Education, so surely all teachers would welcome the ideas of the new, democratic and non-racial government? She didn't anticipate that teachers might resist, or that there would be reasons why they didn't want to – or couldn't – change.

Ms Zondi assumed that change could be introduced in a top-down way: that she could order or mandate it. She didn't allow teachers the time to discuss, understand and ultimately accept that these changes could benefit them. In other words, she did not allow time for teachers to 'own' the changes, nor did she take into account other factors which might make implementation difficult, such as a lack of skills or resources.

**linear:** things follow one another in a straight line of cause and effect

### *The teachers' experience of the change process*

- 1 When they were told about the meeting to introduce changes, most teachers were pleased, but nervous.
- 2 During the meeting, a number of teachers weren't really sure about the ideas being conveyed, but were too nervous to ask questions. While they liked the ideas and reasons for the change, they didn't really understand how they applied to their teaching.
- 3 After the meeting, teachers discussed the changes among themselves, but felt it was unfair of Ms Zondi to expect them to change the ways they taught. Some felt they should give it a try, while others simply refused (and found press clippings which, they said, showed how 'impractical' the new ideas were).
- 4 The teachers who rejected the 'new methods' felt that those who were trying to implement changes were discrediting them and their refusal to change their

teaching. The teachers trying to implement changes felt that they were being undermined by these teachers, by the lack of support from Ms Zondi, and by the lack of resources.

- 5 The school continued much as it always had. Some teachers tried half-heartedly to implement new ideas, but became increasingly disillusioned, while the majority of teachers simply taught as they always had. However, when they spoke to Ms Zondi, they used the new OBE terminology to describe their teaching.

## Thuthuka teachers discuss the experience of Advanced Primary

*'Hmnn ... this sounds like my experience at Thuthuka!' says The Rake, smiling broadly. 'I can sympathize with Ms Zondi!'*

*'Ja, you would!' replies Nomusa, with an equally broad smile. 'I sympathize with the teachers ... particularly those teachers who tried to change, but got support from no one! But joking aside, I think you'd agree with me that we would no longer make the mistakes Advanced Primary made, now that we know something about change ...'*

*'Absolutely,' says The Rake. 'Going back to my old point ... Ms Zondi's problem was that she didn't think holistically. She didn't take into account that she needed to think of all the different things that might get in the way of change actually happening ... like teachers' fears and attitudes, like a lack of resources, a lack of skills and a lack of understanding on the part of teachers, like inappropriate timetabling ...'*

*'Yes, we know from that reading by Hopkins that change requires work on both structures and cultures,' says Sindi. 'But there are other issues that I found interesting – and so familiar. First, the teachers never really expressed their grievances to Ms Zondi. They actually lied to her ... probably because they didn't want to offend her! And she never really set out to discover the real feelings of the teachers. Also, linked to this, was the complete lack of any structures through which teachers could participate in decision-making. This ultimately led to tensions among teachers and all sorts of misunderstandings about the 'new methods'. In fact, by the end of the case study, teachers had rejected even the ideas which they had liked initially!'*

*The Rake reminds the group of the Senge article. 'You remember that he talks about many of these problems there. He says, for instance, that change can only be sustained if strong teams are built, if teachers are motivated and enabled to perform competently (they have personal mastery), and if we all stop thinking in our old, linear models and begin seeing factors at school as interrelated.'*

*The discussion also reminds Sipho of a diagram in the book by McLagan and Nel (see page 23 of your Reader). 'Although this deals with the "big" change from authoritarian to participatory organizations that we spoke of earlier, I think it does provide us with some ideas,' he says.*

*'For instance, the writers talk of two "transition tensions" being "embedded and habitual practices and traditions" and "resistance to change". I think this goes some way towards explaining why staff did not implement change. They also talk about "using the language of participation to describe authoritarian practices" – which seems much like what the staff were doing when talking to Ms Zondi!' says Sipho.*

There is a lot more we can say – and hopefully that you are saying! – about this case study and its 'lessons' for implementing change. Probably the most important lesson is that change is complex: it has many dimensions and needs to be approached thoughtfully. Ms Zondi's experience demonstrates strongly that there is a difference between *telling people about* change and *creating a process in which change actually begins occurring*.



You will notice that we often refer back to various articles – like those by Hopkins and Senge. This should alert you to two things:

- first, these are obviously regarded as key readings within this module and need to be well understood;
- second, we understand learning to be cumulative – we use knowledge from previous articles (Hopkins, or Christie and Potterton, for instance) to understand new concepts and ideas.

# The complexity of change processes

## 4.2

### What can we learn from research about change?

Clearly, the way Ms Zondi approached changing her school's curriculum was not successful. Michael Fullan, a Canadian school organization researcher, has written about educational change for many years. He believes that one of the reasons why so many change projects in schools fail is that people have a *faulty way of looking at change*.

Most people think – like Ms Zondi – that change happens in a linear fashion, with one step following logically from another. Ms Zondi thought that if she introduced the teachers to the new curriculum, they would be willing to try out new methods of teaching and assessment. She assumed that the main reason why teachers didn't use a greater variety of teaching strategies or implement *Curriculum 2005* was that they *lacked information* about the new curriculum. This kind of thinking, in which it is assumed that there is a direct relationship between a *cause* (new information about *Curriculum 2005*) and an *effect* (changed teaching practice), is called *linear* (or *mechanistic*) *thinking*. It can be represented like this:

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New information about *Curriculum 2005*  changed teaching practices

**Figure 4.1** A representation of the fairly simple, mechanistic thinking about change demonstrated by Ms Zondi

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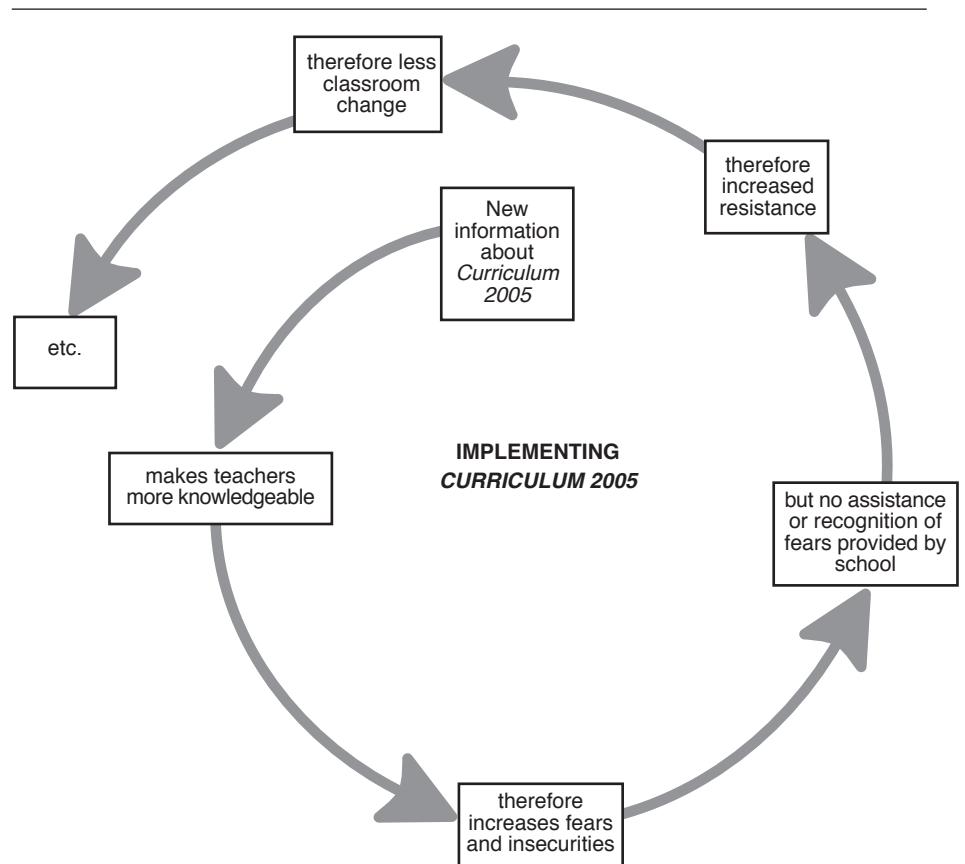
But the experience at Advanced Primary suggests that this assumption was wrong: teachers didn't change as a result of hearing new information. In fact, the impracticality of linear thinking is not a new discovery. You may remember the case studies in Section Three where we found that changed structure doesn't *cause* changed culture. Instead, we found a far more complex and dialectical relationship between the two. The same kind of relationship is also in play here.

We could argue that giving out the new curriculum information in a context where teachers are insecure about their own abilities and their own future as teachers, may well *retard* change. The teachers still had too little information to understand and implement new methods of teaching with any confidence. However, they *did* have enough information to realize that:

- they required new *training* and *resources* to implement many of the practical-sounding ideas;
- the new curriculum was a big change, and it might have consequences for their careers;
- *Curriculum 2005* promised to increase their workload, at least in the beginning.

As a consequence, their *fear* of the new system probably increased, leading to increased resistance. This fear and resistance is already expressed in statements like 'our old methods worked perfectly well', or 'this hasn't worked anywhere', or 'Ms Zondi is being unreasonable'. All these variables meant that change couldn't happen as Ms Zondi intended it to.

We can represent a more *complex* kind of thinking about this issue – which possibly explains how information/knowledge actually increased teacher resistance – in the following way:



**Figure 4.2** A more complex representation of the relationships between different parts of a change process

## Which kinds of change strategies work?

As Fullan stresses, the change process is a complex one. However, Fullan (and other researchers) have begun to identify:

- kinds of thinking about change, and strategies for implementing change, that ***definitely don't work*** (thus we try and avoid these);
- other kinds of thinking and strategies that have a ***much greater possibility of bringing about real change*** (as opposed to what Hopkins calls the 'appearance of change').

Before we learn more about this, do a quick check on ***your thinking*** about change. To do so, read through this list of statements about change, and tick one of the columns to indicate whether you agree or disagree with the particular statement.

**Table 4.1** Fullan's list of 'common-sense' ideas about change

Statements about change	Agree	Disagree
• Resistance is inevitable, because people resist change		
• Every school is unique		
• The more things change, the more they stay the same		
• Schools are essentially conservative institutions, harder to change than other organizations		
• You just have to live reform one day at a time		
• You need a mission, objectives, and a series of tasks laid out well in advance		
• You can never please everyone, so just push ahead with reforms		
• Full participation of everyone involved in a change is essential		
• Keep it simple: go for small, easy changes rather than big, demanding ones		

**ACTIVITY 18: FULLAN AND MILES – GETTING SCHOOL REFORM RIGHT**

Turn to Part 6 of your audiotape (side 2; *after* section on learning organizations). Listen to Nel and Mahanjana talk about the challenges of change, and some of the skills and strategies we require to be successful change agents. Note important points in your workbook. Now read 'Getting school reform right', by Michael Fullan and Mathew Miles (Readings, Section Three, 'Schools: The processes and constraints of change'). In Part 1 of this reading, the authors suggest that there are seven key reasons why school reforms fail. In Part 2, they offer a number of 'lessons' for successful change. You will notice that many of these 'lessons' are direct responses to the reasons the authors give for failures in change processes.

As you read, prepare to do the activities below. But notice that the writers emphasize the importance of making links between the different parts of an argument in order to understand the issue under discussion. When you read, take this advice seriously: make the links! And do so – critically – by trying to apply their ideas to change processes in South Africa, and to the ideas offered by Nel and Mahanjana.

- a** Draw up a table with two columns in your workbook. Head the first column WHY REFORMS FAIL and the second column LESSONS FOR SUCCESS. In your own words, and with your own examples, summarize the advice Fullan and Miles, and Nel and Mahanjana offer us about change under these headings.
- b** In the section headed *Individualism and collectivism must have equal power* (Part 2, page 80), Fullan states that 'Collaboration is celebrated as automatically good. Participatory site-based management is (seen as) the answer. Mentoring and peer coaching are a must. Well, yes and no ...' What reservations about participation does Fullan express? Does Nel have similar reservations and advice about participation? What lessons do these hold for your actions?
- c** Ms Zondi still wants the teachers in her school to grapple with the requirements of *Curriculum 2005*. Write down some suggestions of how she might go about it differently, drawing on the knowledge that you have learned from Fullan and Miles, as well as Nel and Mahanjana, to do so.



This is a long but important activity. We suggest you spend about 2½ hours on it. Make sure you link these new ideas to work you have done so far, as well as to your *own* school experiences.

**reservations:** private doubt or concern about aspects of the thing being considered



- d** Reasses your answers on Table 4.1. Does your thinking differ from that of Fullan and Miles, and Nel and Mahanjana? Who is correct?

## Re-evaluating Advanced Primary's change process

This is how Thulani used Fullan and Miles to analyse the change process at Advanced Primary School. Keep in mind that Thulani's suggestions may not necessarily be wise and correct! So read through them critically, compare them with your own, and then make a judgement about whether he or you have understood Fullan's and Miles' ideas better.

### A memo to Advanced Primary

by Thulani Shabalala

#### Advice to management

Ms Zondi, there is little research evidence to suggest that authorities can order ('mandate') people to change. This is particularly so in education, where change processes are complex: many linked factors either assist or constrain change. But second, fear of change plays a great role in increasing people's resistance. Thus, I'd strongly suggest that you involve teachers in ongoing discussions about the change. In these discussions, you should:

- deal with teacher fears on an ongoing basis;
- thoroughly discuss why the change is necessary, and allow staff to raise their concerns about difficulties with implementation;
- recognize that change requires the use of resources and, within realistic limits, try together to find ways of overcoming these limitations.

The important point is to realize that change is a journey: it takes time, but it also requires that all staff are on the bus! If this is done, teachers will feel that they own the process of change, so it will have a much greater chance of success.

Fullan and Miles, experts on implementing educational change, argue that change processes need to be managed. You cannot just tell staff about the change and then sit back and hope it happens! This management function must include, I think:

- inspiring and leading your team (which includes developing - in the processes of change - a vision towards which your school can move, as well as the benefits change holds for all stakeholders);
- taking difficult decisions when necessary (in other words, as principal, you need to make decisions and use the authority you have to ensure that change happens!);
- creating the processes and atmosphere at Advanced Primary which make the problems you face 'your friends'; this may sound strange, but it means that you must see change as a learning process and not be afraid to take risks, as long as you reflect on the consequences;
- ensuring that both you and your staff don't settle for simple solutions - for symbols rather than substance; instead, constantly think systemically - think about the relationships between all the parts of a school, and ask how they are impacting on the change process.

#### Advice to staff

As a teacher, I understand your fears and anger at the change that Ms Zondi implemented. I also think that many of your criticisms of the

“  
... deal with teacher  
fears of change on an  
ongoing basis ...  
”

process were legitimate. For instance, we do need to understand how to change our teaching rather than simply know what the new ideas are. And the change does have resource and timetabling implications.

But equally, as teachers, we need to be more active in deciding on the direction school change should take. It is no good pretending we are changing and then talking behind management's back: we now have a right to be involved in decision-making. I think this fear at confronting authority and taking responsibility for decisions is a particular version of what Fullan and Miles call 'faulty maps', and Senge calls 'problematic mental models': we are still behaving as if we have no right to participate in making change decisions. We must change this mindset! We need to begin to see ourselves as leaders too!

So, the first important point to realize is that successful change can only occur with teachers' participation: it can't be mandated. But second, we need to recognize that principals have the right and duty to take decisions – even if some of us disagree, as long as they have consulted us properly. Otherwise this process of change will simply die. Third, we need to be patient – change takes time. What we need to do is reflect constantly on how well we are doing in this journey, rather than expect immediate miracles or simply give up. Finally, we need to work with all stakeholders – learners, parents, management, other teachers – and on all parts of the organization. We need to understand the school as a system where, if one part doesn't function well, other parts of the change process will die. For instance, in your case, some teachers rejected the change and it never happened, and timetabling wasn't altered so teaching in a new way was prejudiced. Change is complex!



Note again how Thulani uses the theory developed by Fullan to understand why change didn't occur at Advanced Primary. He constantly applies it to the problem he is dealing with.

## External and internal factors in processes of change

### **External change factors**

Advanced Primary School was trying to deal with change that was coming from outside the school. The national Department of Education had issued a policy about the new curriculum and Ms Zondi was responding to an **external** pressure for change. External policy is often difficult to implement, for a number of reasons:

- Macro (countrywide) policies can't take the **particular contexts** of different schools into account. For example, the Schools Act requires that all schools must establish governing bodies, and that parents have the greatest representation. In secondary schools, learners also need to be represented. Here is what the principal of a school near Isandlwana, KwaZulu-Natal, said:

*We are experiencing great difficulty in setting up this governing body. Parents refuse to have students sitting with them. They say that students do not have the authority or the understanding to make decisions.*

Other schools might not experience the same problems. For instance, it seems that these problems could emerge because of deep, traditional beliefs about respect for elders, a problem not likely to be encountered in urban schools in Cape Town or Soweto.

- A second problem with externally-driven change is that it is often initiated to meet some rather broad and often abstract-sounding policy. So, even though the change may be very important, the **reasons why it needs to be implemented** are not always clear to teachers in schools. As a consequence, it is far more likely to be rejected, or only implemented at an **appearance** level rather than a **real** level. Change agents – including principals who may themselves not be completely convinced of the need to change – will have to work a great deal harder to sell the





Think of the way in which outcomes-based education and *Curriculum 2005* have been implemented in South Africa. Do these points make sense in our context?

need for change to teachers. It is more difficult to get local teachers to 'own' externally-driven change.

- Linked to these points is the fact that sometimes the initiators of macro changes – like national departments of education – are more concerned with the **symbols** rather than the **substance** of change. While, ideally, they may want policies to work well, in practice they would not be unhappy if they only **seemed** to be working well in schools. In other words, some people argue, governments which initiate curriculum changes (like OBE, for example) want to be **seen** to be doing something good ... regardless of whether it is actually happening in practice. This may lead to a great deal of money and time being spent on **publicizing** the change process, rather than on the difficult internal **implementation** processes in schools.

### **Internal change factors**

In other situations, schools may decide to change certain aspects because they are facing **internal** problems. For example, a primary school may find that many of its learners are struggling to read, and might want to introduce a different kind of reading programme for learners. Or an urban high school may be experiencing problems because some learners are bringing knives and guns to school which is making teaching (and life generally) more difficult (and unpleasant) for teachers and the other learners. In both cases, the local school community has a **real interest** in change – in other words, they will find it relatively easy to **identify with** a project aimed at dealing with these problems. It is also more likely that teachers will focus on real rather than symbolic changes, because the latter won't make life or teaching any easier for them!

But as Fullan and Miles suggest, well-functioning systems require a balance of internal and external influences. While it is important for schools to work on internal development continuously, they should also realize that they are part of a wider educational movement. They need to learn from ideas outside their own school if they want to contribute to the development of a learning **society**.

This issue emerges again later (in a slightly different form) when we discuss different strategies for school change. Within school change literature (and practice) there is fierce debate about whether external facilitators should play a role in internal school change processes and, if so, what kind of role they should play. While external facilitators do bring new ideas and a sense of authority into local change processes, their lack of knowledge of local contexts may lead to the suggestion of inappropriate actions or the alienation of local stakeholders.



If you have the video that accompanies this module, fast forward to counter number 4 and watch the section titled 'The school-as-organization approach'. Notice the way in which external facilitators are used in these school development approaches.

## **Summing up: thinking about possible barriers to change**

Before we move to the next sub-section – in which we explore three key problems in change – we'd like you to read this summary of an article on change by Per Dalin. Dalin is an important Scandinavian researcher in the area of school change. In his book called *Limits to Educational Change (1978)*, he reports on his analysis of a number of school change processes in different countries. He argues that four broad categories of **barriers to change** were noticeable in all the countries studied. Here is a summary of his list (with our examples).

## Barriers to change

### 1 Value barriers

Value barriers exist because individuals and groups have different ways of seeing things. This means that two people can look at the same innovation in a completely different light. One person will think it is a good idea, and another person will think it is the wrong way to go. All changes – and responses to changes – come from *an underlying value perspective*. Think about the introduction of Model C schools in South Africa in the early 1990s. Some people welcomed the change, others did not. They were seeing it from their own understanding of what was important.

### 2 Power barriers

Significant innovations usually involve a redistribution of resources and changes of authority structures in the system. There is often resistance when power changes hands. This question is also related to who has the power to make the decisions about change. Often we want to resist change if we are told that we *must* change by someone who has more power than we do.

### 3 Practical barriers

One of the biggest problems with change is to bridge the gap between the *idea* or *plan* and the *implementation* of that plan in the school or the classroom. There are a number of key factors that are important to help the implementation of change. Per Dalin lists five main factors:

- **Time:** On a macro level, this means allowing many years for the innovation to happen. It took Britain 25 years to usher in the large-scale reform of introducing comprehensive schools. While change may not always take this long, we still need to allow time for it. The South African Ministry of Education has said that the phasing in of a new curriculum will take up to ten years (if not longer). On a micro level, teachers in schools need time to change also. If they need to implement a new curriculum, they need time to attend staff development courses, time and space to try out new teaching methods, and time to discuss issues with their colleagues. Too often, schools expect teachers to try new things on top of a heavy workload.
- **Knowledge:** Schools need to have knowledge about the *innovation* they are trying to adopt, as well as about *how change happens*. For example, teachers need to know *why* they should change their teaching methods, as well as *how* they should do so.
- **Organizational development:** For implementation to be successful, schools need to develop their *capacity to manage* the process. There must be support for teachers, both in terms of resources and skills. When the roles in an organization change, as often happens in a change process, this can create interpersonal conflicts.
- **Specific objectives:** If innovation is going to work, everyone involved needs to know what is happening and why. One of the problems with implementing external policies like the new curriculum, or introducing representative governing bodies, is that schools simply do not have the information they need, or the information they do have is too vague.
- **Resources:** Change requires resources. It is difficult for teachers to change their teaching styles if there is not enough learning material available to support this.

### 4 Psychological barriers

Experience shows that people find it difficult to change. We tend to continue doing things that we are familiar with. Familiarity provides security, and it is



You may notice that many of Dalin's ideas are similar to those you have learnt about earlier, although he organizes them differently. What is the implication of this repetition for you, as the learner?

- First, it suggests that different researchers in different parts of the world have noticed similar features in change processes. This should give you confidence that these features would probably also occur in any change project you were to implement.
- Second, don't simply write all these ideas down *again*. Rather ask: 'What *new* ways of thinking does Dalin add to my understanding of change?' Then write down only those new understandings, in your own words.

difficult to enter into the unknown. To be willing to change, we need to believe that the change is worthwhile. We need to see some meaning and advantage for ourselves in the change. This does not necessarily mean we get money for it! A change could be worthwhile, for instance, if it improves our working conditions, if it will lessen our workload, if it reduces conflict, or if it makes our teaching more interesting.

In the next sub-section we focus on three issues that both Fullan and Miles, and Dalin, have identified as critical to successful change:

- The need to think about and approach change *systemically*.
- The need to take into account the *personal fears* that are evoked by change.
- The need for *good leadership* to manage the process of change.



A particularly good but different view of school change in South Africa is Davidoff and Lazarus. 1997. *The Learning School*. Cape Town: Juta. We have used an excerpt from this book as a reading in this section.

You may legitimately ask 'But why these three issues? There are so many other issues.' And this would be a good question. Many other books may well focus on different issues and treat them differently. As we suggested earlier, this is one particular story – our story – about school organization and change. So, take our ideas seriously, but also understand that they must be critically assessed.

But here are some justifications for our curriculum choice. We focus on:

- The *need to think about and approach change systemically or holistically*. So much recent literature on organizational change (and on learning organizations) – as well as our experience of change in the institutions in which we work – emphasizes the interconnectedness of things. It seems that successful change agents – and we hope you will be at least apprentice change agents by the end of this module – have to be able to think systemically.
- The *need to take into account the personal fears that are evoked by change*. First, our own experiences, as well as studies from elsewhere in the world, have made it clear that fear is a common reason why change projects fail. But second, if you understand organizations to be essentially human institutions, as we do, then dealing with basic human emotions must be a central task of change agents.
- The *need for good leadership to manage the process of change*. So often in South Africa, change is either imposed by an authoritarian leader or else, in so-called 'democratic' structures, it is not managed at all. In both extremes, change fails. So, if we are committed to the success of change, we need to develop a leadership which balances wide participation with firm decision-making.

# Approaching change systemically

## 4.3

### Introduction

You may have noticed that The Rake – Thuthuka’s deputy principal – is a fervent disciple of systemic thinking (he calls it holistic thinking). In fact, he has become the butt of many good-natured jokes at Thuthuka because of this. However, since reading the article on learning organizations by Peter Senge, and attending a workshop he ran in Durban, the Thuthuka study group have become fans too. But, as Nomusa complains: ‘It sounds so sensible, but it’s so difficult to think like that ... and to analyse Thuthuka in that way.’

Nomusa is right. It is difficult to break old habits, and thinking in a particular way – whether systemic or non-systemic – is a *habit*. The first step is knowing *about* new ideas and thinking that they make sense. But the second, more difficult step is to know *how to use* these new ideas. We will introduce you to a few more ideas about systemic or holistic thinking, and will *begin* giving you practice in using these ideas. However, to become a good systemic thinker, you need to *practise and read*, and *practise and read* ... until this kind of thinking becomes a *habit*.

### Thinking about Thuthuka’s discipline problem

Let’s begin with a problem. You may remember various discussions among Thuthuka teachers about their difficulties with late-comers (and discipline more generally). Well, since The Rake is part of this study group – and is in charge of discipline – he thought he’d ask the group for some assistance in dealing with this problem. You may remember that the initial response from Thuthuka teachers was a flurry of comments like:

- *‘It is these hooligan learners we have to deal with who make some of us lose hope and give up’;*
- *‘Lack of discipline is the cause of the destruction of the culture of learning and teaching ... Learners should be learners, and unless we emphasize and enforce respect, we may as well forget it’;*
- *‘Abolishing corporal punishment ... was a recipe for disaster.’*

We were also told that teachers did not help to get learners inside on time as they thought this was The Rake’s job. In fact, many teachers also wandered into school and class late.

What’s wrong with staff suggestions about how to change this situation? As The Rake said earlier, the staff are treating the school’s problems *in parts* rather than trying to get a ‘whole’ picture of them. This lack of systemic thinking leads to change suggestions being limited to *obvious but simplistic* suggestions, like learner discipline. The staff were thinking in a linear, cause-and-effect fashion: ‘If we increase the severity of our discipline, the *effect* will be better behaviour from learners.’ They reduced the situation to a simple problem that had a simple solution, rather than asking questions like:

- *Why* are students undisciplined?
- What impact does the way the school is managed have on the poor discipline?
- Does teacher behaviour affect learner behaviour? How? Why?
- What impact does the family background of learners have on discipline?
- Is it possible that the caning that occurs actually contributes to – in other words, partly *causes* – the discipline problem?

“  
... to become a good systemic thinker, you need to practise and read, and practise and read ...  
”

Okay. So we have possibly identified the *problem* with the way in which Thuthuka teachers think about their disciplinary problems. But where can we go to get *new* ideas – ideas about how we can begin *thinking* about these problems in more insightful ways?

## Relating systems thinking and Hopkins' link between structure and culture

You may remember that Fullan and Miles had this to say about systemic thinking:

*What does it mean to work systemically? There are two aspects:*

- *reform must focus on the **development and interrelationships of all the main components of the system simultaneously** – curriculum, teaching and teacher development, community, student support systems, and so on;*
- *reform must focus not just on structure, policy, and regulations, but on **deeper issues of the culture of the system.***

So, systems thinking is about asking *why* questions ... *again and again* ... rather than simply assuming a *one-cause, one-solution* answer to problems. By asking *why* in this way:

- we have a means of finding out how many *different* factors contribute to problems;
- we have more chance of finding out which of these many 'causes' are more important than others.



At this point, we suggest you re-read the excerpt by Hopkins et al. – titled 'Culture and structure in school improvement' (Readings, Section Three). It is an interesting and important reading. You might also want to re-read the two case studies we analysed on pages 42–45 of this Learning Guide, and re-listen to the discussions about the difficulties of changing school cultures in Part 3 of your audiotape. Would you change your analysis of these case studies now that you know so much more?

We can then begin changing the situation by making a *number of changes simultaneously*, but in a more *targeted* way.

Fullan and Miles also point to the need to focus on the 'deeper issues of the *culture of the system*', not just on the obvious and visible parts, like structures. They believe there are two main reasons why educational change fails. First, problems are complex and hard to handle. We have looked at this issue, and suggested that a systemic way of thinking is a useful strategy for understanding complex problems. Second, they argue, strategies used often don't focus on the things that will really make a difference. They assert that strategies which focus only on changing the structure of the school are likely to fail because the *real* issue is changing the culture.

This reminds us again of the importance of exploring both structure and culture, and understanding the interrelationship between the two, when we attempt to change organizations. It certainly provides a clue about Thuthuka's problems: perhaps the *culture* of late-coming and demoralization is so strong at Thuthuka that learners simply don't realize that their behaviour is problematic. In other words, this careless behaviour is the 'norm' – among teachers and learners – that has been learnt by all members of Thuthuka. Is this possible? And if it is, then will harsher discipline on its own, and directed only at learners, have the desired effect?

## The five whys: a strategy for systems thinking

Many of Peter Senge's 'five disciplines' have been adapted and used as tools for analysing organizations and organizational dynamics in a book called *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*. The following excerpt, from an article in the book by Rick Ross called 'The five whys', is a demonstration of one such thinking tool. It is a fictitious story about a problem in a factory, but it demonstrates the kind of faulty thinking we often bring to bear on solving school problems. In telling this story, Ross demonstrates an alternative and more systemic way in which we can tackle common problems.

## The five whys

### A story

It's mid-afternoon, an hour before the shift changes at a manufacturing plant, and I'm the foreman. I'm walking through the plant, giving a tour to a friend who happens to be a systems thinker. Suddenly, I see a pool of oil on the floor so I grab the nearest worker and tell him: 'Hey! There's oil on the floor! For Pete's sake, somebody could slip in that! Clean it up!' When I'm finished, my systems thinking friend breaks in with a quiet question: 'Why is there oil on the floor?'

'Yeah,' I repeat to the worker, 'how'd the oil get on the floor?' The worker replies, 'Well, the gabungie's leaking.' All of us automatically look up. Sure enough, there's a visible leak up there in the gabungie. 'Oh, okay,' I sigh. 'Well, clean up the oil and get the gabungie fixed right away.'

My friend pulls me aside and murmurs, 'But why is the gabungie broken?' I say, 'Yeah, well, the ga-' and turn to the worker: 'Why is the gabungie broken?' 'The gaskets are defective,' is the reply.

'Oh well, then, look,' I say. 'Here. Clean the oil up, fix the gabungie, and, uh, do something about the gaskets!'

My friend adds: 'And why are the gaskets defective?' 'Yeah,' I say. 'Just out of curiosity, how come we got defective gaskets in the gabungie?' The worker replies, 'Well, we were told that the buying department got a good deal on those gaskets.' I can see my friend start to open his mouth, but this time I get there first. 'Why did the buying department get such a great deal?' I ask the worker. 'How should I know?' he replies, wandering off to find a mop and bucket.

My friend and I go back to my office and make some phone calls. It turns out that we have a two-year-old policy in the company that encourages purchasing at the lowest price. That's the reason for the defective gasket - of which there is a five-year supply - along with the leaking gabungie and the pool of oil. In addition, this policy is probably causing other problems throughout the organization, not closely related in time or space to the root 'cause'.

### A problem-solving strategy

**Step 1 - The first why:** Pick the symptom where you wish to start; the thread which you hope you can pull on to unravel the knot. Ask the first why of the group: 'Why is such-and-such taking place?' You will probably end up with three or four answers. Put them all on the wall, with plenty of room around them.

**Steps 2, 3, 4, 5 - The successive whys:** Repeat the process for every statement on the wall, asking 'why' about each one. Post each answer near its 'parent'. Follow up all the answers that seem likely. You will probably find them converging; a dozen separate symptoms may be traceable back to two or three systemic sources.

As you trace the 'whys' back to their root causes, you will find yourself tangling with issues that not only affect the gabungie (whatever that may be in your school!), but the entire organization. The policy to get the lowest price on supplies might have been caused by a battle in the finance office. It might result from a purchasing strategy, or from under-investment in maintenance. The problem is not that the original policy was 'wrongheaded', but that its long-term and far-flung effects remained unseen.

### Avoiding the 'fixation on events'

To be effective, your answers to the five whys should steer away from blaming individuals. For example, in answer to the question: 'Why is there oil on the floor?', someone may say: 'Because the maintenance crew didn't clean it up.' Don't leave it there. Ask: 'Why didn't they clean it up?' ('Because their supervisor didn't tell them to.') 'Why didn't he do that?' ('Because the crew didn't tell him about it.') 'Why



This excerpt from Rick Ross' article is taken from Peter Senge et al. 1994. *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*. Published by Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 36 John Street, London WC1N 2AT. Tel: 0171 430 0224; fax: 0171 404 8311.





This book – Senge et al. 1994. *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook* – has interesting descriptions of a large range of organizations – from hospitals to companies, and from local authorities to schools – that have used Senge’s ideas to change themselves into learning organizations. It also includes a number of exercises that institutions can use to develop their understanding of change and of learning organizations. It is a very useful ‘practical’ companion to *The Fifth Discipline*.



Spend about 1 hour on this activity. We suggest you do it collaboratively with a few of your fellow students.

didn’t they tell him?’ (‘Because he didn’t ask.’) etc., etc.

Blaming individual people leaves you with no option except to punish them; there’s no chance for substantive change. One of the benefits of the five whys exercise is that it trains people to recognize the difference between an *event-oriented explanation* and a *systemic explanation*. The systemic explanations are the ones which, as you trace them back, lead to the reasons why they didn’t clean it up, or he didn’t tell them to, or they didn’t ask. (Maybe, for example, poor training of maintenance people contributed to the oil puddle problem: but even the best-trained, hardest-working custodians in the world could not stop the gasket from leaking.)

To avoid being distracted by event- and blame-related ‘answers’, try this technique: as an answer is recorded, say ‘Okay. Is that the only reason?’

### ACTIVITY 19: USING THE FIVE WHYS APPROACH TO ANALYSE A SCHOOL PROBLEM

- a What is the difference between a ‘systemic explanation’ and an ‘event-oriented explanation’? Think about this in the context of a school: give an example of how an issue would be explained differently, using the two different kinds of explanation.
- b Take a common problem – such as absenteeism, or late-coming, or high failure rates, cheating in tests and exams, or violence in the playground – at a school you know. Write down all the possible causes for that problem. Ask ‘why’ of each. Don’t stop at the obvious reasons: try to think on a deeper level. Also, look out for the connections between the issues. Organize your ideas in the form of a diagram.

## Solving the problem of absenteeism systemically

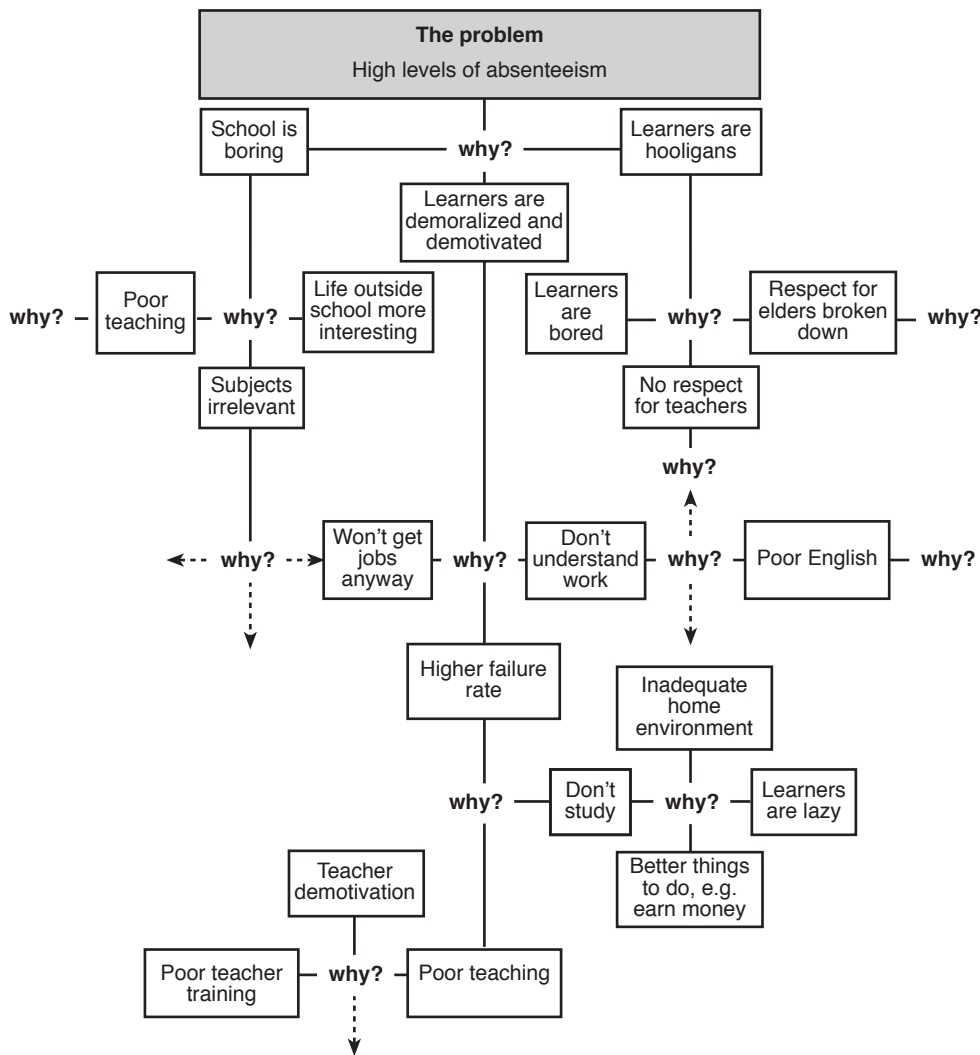
*Thuthuka teachers are excited by this technique. ‘It seems relatively simple, but has the potential to get past our previous, rather simple, explanations of our problems,’ says Siphso. ‘Let’s play around with this technique to get to a more complex understanding of the late-coming and absenteeism problem. At the moment, this rather simple diagram seems to represent our thinking,’ he says, holding up a diagram he has sketched on some newsprint.*

Non-systemic/linear problem solving	
Problem:	High absenteeism and frequent late-coming
Why?	Learners are undisciplined hooligans
Solution:	Tighten up on punishment for late-coming and absenteeism

*A number of the group say that their thinking isn’t quite as simplistic as that. For instance, they did point to the problem of poor teaching too. But they agree that it is largely true.*

*‘But let’s get on with the “five whys” process,’ says Sindi. So they begin with Siphso leading the discussion (he asks the ‘why?’ questions) and summarizing it on the chalkboard. This is what the board looks like after about half an hour’s brainstorm*

...



**Figure 4.3** Systemic thinking demonstrates the complexity and inter-connectedness of different problems

*This discussion continues for quite a while as the teachers try to untangle the knotty problem. It is like a ball of string that is all tangled up and has many loose ends. Now that the teachers have a clearer understanding of the problem, they can see that it needs to be dealt with at a number of different levels and will take time. They decide they should still tighten up on discipline, but that more is required. They decide that:*

- they will identify the learners who are regularly absent and try to find out why they are absent so often;
- it is necessary to improve the largely poor relationships between teachers and learners;
- starting a soccer club at the school will motivate learners, and agree that the teacher who offered to organize the club should ask the matrics to assist him;
- many learners who are absent frequently are also learners who perform badly and often fail. The teachers feel it is necessary to find out why these students are failing.

### ***Making sense of the Thuthuka discussion***

Senge tells this story about a rainstorm in the reading you did earlier:

*A cloud masses, the sky darkens, leaves twist upward, and we know that it will rain. We also know that after the storm, the runoff will feed into groundwater miles away, and the sky will grow clear by tomorrow. And these events are distant in time and space, and yet they are all connected within the same pattern. Each has an influence on the rest, an influence that is usually hidden from view. You can only understand the system of a rainstorm by contemplating the whole, not any individual part of the pattern.*

The 'five whys' brainstorm at Thuthuka made clear just how true Senge's statement is. Many of the possible reasons for absenteeism unearthed in this process were '*events ... distant in time and space, and yet ... connected within the same pattern*'. This observation has important implications for the actions we take in change processes. Initially the solution – increased discipline – was the immediate and obvious action to take. But now the staff realize that the best actions might be seemingly far removed, such as dealing with a lack of learning facilities at home, or working to motivate teachers, or building a better all-round culture at the school by starting extramural activities.

Senge says we need to understand:

- that we are all 'bound by invisible fabrics of interrelated actions' (in other words, that our individual actions have limited power to change things unless conceived of as part of other actions);
- that these actions (and thus change) take 'years to fully play out their effects on each other' (so we need to put in place processes, ***not just to stage events***);
- that, since we are part of that fabric ourselves, 'it's doubly hard to see the whole pattern' (in other words, we often cannot see how we contribute to the problems ... we are simply too close to them).

Senge suggests that this 'shift of mind' – from seeing ourselves as separate from the world, to seeing ourselves as connected to the world; from seeing problems as caused by someone or something 'out there', to seeing how our own actions often create the problems we experience – is a key characteristic of a learning organization. Systemic thinking is thus a crucial characteristic of a ***learning*** school.

# Coping with the fears evoked by change

## 4.4

### Introduction

Many people have argued that Senge's 'shift of mind' isn't possible in a context of fear and uncertainty which is common in times of change. Change, as we have suggested, is difficult and prone to resistance from those affected, even when it is regarded by most people as good and beneficial. If we want to initiate and sustain change successfully, then it seems important to find out why this is so and develop strategies for dealing with it. Otherwise, our aim of changing our school into a learning organization will fail.

Fullan and Miles tell of asking a group of principals to list the problems they faced in a specific change project:

*More than half said 'resistance' – variously known as intransigence, entrenchment, fearfulness, reluctance to buy in, complacency, unwillingness to alter behaviours, and failure to recognize the need for change. These traits were attributed to teachers and other staff members, though not to the principals themselves.*



**intransigence:** stubbornness, unwillingness to co-operate  
**entrenchment:** being firmly established in a particular position  
**complacency:** self-satisfaction, seeing no reason to change

But, they argue, to label these attitudes as 'resistance' diverts our attention away from the real problems of implementation. They say the label places the blame (and thus the responsibility for the solution) on others – those who 'resist', rather than on the implementers of change. The thrust of their argument – which fits with Senge's ideas about understanding change as the consequence of a number of integrated actions – places an emphasis on reducing fears in any change process by having:

- clear and achievable goals;
- inclusive processes;
- the intellectual and other resources to make it possible.

In a sense they are arguing: 'Plan well, and fears and "resistance" will decrease.' In subsections 4.6 and 4.7, we provide a number of strategies for school change that take into account these principles.

### Managing personal fears of change

But this is only half the story, and Fullan and Miles admit this:

*During transitions from a familiar to a new state of affairs, individuals must normally confront the loss of the old and commit themselves to the new, unlearn old beliefs and behaviours and learn new ones, and move from anxiousness and uncertainty to stabilization and coherence. Any significant change involves a period of intense personal and oral learning and problem-solving. People need support for such work, not displays of impatience.*

In other words, Miles and Fullan argue that people are not simply *rational* beings whose fears can be satisfied by a clear and logical argument as to why change is necessary and good. Because we are creatures of habit, any change is experienced as a loss. It is a loss of those routines and procedures that were familiar and, in many ways, gave meaning to our life. Think of the *feelings* that the introduction of OBE has

generated in schools. Most teachers think we need to change the way we teach. **Rationally** then, most teachers support most of the new ideas. But that **understanding** doesn't mean that we don't have fears about it. These fears are evoked primarily by two things:

- the fact that we are uncertain about what is required of us by this change (in other words, by a lack of information, and of concrete models of the new teaching);
- the fact that we are being asked to give up the ways of thinking and implementing education with which we have **become comfortable**, and which have **served us well**. This is so even among those who did not agree with Bantu Education or CNE or rote learning!

In other words, the fear and uneasiness is evoked by the loss of the **familiar** and an absence of any **concrete and visible** alternative. Psychologist Peter Marris explains in the next reading why no matter how unsatisfactory this old meaning might be, or how good the change might be, the most common response to change will be 'resistance'. As a consequence, good change agents must give people the **time** and the **space** in which they can work through their feeling of loss and integrate the changes into their 'meaning systems'.



The Marris reading is complex, so read it carefully and more than once. You should spend about 2 hours on this activity. Try to apply Marris' ideas to your own personal experiences of change. It might also be useful to share these ideas with other students or teachers.

### ACTIVITY 20: MARRIS' IDEAS ABOUT CHANGE

Read the article written by Peter Marris (Readings, Section Three, 'Schools: The processes and constraints of change'). Then answer the following questions in your workbook:

- Explain why Marris believes it is important to encourage conflict during change processes. Do you think he is correct? Can you support your answer with an experience of your own?
- Marris compares the fears evoked by organizational change with the feelings of personal loss. Is this a legitimate comparison? (If you can, you may want to describe the feelings you had when you lost someone close to you, and compare these with feelings you have when you enter into new and strange situations.)
- What lessons does Marris have for those involved in change processes?

## The importance of encouraging conflict in change processes

Marris has important warnings for people interested in implementing change **and** for ordinary teachers involved in change processes. He argues – in contrast to much current thinking – that, first, processes of reform must expect **and even encourage** conflict. This, he says, gives people the time and space to confront the change, react to it, articulate their often confused feelings about it, and work out **their own sense** of it. This is a controversial position but one that we believe is enormously important. We all know that when we experience loss – of a loved one, or simply a loss of the routines which made our life or teaching simpler – our **feelings** of sadness, anger, and emptiness cannot simply be resolved by someone telling us that 'life's like that'. We **know** this is true, but we still **feel** sad and angry.

Marris argues that this is why processes of change – which evoke the same feelings of loss – should allow people involved in that change to express their feelings of anger by encouraging conflict (and not trying to resolve it prematurely). Otherwise, change occurs but participants remain filled with unresolved feelings of loss and anger which, in time, will undermine both the change process and the individual.

Second, change processes must respect different feelings and interpretations of change and work with these rather than impose some 'alien conception' on the process. And, third, says Marris, there must be time and patience so that different

people affected by the change can work through their conflicting interests, but also so that individuals can re-establish a 'continuity' – a consistency – in their lives.

Moreover, Marris makes the seemingly uncontroversial statement that, ultimately, change has to be implemented by those who will *resist* change. But, despite the seeming obviousness of this, we know that change agents – who have already worked through their own internal conflicts about change – do get impatient and:

- try to rush through change *by co-opting a couple of people* to take their change message forward (rather than creating processes through which the majority have time to work through the implications of change *for themselves*);
- overlook or prematurely resolve conflicts in groups. This often means that change is implemented with resentment from certain people, and frequently leads to the appearance rather than the reality of change, or heightened tensions in organizations, or change that simply fizzles out after a while.

## Harnessing community 'fears' to build new organizations

While Marris focuses strongly on *individual fears* and suggests ways of *overcoming* these, Lovemore Mbigi explores how a clash of interests and beliefs between 'modern' reformers and traditionalists can be harnessed to enrich change processes. Mbigi, a business consultant, writes about how traditional African beliefs – which are often regarded as 'resistance' in modern business organizations – can be used to transform businesses in Africa into more efficient and *humane* organizations. In the next reading, Mbigi tells the story of transformation in a company where he was manager, to demonstrate how the seemingly 'irrational' and 'impractical' beliefs and demands of local communities can be used to strengthen organizations.

### ACTIVITY 21: USING COMMUNITY 'FEARS' TO BUILD STRONG AFRICAN ORGANIZATIONS

Turn to Part 7 of your audiotape (side 2; *after* narrator asks you to complete Activity 19). Listen to the excerpt in which Lovemore Mbigi talks about how he has used African ideas and ritual to revitalize organizations he has worked in. When you have completed this, read the article by Mbigi titled 'The Spirit of African Management'. (Readings, Section Two) Then answer the following questions in your workbook:

- Mbigi talks about creating 'psychic communities'. What does he mean by this? How are Mbigi's ideas similar and different from Marris' ideas? And what implications do they have for our ideas about changing schools?
- Mbigi's major argument is that we need to draw on African tradition in order to *energize* people for change, and then synthesize these ideas with Western ideas in order to maximize the impact of organizational change. Can you think of any other 'traditions' that can be drawn on in order to change schools?



Activity 21 develops your understanding of holism a great deal more, and in interesting new ways. Mbigi draws mainly from his experience in a company. Try to link his ideas to schools and, in particular, your own school. Spend about 2 hours on this activity.

*Note:* The audiotape *incorrectly* refers you to Activity 22. It should be Activity 21.

Mbigi also has important advice for those interested in change: don't judge people's actions too soon or too simplistically. Rather harness the energy that drives these actions by:

- acknowledging the fears that exist as legitimate, and addressing them;
- recognizing that 'ownership' of change is not a matter simply of *understanding*, or vision simply a matter of words on paper. Instead, it is a 'deep psychological' matter. Change agents have to create a situation where people *feel* that they own the process and where vision statements become *actions*.

Mbigi's ideas are interesting in that he *doesn't* reject Western organizational ideas but does argue that they are – on their own – deficient. He suggests ways in which we can integrate traditional African ideas and Western ideas to develop a new locally-appropriate form of organizational change. You might notice that many of these ideas – while expressed in terms of African traditional belief – are similar to those raised by Senge and other writers. Later you will read about the 'school-as-community' approach to school change. The ideas expressed by Schofield – who works in Soshanguve near Pretoria – reflect similar sentiments to those of Mbigi.

## 4.5

# Leading and managing change



## Introduction

An interesting dilemma is raised by the need to *manage* fears. Marris (and Fullan and Miles) warn about autocratic leaders rushing change through. Yet highly 'participative' styles of management often ignore the *depth* of fears expressed too. In fact, the lack of direction in many 'participative' processes heightens fears because participants don't know where they are going and thus can't begin to make personal sense of the change. Mbigi is also intriguing. On first reading, it sounds as if the manager takes an enormously directive approach: he decides what will be done. But then he sets in place processes that are extremely participative (although structured), and he *leads* in a manner where *listening* becomes very important and judgements are suspended.

What is becoming increasingly clear is that change towards a more democratic 'learning' organization requires leadership and firm decision-making. So the crucial difference to authoritarian organizations is *not* that leadership must cease. Instead, the *manner* in which people lead must change.

**authoritative:** to possess *acknowledged* authority, or authority that engages people's trust. It is different from *authoritarian*, which refers to a leadership style that does not consult or respect democracy and individual freedom

## Towards democratic and authoritative leadership

For some, 'leadership' and 'management' have become dirty words in a newly democratic South Africa in which 'participation' and 'flat structures' are promoted. Yet the 'Changing management to manage change' report suggests that all teachers need to be leaders and managers. And, as we noticed above, a lack of leadership often results in heightened fears and no change.

The challenge for 'new' organizations is to redefine these two functions as **democratic** functions. We also need to devolve management functions downwards. In other words, we need to create **schools** in which many more people participate in decision-making and, in order to ensure the success of these schools, we need to develop **teacher and learner understandings** of democracy and the **skills** required to manage and lead democratically. Schools, for one, cannot run without strong management skills **at all levels**. Now listen to Christo Nel, who talks about 'new' leadership and management styles, and Lovemore Mbigi, who explains the complexity of a teacher's management function.

What do you think of Mbigi's claim that a teacher's management role is as complex as that of a business manager?

He seems to suggest that the work of teachers has **always** required advanced management skills. These, he says, are of two kinds:

- **people management:** so that teachers can manage learners, organize their classrooms effectively **and** participate in new decision-making structures at schools;
- **knowledge management:** so that teachers can access, select and organize the information they need to teach learners. This, suggests both Nel and Mbigi, will become an increasingly important function for teachers as we move into the **information age**.

Davidoff and Lazarus provide a particularly interesting explanation of leadership and management. They take a strongly humanistic, rather than a technical, approach to these functions. While most management literature suggests that good leadership and management is a matter of implementing efficient rules and procedures, these writers argue that, while it is important to have rules and procedures in schools, good leadership is ultimately an **art**. This is so because it relies on intuition and personal judgement rather than following established procedures. As such, good leaders must explore and develop their own personal dispositions, not simply learn new skills.

This kind of thinking – as you may recognize – fits closely with the kinds of ideas raised by new management writers, like Peter Senge, and is at the heart of building 'learning organizations'. Let's read Davidoff and Lazarus ...

## ACTIVITY 22: THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN CHANGE

Turn to the reading by Davidoff and Lazarus (Readings, Section Three). Then answer the following questions in your workbook:

- a What are the qualities of good leaders and managers? Why does Davidoff call leadership an 'art'?
- b The authors distinguish between leadership and management. What are the main differences they mention? Do you think this distinction is useful?
- c Having a flatter hierarchy in schools means that leadership and management capacity need to be built throughout the whole school. What suggestions do the authors make about building leadership and management capacity?



Rewind your audiotape to Part 1. Listen to the way speakers talk about the managerial and leadership roles of teachers today. Do you perform in this kind of way? Do other teachers in your school? Why or why not?



Read this article carefully. Note down how the writers' views differ from your ideas of leadership and management. Spend about 3 hours on this activity.

## Conclusion: developing a humane leadership style

Clearly, then, leadership and management are crucial both for:

- **change** to occur;
- building **democratic** schools.

But, we **do** need to rethink our old assumptions about leadership and management in at least three ways:

- First, we need to **widen participation in decision-making**. For this, we need to



develop *new structures* as well as a *democratic culture*, and to teach the *skills required to operate democratically* among all stakeholders.

- Second, we need to balance *innovation* (leadership) and *maintenance* (management). While it is important for schools to *change* the way they operate – and constantly be prepared to think of new ways of doing things – it is also important that schools have some stability, that they *maintain and manage processes efficiently*.
- Third, we need to think of management as a human function, an art, rather than as a technical procedure. This requires that we develop the ability to *listen*, to tolerate irrational fears, rather than being set on rushing ahead with ideas that people have not fully internalized.

In the next two sub-sections, we explore a number of case studies of change that illustrate some of these ideas more concretely.

## 4.6

# Changing schools: the school-as-organization approach



These strategies are mostly inspired by the school improvement research you read about in Section Three. You will remember that school improvement researchers were particularly interested in what kinds of internal processes gave schools the capacity to improve. The *strategies* which follow are some of the ways in which they believe these 'improved' schools can be created.

### Introduction: two approaches to school change

There are many different strategies for school change. Some strategies provide very specific steps that a school should follow, while others are more flexible: they provide only general principles. The point in this and the next sub-section is *not* to learn *about* and be able to describe different strategies of school change. Instead, we would like you to:

- read through the case studies in order to *add to your understanding* of change, so that you feel more *able to actually begin changing* – or contributing to change in – your school;
- understand that different strategies pay more attention to certain aspects of school change (and thus have particular strengths), but they also neglect other aspects.

For the purposes of this module, we have chosen to classify the case studies into two broad approaches to school change and improvement. We have called these:

- the *school-as-organization approach* which emphasizes the internal processes of change, in particular, the importance of teaching and learning (sub-section 4.6);
- the *school-as-community approach* which emphasizes the *context* within which the school is located, and how these external factors impact on the school (sub-section 4.7).

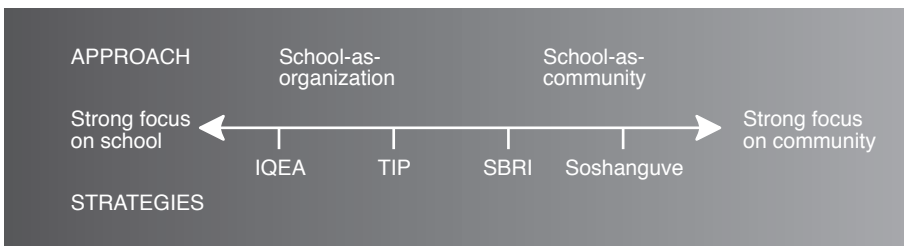
While we have classified school change approaches into two 'families' or 'clusters' of strategies, we need to provide important warnings:

- First, different change agents operating *within* an *approach* will develop school

change *strategies* that aren't identical. While they will share many characteristics, they will also differ in their emphases and the way in which they do things. We will introduce you to two different strategies (case studies) within each approach in order to demonstrate how practitioners adapt the approach to their particular needs.

- Second, while the two approaches (the two 'clusters' of strategies) *do* have different emphases – the school-as-organization approach focuses on the *internal dynamics* of schools, and the school-as-community approach gives more emphasis to external (*out-of-school*) dynamics – they *aren't* mutually exclusive. They 'borrow' from each other quite freely, as you will notice when you read through the different case studies.

In other words, these two clusters of strategies are not necessarily in conflict; their differences lie more in the *emphasis* they place on different factors than in substance. In effect, they probably represent positions on a *continuum* of approaches to school change, ranging from the IQEA's *school development planning* strategy (page 122) through TIP's *organizational development strategy* (page 128) to SBRI's (page 135) and the Soshanguve schools (page 132) different *school-as-community* strategies. One could represent these two approaches in this way – as *emphases* on a *continuum* with the different strategies located at different points on the continuum. The approaches should not be thought of as being in different boxes!



**Figure 4.4** A continuum of approaches to school change

But let's listen to two school change experts explain the similarities and differences ...

### ACTIVITY 23: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SCHOOL-AS-ORGANIZATION AND SCHOOL-AS-COMMUNITY APPROACHES

- Listen to two South African school change practitioners – Mark Potterton and Andrew Schofield – explain what they believe are the key differences between the school-as-organization and school-as-community approaches to school change (Part 8 of your audiotape; directly *after* narrator asks you to complete Activity 22). Note down in your workbook the key differences mentioned, but also the similarities.
- Watch and listen to teachers at schools who are using school-as-organization strategies to improve their schools. If you have a video, fast forward to counter number 4 and the title 'Creating people-centred schools'. Watch the video until the next title – 'The school-as-community approach' – appears at counter number 24. Note down in your workbook *how* school-as-organization facilitators work in schools, *why* they work in this way, and what the strengths and weaknesses of the approach are.



This activity should take no longer than 90 minutes.

*Note:* The audiotape *incorrectly* refers you to Activity 24. It should be Activity 23.

Now let's get practical! Let's read about the different ways in which these approach-

es have been used to change schools. We will begin with an example of an important school-as-organization strategy – school development planning.

## The school-as-organization approach

*School-as-organization change strategies* focus strongly on improving the *internal functioning* of the school. In particular, their interest lies in schools improving the way they perform their key function, namely *teaching and learning*. They believe this will probably best be achieved by getting all stakeholders within schools to think more carefully about *what* they have to achieve and *how* they are (or aren't) achieving it.

## The IQEA and school development planning

### *What do projects using school development planning (SDP) aim to achieve?*

School development planning (SDP) is a strategy for change which has been used in British and American schools for many years. SDP aims to improve the capacity of the school, particularly the quality of its teaching and learning. Hopkins argues that if one cannot understand what creates a school's capacity for quality, then any school change strategy is severely limited in its ability to make real changes. SDP's *strategy* is to bring together key stakeholders *within the school* to identify problem areas, agree where improvements can be made, and then decide how to make change happen with the people and resources they have available.

A good example of this approach is the 'Improving the Quality of Education for All' (IQEA) Project, based at Cambridge University's Institute of Education, but implemented worldwide – including South Africa. IQEA focuses on student achievement *and* the school's ability to cope with change. The Project often uses the metaphor of 'the journey' to describe the work that it does with schools. It 'travels' with schools in a direction which may not always be well signposted, but that is informed by its vision and principles. IQEA believes that the goal of school improvement is the transformation of the *culture* of the school: school members need to change the *way they think about education* in order for change in the school to be sustainable.

### *How do projects using SDP suggest that schools should implement change?*

SDP suggests that school change agents ask four key questions to get the change process going:

#### **1 Where is the school now?**

This process aims to get internal stakeholders to review the school's *strengths, weaknesses, opportunities* and potential *threats*. They often use what is called a SWOT analysis: identifying **S**trengths and **W**eaknesses, but then also identifying new **O**pportunities and potential **T**hreats to those opportunities and the school as a whole.

#### **2 Where would we like our school to be?**

This process aims to get all stakeholders to define a vision for the school. But it must go further than a mission statement or vision document: it must also set *priorities* for development (from among the many different things it could do to realize its vision), and then turn these priorities into *specific targets* (so the school can assess its progress continuously).

#### **3 How will we manage these changes over time?**

The school must decide *how* to get where it wants to be. This means setting in place *structures and processes* that will make it possible to implement changes



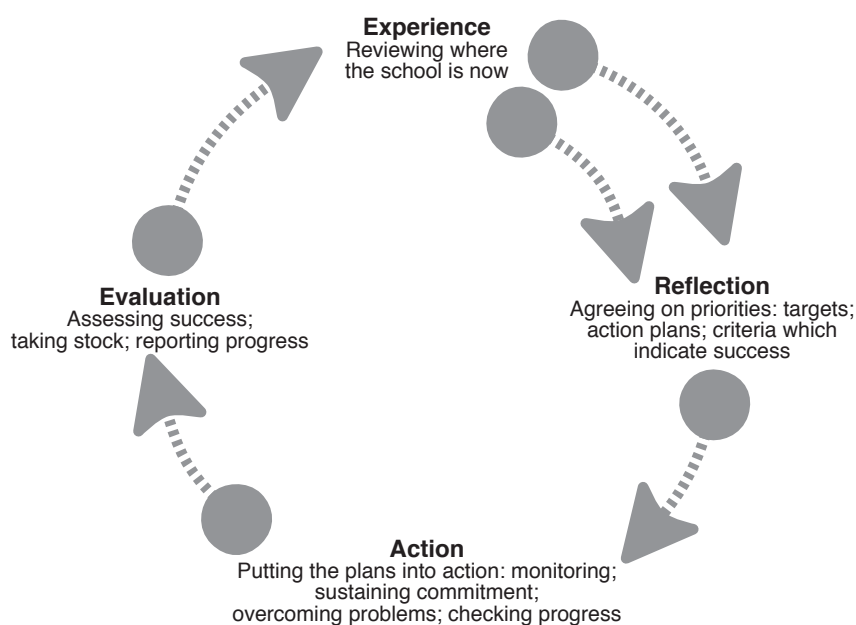
David Hopkins has written widely about SDP and about the IQEA. The information in this summary has been taken from a paper – titled 'Strategies for school development' – which Hopkins delivered to the Second International Conference on School Management at the University of Deusto in Spain in 1996.

and meet the planned targets. This is the vital step if schools want to turn their vision, plans and ideas into reality.

#### 4 How will we know if we've been successful in our changes?

It is important to keep the momentum going and to *check regularly on progress*. The school shouldn't wait until the end to ask questions such as: Have we done what we hoped? If things do not work out as we hoped, will we be able to see why? What will we do differently next time?

SDP is not a simple step-by-step approach to change. Rather, it assumes that change is a complex and dynamic process: it is cyclical. You will have noticed that the practitioners you listened to on audiotape and video spoke of something called the 'planning cycle' or 'action-reflection cycle'. This is strongly associated with SDP but, as you will notice later, is widely used in other school change strategies too.



**Figure 4.5** Planning cycle or 'action-reflection' cycle

You will notice that the cycle begins from **Experience** (step 1 or the first key question in the plan mentioned earlier), and then proceeds through **Reflection** (step 2 of SDP planning), **Action** (step 3), **Evaluation** (step 4) and then returns to the beginning of the cycle again. It is important to note that school development planning does not move through these steps in a linear way. In other words, evaluation occurs continuously (in the action phase too) and not only at the end of each year, for instance.

## The strengths and weaknesses of SDP

According to Hargreaves and Hopkins, SDP offers schools a number of important benefits if well implemented. Among these are:

- It focuses attention on *teaching* and, in particular, the *learning* achievement of learners. (This prevents schools from sliding into simply handling everyday administrative affairs, with little attention being paid to the quality of its most important function – learning.)
- It helps to relieve the stress felt by teachers in change processes because they have greater control over change, rather than being controlled by it. This increas-

es the possibility that teachers will feel a sense of ownership.

- It offers the possibility of improving the quality of staff development. Because of the analysis of strengths and weaknesses, and the clear outline of the plan that needs to be carried out, it is likely that staff development will become a priority in order to build internal capacity.

But Hargreaves and Hopkins also warn that if SDP is badly implemented, it can cause problems. They argue that it:

- should not be 'added on' to the existing work of a school, but should change the fundamental way in which the school manages itself;
- needs careful management;
- must not end with the production of a plan, but must pay attention to the *process* of development;
- must involve as many stakeholders as possible: if key people are not included in planning from the beginning, they could stop the process by not co-operating;
- should limit the number of priorities or goals to be focused on at the same time: if this isn't done, people may become over-burdened and lose heart because they are doing too much.



## Using the SDP approach to begin changing Thuthuka

*Back at Thuthuka, the small group of teachers who started to ask questions about their school has grown to a much larger group. In fact, the presence of the group has been formally recognized as the Interim Development Committee. As yet, they do not have parents and community members 'on board'; but they are working towards this. The principal has not yet attended any of the meetings because he is so busy, but he has expressed his support for the process.*

*The Interim Development Committee decides to invite an outside facilitator to run the school development workshop for them. They feel an outsider will get more respect from other teachers, as well as having more ability to deal with sensitive issues that might arise. They invite Poppie Ndhlovu, a respected local educationist who was a principal for 16 years before joining an educational publishing company.*

*All but four of Thuthuka's teachers gather in the library for the first meeting. There is a general air of expectation, although one group of teachers sitting at a table at the back is clearly not all that keen to be involved in the process. They would much rather be at home. Poppie introduces herself to the staff and says she is glad that they have asked her to accompany them on their journey of school change. She then introduces the four important SDP stages in the form of questions: Where is Thuthuka now?, Where do we want to be?, How will we manage the change?, and How will we know if we are being successful?*

### **Stage 1: Where is Thuthuka now?**

*'A good way to start is to do a brainstorm of Thuthuka's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (a SWOT analysis),' Poppie suggests to the staff. 'This will help us identify what we can build on and what our priorities should be. Let's split into small groups with each group looking at a different aspect of the school: staff and teaching, learners and learning, resources, and links with the community and parents.' 'What about looking at the management team?' a teacher asks, to loud laughter from the rest of the staff. This doesn't please the HoDs who are all sitting at a table together.*

*The Rake intervenes before things turn nasty. 'Every one of us needs to think about the role we can play to make Thuthuka a better school. But your comment highlights the big gap between teachers and management. We need to think about how we can start working together better.' As a consequence, Poppie suggests that a fifth*

group should look at the relationship between management and teachers.

The teachers settle down to the task. They write down all their ideas first, and then analyse these into main points (where there is large agreement in the group) and minor points. The main points are written up on large pieces of newsprint which they stick on the wall when Poppie asks them to close their discussion after about half an hour. Everybody then walks around, reading the points made by the groups. This is what the group who looked at staff and teaching has written down:

- Strengths: well-qualified teachers, good subject knowledge, many teachers studying further, reasonable teaching facilities, relatively good matric results
- Weaknesses: demotivation among teachers and learners, class sizes too large for individual attention, teachers not supporting one another, a discipline problem, no educational direction from management
- Opportunities: much greater teaching involvement by local community, opening up an adult education centre, exciting new learning areas and teaching methods through Curriculum 2005
- Threats: down-sizing, budget cuts, education department not replacing teachers, uncertainty about the new curriculum, best learners going to former Model C schools

Discussion follows in a large plenary group, and new ideas are added to the points on the wall. Poppie notes how certain points appear on a number of charts, which probably means that these are pressing issues which Thuthuka must address in the near future. But she also emphasizes that this first phase only suggests **where** Thuthuka is at this point: it does not explain **why**.

It is 3:15 p.m. and many of the teachers are now anxious to get home. They have already given up an hour of their own time for the workshop. 'One of the best things about this hour,' says one teacher, 'is that I can see that other teachers are facing similar problems and have similar fears to me. That's been really helpful.'

'Yes,' Jabu agrees. 'But there's one problem. We haven't got any people from the community or even any learners to give us their opinions. We really need to know what they want to change at Thuthuka.' The teachers agree that it is important to get other stakeholders on board. The Rake says he will address this issue at the next governing body meeting. Thulani says he will bring it up at the next SRC meeting, where he is the staff representative.

Poppie agrees that the workshop has gone well. 'But it's a real pity that the principal was not here. We must see if he can come the next time we all meet.'

## **Stage 2: Where do we want to be?**

A week later the staff again gathers in the library. The Rake reports that the governing body meeting was cancelled, so he still has not spoken to them. Thulani says that the SRC was sceptical about the process. 'They still think that the teachers are out to get them.'

Poppie says the challenge for the day is to think about Thuthuka's vision. She explains that the process of discussing, debating and jointly agreeing on a vision is at least as important as producing the final written document. The Rake agrees. 'Zizamele went on and on about their mission statement, but I can't see how a piece of paper stuck on the wall of every classroom and put into peoples' pigeonholes will change peoples' attitudes,' he says. Poppie answers, 'Yes, that is true if no action follows the production of the mission statement. But that doesn't mean a vision document isn't useful.'

'The staff need to talk about what we want for Thuthuka. It would be great if we could get learners and parents thinking about their vision as well. Once we have a broad vision, then we can write a mission statement which describes what we stand for and what we are aiming for. It will also help us to be sure that all stakeholders are committed to working to ensure that we achieve our commonly agreed upon goals

(vision). It has to change the culture of the school, and this can only be done through a careful and joint process,' says Poppie.

Poppie divides teachers into groups again and asks that they describe the school they'd like to work in. She urges them to think about relationships and attitudes, as well as physical resources. She also urges them to think of practical things that can be done, as well as ways of giving expression to their vision. Here are some of the ideas that emerge:

- We want to work in a school where teachers work together and where we feel affirmed.
- We want a school where learners want to learn and also feel affirmed.
- We would like to improve our learning resources.
- We want a school that the community is proud of and wants to send their children to.
- The school should be vibrant all day, it shouldn't die at 2 p.m. I want a school with some extramural activities.
- We want the school to be a place where parents are involved.

There is a very fruitful discussion and teachers are excited about the potential which lies in their school. They are glad to be talking about positive things, rather than always focusing on what is wrong with the school. But they realize that they have only begun the process of building a vision. Poppie continues, 'You have some good ideas about where you want to be. You now need to continue to work on your vision but, most importantly, you need to **be more precise** about what these things mean and **how you would achieve** them. You need to prioritize – you can't achieve all of these things! – set targets, and work out criteria for judging the success of your efforts. So, for instance, tell me how you would know whether you have achieved your desire that "learners want to learn and also feel affirmed"?'

Thulani makes a suggestion: 'I'd divide this into stages. I'd first ask **why** they aren't keen on learning. I think one of the reasons is that they struggle to understand English, yet we teach in English. So, my first criterion would be: "To run regular communicative lessons in English conversation with, let's say, matric learners, and have a good turnout." Obviously, in later stages we would add more activities and measurable criteria ...'

Poppie knows that the staff will have to spend a great deal more time on Stage 2 of the process. She suggests that the teachers brainstorm around things that the school might do to give expression to the vision, and then choose one activity – possibly Thulani's suggestion of improving the language skills of matric learners – to take the school planning process forward. She concludes by saying: 'I can't travel the whole way with you, but what I would like to do in the time that I have left is work with a group of staff to develop an action plan for this small part of your final school development plan.'

### **Stage 3: How will we manage the change?**

'Yes, but we must be careful. One action plan is not a school development plan,' warns The Rake. 'We need to develop plans in other priority areas too, and then see how the different individual projects come together to form an integrated school development plan.'

Poppie agrees, but says that this small bit of planning would be good 'practice' in school development planning.

It takes many hours of work for a small committee comprised of Poppie, teachers and a few parents and learners to finalize the action plan. The plan is shown at the top of page 127.

The small committee discuss this action plan at the next SDP meeting and then make some changes to the plan. The staff also decide on how the process should be monitored and assessed in an ongoing way to ensure that it is sustained and doesn't

**Table 4.2** Thuthuka's action plan to improve learners' ability to communicate in English

What objective do we want to achieve?

To improve learners' ability to learn through the medium of English

What steps will we implement to achieve the objective?	What specific tasks need to be done?	Who will do the task?	Resources needed	When will it be done?	Progress check by whom?
STEP 1: To run communicative English lessons after school  Success criterion Learners who attend these lessons show an improvement in spoken English after one term (How will we check this?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform all learners and staff about the English lessons</li> <li>• Get feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class teachers</li> <li>• Principal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-operation from staff and learners</li> <li>• Time during class</li> <li>• Time before school</li> </ul>	Before May 4	Ms Zondi
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold a meeting with all interested learners and teachers to gain commitment; organize times, etc.</li> </ul>	Ms Zondi English HoD	—	Meeting at 2 p.m., May 4	Mr Nxumalo
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report back to a staff meeting</li> </ul>	Ms Zondi	—	May 6	All staff
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw up a schedule of lesson times, teachers' names, etc.</li> </ul>	Whole team	—	May 12	Principal  Ms Zondi
STEP 2: To develop teachers' skills in teaching communicative English  Success criterion Teachers use these interactive teaching methods and learners' learning improves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find out what INSET courses are available for teachers and report back to team and staff</li> </ul>	Mr Nxumalo	List of contact numbers	May 6	All staff
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find out if funds are available for teachers to attend the course</li> </ul>	Ms Mkhize	Check school budget	May 8	Ms Zondi
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up a date for the INSET course</li> </ul>	Mr Nxumalo	—	May 8	Ms Zondi
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure teachers attend the course</li> </ul>	Ms Zondi	—	On the day	

Team members: Mr Nxumalo, Ms Mkhize, Ms Zondi

die. A number of other small teams begin working on other action plans, while a team led by Sindi and The Rake are given the task of pulling all the different ideas together into a school mission statement and development plan. The staff also vote that The Rake be charged with driving the school development process.

There is one worry, though: neither learners nor parents are involved yet. The Rake asks Thulani to take charge of this important aspect of school development.

#### **Stage 4: How will we know if we are being successful?**

The next few months are very busy at Thuthuka. Staff meet formally almost every Thursday afternoon for an hour to discuss the progress that has been made. When a few parents and learners are brought 'on board', the time of the meeting has to be changed to a time that is more convenient to parents. At these meetings the different task teams report on and discuss their progress.



*After about six months, The Rake says a school development plan has been completed. (In the meantime, a number of smaller projects – like the English lessons – have been running anyway.) ‘What is important now,’ says The Rake, ‘is to develop workable structures and processes to make this plan a reality. A meeting every week is simply not feasible.’*

*And, although the work has just begun, an important milestone in Thuthuka’s continuing journey of school development has been reached. The informal study group that initiated this feel proud, but realize that they still have a role to play in sustaining the process of school change.*

## TIP’s organizational development strategy

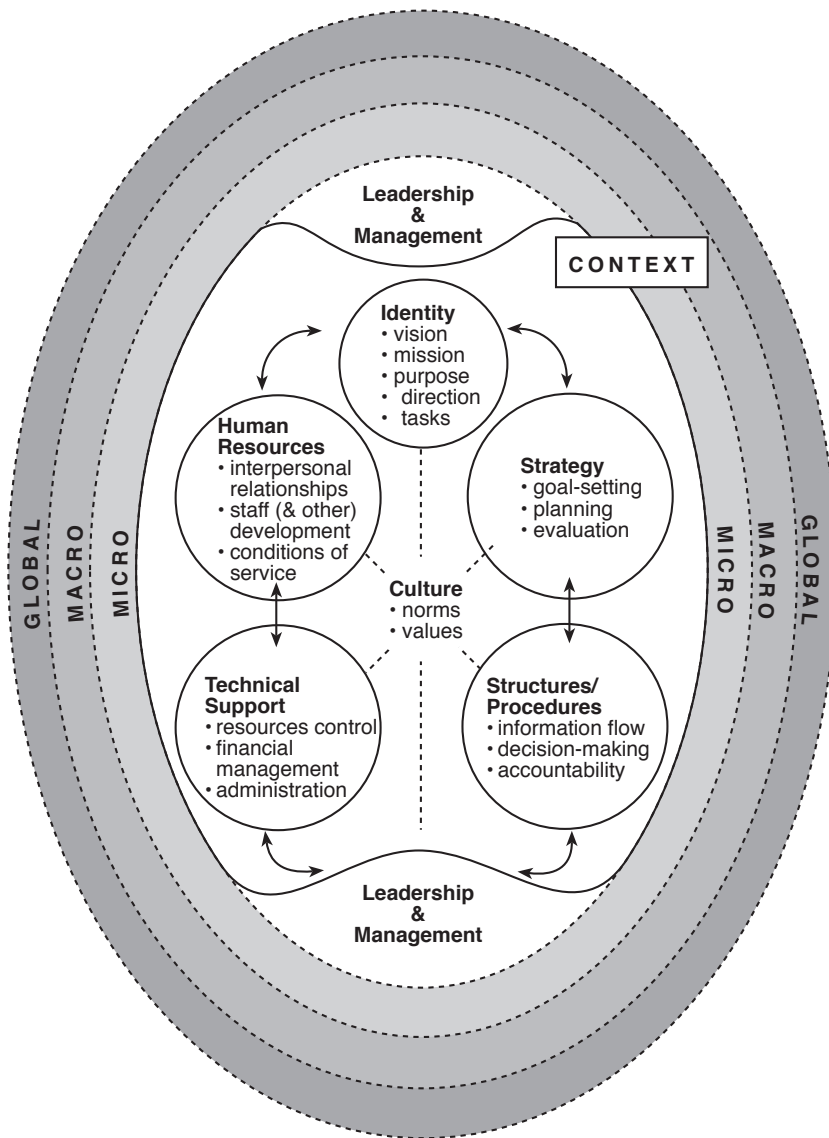
**Organizational development (OD)** is another strategy that could be classified as being within the school-as-organization family. It shares many features with the SDP approach.

The Teachers In-service Project (TIP), based at the University of the Western Cape, is one organization which uses such a strategy. TIP takes a strongly holistic view of schools, and argues that they are organizations made up of a number of *interrelated* elements. Each element, they argue, needs to function healthily for the whole to be healthy. TIP’s focus is on developing the different elements or parts of the organization as a strategy for school change. The diagram on page 129 outlines TIP’s understanding of the relationship between the different elements which make up organizational life.

### **The elements of organizational life**

You will notice that CULTURE is at the centre of the TIP diagram. This indicates that it is the foundation of school life and thus needs to change if organizational change is to be implemented. The five essential components of an organization – identity, strategy, structures/procedures, technical support, and human resources – radiate out from CULTURE (and support it), and are linked to one another. You will also notice that LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT is shown at the top *and* the bottom – they *surround* the essential components, indicating their importance to organizational change and the ongoing life of the organization. But the entire organization is encapsulated in three CONTEXT rings – micro, macro, and global. This suggests that organizational life (and its elements) exist in, and are influenced by, different kinds of contexts. Let’s look at each element in more detail:

- **Culture:** According to TIP, culture is the central element to work with in a process of whole school development.
- **Identity:** Members of the school community should ask: ‘Who are we? And where are we going?’ It is important for the school to know what its central purpose – its identity – is, if it wants to change itself.
- **Strategy:** This refers to setting goals, planning to achieve them, and evaluating whether they have been achieved. According to TIP, goals should relate to all dimensions of the school, in particular, teaching and learning.
- **Structures and procedures:** Structures are the formal relationships within the organization – the lines of responsibility and authority. Procedures are the rules, regulations and ‘ways of doing things’ that operate within the school. These have an important influence in shaping the culture of the organization.
- **Technical support:** This aspect of school life is often overlooked, but is very important. It refers to administration, finances and allocation of resources, and it controls and often constrains attempts to change a school.
- **Human resources:** This refers to the staff of the school (teachers, non-teaching staff, and the principal), as well as the interpersonal relationships among staff and stakeholders generally. Staff development and conditions of employment are also part of human resources.



**Figure 4.6** Elements of organizational life (from Davidoff and Lazarus. 1997. *The Learning School*, page 18. Cape Town: Juta)

- **Leadership and management:** Davidoff and Lazarus suggest that these 'have a leading, guiding role (leadership), as well as a containing and holding role (management) ... these aspects ensure that all other aspects are held together and developed'.
- **The context:** This includes everything from a school's physical location in its immediate community, through the local educational situation, to broader national trends and global trends in society, economy and education. The problems that schools face, and the solutions they may choose, are strongly influenced by these various contexts.

But if you are faced with having to change a school, how do you work with these elements? In other words, how do change agents committed to an organizational development change strategy work with schools? The next reading – by Davidoff, Kaplan and Lazarus – describes a change process undertaken by TIP in a Cape Town school.



This activity should take you about 2 hours. Try to apply Davidoff et al.'s experiences to your own school.

## ACTIVITY 24: USING ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO CHANGE A SCHOOL

Read the extract from a paper by Davidoff et al (Readings, Section Three, 'Leadership and management in building 'learning' schools'). Write your answers to the questions below in your workbook:

- a Read the first section entitled 'The story begins'. Why do the authors see the situation as 'a case of what Fullan refers to as "false clarity" – that is, an oversimplified understanding of what the issues or problems are?
- b Read the section entitled 'The introductory workshop'. What were the purposes of the workshop? What did the school developers hope to achieve? Do you notice similarities between the SDP and OD strategies?
- c Read the section entitled 'A framework for understanding'. Also look back at Figure 4.6. Now write two to three lines on each of the elements of organizational life, and provide an example of each from your own experience.
- d Read the last section entitled 'The next workshop'. What spin-off effects did the writers notice in their next visit?

Davidoff et al. provide a fascinating insight into *how* a group of external facilitators work *with* teachers to identify where a school improvement process should begin. They argue:

*There is no one entry point which holds for each school, for each situation. There is no one element of organizational life that is intrinsically more important than another. Each school is different. Each situation is unique. There is no set order of where one might begin a process of change with a school.*

They then demonstrate how they use their particular framework to *organize and understand* the long lists of problems which emerge in all schools faced with change.

School development planning and organizational development – as well as Senge's and Fullan's understandings of organization and change – seem to share a number of beliefs and practices. They all:

- understand the different elements that make up a school to be *interdependent* and part of a *system*;
- emphasize the importance of 'digging beneath' the symptom (what Davidoff et al. call the '*presenting* problem') in order to uncover the real, deeper cause of the problem;
- emphasize the need to work with all stakeholders – however slow and difficult the process – so that the change which does emerge is sustained.

## What does organizational development add to our understanding of school change?

First, we'd argue that TIP's version of organizational development highlights the impact of *context* on the organizational life of schools far more than SDP does. Davidoff suggests that we cannot simply implement a technical process – like a SWOT analysis and SDP's four stages – without understanding how contextual/political issues will impact on this process. For instance, the micro-context of the school may well be characterized by an imbalance in power which makes it almost impossible for the opinions of women teachers to be heard. If this is not taken seriously, the entire success of the change process might be impeded.

Second, it seems that TIP pursues a more *actively* holistic approach to change.

While SDP does mention the importance of considering the relationships between the different parts of an organization in the processes of change, TIP's version of organizational development regards the different elements as integrally linked. In addition, Davidoff emphasizes the importance of constantly exploring how participants understand and feel about the relationships between the different elements.

But, third, Davidoff offers a very useful framework for sorting out the often long lists of weaknesses that are generated in SWOT analyses. By organizing these under the various elements of organizational life, Davidoff suggests that we can be more precise about where we must prioritize and direct our change efforts.

Interestingly, TIP's use of system thinking and organizational development is far more politically committed and community-sensitive than versions used elsewhere in the world, and than school change strategies like SDP.

## Changing schools: the school-as-community approach

# 4.7

### Introduction

The school-as-community approach takes a far more political approach to school change than the school-as-organization approach. While advocates of the school-as-community approach accept that many of the internal change processes used by *school development planning* or *organizational development* strategies are useful, they add to our understanding by demonstrating that the internal changes that emerge as a result of this work might be undermined by external community factors. They suggest that school change agents pay a lot more attention to three issues:

- First, they suggest that all school development projects, especially if they are to be sustained over time, **must** understand and take into account the community dynamics in which that school finds itself. For instance, projects cannot simply focus on improving teaching and learning processes, or management skills.
- Second, they warn against rigid planning because of the 'chaotic' and rapidly changing environments that schools are, and in which schools are located. Instead, they suggest that projects be guided by the (often changing) needs of communities, as long as the central function of education is occurring.
- Thirdly, their call is explicitly political (or ethical). They suggest school change is ultimately driven by moral imperatives and not by technical efficiency imperatives. An implication of this is that schools must **give** to the community because they are often nodes of relative privilege in developing country communities.



**imperatives:** urgent needs, considerations that must be acted on

## The Soshanguve School Project's 'sustainable school community' strategy



Activity 25 introduces you to a particular interpretation of the school-as-community approach. You will watch and listen to teachers at schools in Soshanguve and then read an article by a leading advocate of this approach. Spend about 3 hours on this activity.

### ACTIVITY 25: 'SUSTAINABLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY' STRATEGY USED IN SOSHANGUVE SCHOOLS

To begin, we'd like you to listen to South African practitioners who have used the school-as-community approach. If you have a video, fast forward to counter number 24 and the title 'The school-as-community approach'. Listen to practitioners from Soshanguve who are using school-as-community strategies to improve their schools. Note down in your workbook:

- a** *how* these people believe schools change, *why* they work in this way, and what the *strengths and weaknesses* of the approach are.

Next, we'd like you to read an article by Andrew Schofield, who works in the Soshanguve district office of the Gauteng Education Department. He has written an interesting description and analysis of what he calls a sustainable school community approach to school change. The paper – 'It takes a village to educate a child' – focuses on Schofield's experience in the Soshanguve schools featured in the video. We have also included an excerpt from another paper in which Schofield's experiences as a school change facilitator in Sharpeville are described. Read Schofield's article (Readings, Section Four, 'Strategies for school change'), then answer the following questions in your workbook:

- b** What are Schofield's criticisms of traditional school change approaches? Why are these approaches inappropriate to developing nation contexts?
- c** In the three main examples Schofield gives of a community-oriented approach, how do schools contribute to communities, and how can communities contribute to schools?
- d** If Schofield was the facilitator of Thuthuka's school development planning exercise, what do you think he would have done differently? Why do you say this?

As you may have noticed, this school-as-community strategy echoes the kind of thinking you read about in 'The spirit of African management' by Lovemore Mbigi. Both are critical of the over-emphasis on organizational efficiency, and the scientific and rational approaches common to Western thinking about organization and management. They argue for change strategies which recognize the humanity – the feelings and desires – of people who make up organizations. (But, again, this is not unique to school-as-community strategies. As you would have noticed, Davidoff strongly urges that the feelings and desires of the people in organizations be valued.) But Schofield goes further – he describes schools themselves *as* communities rather than as organizations.

These strategies to school change are gaining ground in many developing countries. They view the school as being firmly embedded in its community, and recognize that many of these communities are unstable and fractured, or under other forms of stress. This poses a number of challenges to schools:

- first, how do you design planning strategies that are flexible enough to work effectively, despite constant changes in the school's environment (in other words, how do communities impact on the functioning of schools)?
- second, how can schools be used to develop and stabilize communities rather than only educating children (in other words, how do schools impact on the communities in which they exist)?

## Thuthuka explores another school-as-community strategy for school change

*Nomusa remembers that her friend, Mabo Juleka, and a small group of teachers at Sakhisizwe Technical School, made both local and national news when they won an award for being 'Community Builders of the Year'. 'There must be something we can learn from them,' she says to the team focusing on school change. After some discussion, they decide that Nomusa should go to Sakhisizwe on their behalf to learn as much as possible about this particular school-as-community strategy.*

*When Nomusa arrived early at Sakhisizwe, she was surprised to find learners milling around on the premises and walking up and down verandahs. Later, she learned that there was a class boycott and the learners had submitted a list of grievances to the principal. 'How strange – even the nationally-acclaimed Sakhisizwe is out on class boycotts and disruptions. What is all this talk about model schools, if they are just the same as all of us?' Nomusa thought to herself as she made her way to the administration block.*

*After a short wait Mabo appeared, apologizing that he had to attend to two boys who were fighting, one of whom was apparently drunk. All this visibly surprised Nomusa. Mabo noticed this and reassured her: 'What you see and hear here is the reality of change. People often think that we are a wonderful, well-resourced, highly-organized school with everyone accepting a strong work ethic. That is our ideal. The reality of change is that three steps forward today are often counter-balanced by two steps backward tomorrow. Let us get on with our discussion before something else crops up.'*

*Here is the record of Nomusa's interview with Mabo at Sakhisizwe:*

## Interview

**Nomusa** Mabo, could you please tell me what your school understands by the concept of 'schools as communities'?

**Mabo** Well, first I must say that the concept of schools as communities is not a new thing. Nor is our school the only one to use it. Last year we had the luck to attend a course on school improvement where we learnt a bit about different approaches to school development. All these approaches make some reference to schools as communities. The difference is in the interpretation, and perhaps the definition, of the concept 'community'. You see, in most cases 'community' is used in a limited way, referring to learners, teachers, non-teaching staff, and the parents (through their representation on the school governing body). In other words, the school fence marks the boundaries of the community.

**Nomusa** So, by 'community', do you mean all the stakeholders within a school?

**Mabo** In a way, yes. But I think there is a better way to use the word 'community'. We can use the word to refer to a common purpose and unity. It refers to collegiality and working together. The ideal is for everybody to see themselves as part of the institution, and to pull together to make it work. We strive to strengthen the bonds between the different 'stakeholders' within the school. But there is yet another way of looking at the concept of a school community, which is much broader and deeper. The fences – where schools are fortunate enough to have fences – cease to be the boundary. The school is seen as an integral part of the big community in which it is located. We should not talk about the 'outside community'. The goal is to make every individual member of the community – including those who don't work at the school or attend as learners during the day – proud of the school and to take 'ownership' of it. Education is at the centre of politi-

cal, economic and social transformation. Education institutions need to prepare people to be responsible members of the community, and also to be competent to make a living and to contribute to the economy.

**Nomusa** All of this sounds impressive, but what about those who see schools as targets - those who prey on schools by vandalizing them, stealing equipment, selling drugs through the fence or even abducting female students?

**Mabo** That's exactly why the most important aspect of this approach is that schools are seen as part of, and belonging to, local communities - in partnership with the state. In many schools, the school building offers the only venue that is large enough for community meetings and adult education initiatives. It has at least some of the facilities needed, and is available a lot of the time when it isn't being used by the learners. And, if the community really comes to see it as theirs in these ways, the whole effort towards reform and development - both in the school and in the community - becomes more sustainable.

**Nomusa** Why?

**Mabo** Because people care about it, and they care about it because they can see that it is helping to answer their needs - for basic education that is relevant to job creation, and so on. In so many schools, wonderful efforts towards improvement have broken down after a while because of demoralization among the teachers. They see themselves as fighting a losing battle without allies - against crime, against parents who don't seem to care, against learners who don't come to school, and so on. When we start to approach the problem more holistically, and see the school as part of the community - and act on that vision - something is generated that can begin to erode the forces that lead to demoralization.

**Nomusa** What does this mean in practical terms?

**Mabo** I'm pleased you have asked that question. Maybe I should answer this in terms of our experience. Our school is a technical school. Since we opened in 1984, we have had numerous problems of violence, vandalism and crime. For many years, teachers have gone on with their work, becoming increasingly demoralized. Early last year, the school took on the challenge of the Masakhane Campaign. A small group of teachers came together and thought of ways in which they could improve their relations with the community, and contribute to the reconstruction and development process. Within three months, a few projects were on the go. We offered a number of courses - bricklaying, plastering and painting, an evening knitting and sewing class, and a literacy class. We found that these courses transformed educator and learner roles because day-learners assumed the role of educator in the evenings and sometimes over the weekends. The benefits have been immense. Within a few months, the tone of the school has changed dramatically. And, with a bit of luck, it looks as if the momentum created by all this activity and interest will carry on for the foreseeable future. Small things like this can really make a big difference.

**Nomusa** How have you managed to win over communities?

**Mabo** I think that local community leaders play an important role in the mobilization of communities to support their schools and to perceive them as their wealth. In South Africa, communities often see schools as government property. If the school is vandalized, the department or the state is responsible for fixing it. You will surely agree with me that this is flawed logic, but we all know that it is a result of years of apartheid. What we need to do is to destroy these harmful attitudes and, in their place, develop new ones of communal ownership, responsibility and accountability.

To conclude sub-section 4.7, we will introduce you to another group of teachers who argue that they are using school-as-community strategies to change their schools. These teachers are from Pietermaritzburg in KwaZulu-Natal, and are involved in the School-based Reform Initiative (SBRI). The director of this initiative is one of the writers of this module, Themba Ndhlovu. Listen to how he and other teachers from SBRI interpret the school-as-community approach.

## The School-based Reform Initiative's school-as-community strategy

### ACTIVITY 26: SBRI – ANOTHER SCHOOL-AS-COMMUNITY STRATEGY

Find Part 9 on your audiotape (directly *after* narrator asks you to complete Activity 24). Listen to the interview with Themba Ndhlovu and a number of teachers who have been involved in the School-based Reform Initiative, a school change project in the Pietermaritzburg region. In your workbook, make notes on what they say about:

- how their strategies are similar to, and different from, other school-as-organization and school-as-community strategies for change;
- the strengths and weaknesses of their strategy;
- how they believe they have strengthened their previous understanding of school-as-community strategies for school change.

Then, write about a one-page presentation to a group of teachers in which you draw together what you have learnt about different versions of the school-as-community approach. Your presentation should aim to provide your teachers with a number of practical steps they can embark on to change their schools.

## Concluding comment

Those 'voices from the ground' bring this module to an end. We have deliberately concluded by listening to practitioners, and by listening to stories that raise the difficulties of school change. While this module has aimed to give you a theoretical understanding of school organization and change, it has constantly asked that you try to apply these ideas within the 'messiness' of real South African schools – and then develop an ability to reflect on the difficulties that arise and to adapt strategies. At this point we would strongly suggest you page back and re-read parts of the module to see whether you can develop your own strategy for school change, making use of the many ideas offered in this module.

We hope you enjoyed working through this module with us. Good luck in your attempts to develop better schools in South Africa.



Activity 26 is another listening activity. Listen to module co-ordinator Themba Ndhlovu and some teachers talk about their experiences of school change. Spend no longer than 50 minutes on this activity.



## 4.8

## Final tutor-marked assignment



Here is a case study of a school with a problem that you are probably familiar with: absenteeism. Read through the case study, and then answer the questions which follow.

### Bytheway Secondary School

The teachers and the management at Bytheway are becoming increasingly frustrated at the high rate of absenteeism at their school. Learners are missing large amounts of work and are doing very badly in tests. Sometimes a third of a class are absent on test days, but they always have excuses which sound legitimate. Teachers then have to schedule another time and set a different test, which is very time-consuming.

The principal, Mr Dlamini, runs the school in a fairly participatory manner. He calls a special staff meeting to look at this issue. About a quarter of the teachers attend the meeting, and they decide that the best way to deal with the issue is to keep a stricter control of class registers and to punish learners who are absent. Teachers agree that none of them will allow learners to write a re-scheduled test. One of the punishments is that learners will have to clean toilets after school.

After a few weeks, it is clear that this is not having much effect on absenteeism. In fact, offenders are even absenting themselves from their punishment: they are not staying after school! The teachers are frustrated as the keeping of registers is time-consuming. And anyway, many teachers are simply not bothering to do it properly because they are often late or absent themselves. Some of them simply tick that learners are present when they aren't. In effect, conscientious teachers are also being punished now because they have to stay after school to supervise the learners who are supposed to be cleaning toilets. These teachers are also coming under attack from parents who say they have no right to keep their children at school to do 'dirty work' when they are required to do work at home.



This is your final assignment. It aims to assess your ability to integrate and apply the ideas you have learnt to an authentic school situation. Remember this as you write the assignment. In other words, merely repeating theory without application cannot be rewarded! We suggest you spend at least 12 hours doing this assignment.

- a Use strategies associated with the school-as-organization approach to work out what the problems are at Bytheway, then suggest a strategy to overcome these problems. Explain *why* you are suggesting that certain action be taken by referring to appropriate literature. (900 words)
- b Use ideas associated with the school-as-community approach to critique the approach you took in (a), and suggest an alternative strategy for dealing with the problem. Again, you need to justify your criticisms and alternative actions by referring to appropriate literature. (900 words)

## Selected additional reading

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### South Africa

Christie, P. and Potterton, M. 1997. 'School development in South Africa: a research project to investigate strategic interventions for quality improvement in South African schools.' Research report, Education Department, University of the Witwatersrand. Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand.

Davidoff, S. and Lazarus, S. 1997. *The Learning School: An Organizational Development Approach*. Cape Town: Juta.

Harber, C. and Davies, L. 1997. *School Management and Effectiveness in Developing Countries – the Post Bureaucratic School*. London: Cassell.

Moonsammy, G. and Hassett, A. 1997. *Reconstructing Schools: Management and Development from Within*. Swaziland: Macmillan.

Potterton, M. 1998. *Quality for All: Improving the Quality of Catholic Schools*. Johannesburg: Catholic Institute for Education.

### International

Fullan, M. and Hargreaves, A. 1992. *What's Worth Fighting for in Your School?* London: Open University Press.

Mabey, C. and Iles, P. (Eds.) 1994. *Managing Learning*. London: Routledge and Open University.

Mabey, C. and Mayon-White, B. (Eds.) 1993. *Managing Change*. London: Paul Chapman and Open University.

Reynolds, D., Bollen, R., Creemers, B., Hopkins, D., Stoll, L., and Lagerweij, N. 1996. *Making Good Schools: Linking School Effectiveness and School Improvement*. London: Routledge.

Schwan, C. and Spady, W. 1998. *Total Leaders: Applying the Best Future-focused Change Strategies in Education*. Arlington: American Association of School Administrators.