A paradox in action?
A critical analysis of an appreciative inquiry.

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Abstract

A journey comprised of three paths is the metaphor through which I

i)   reflect and report on my involvement with four New Zealand primary school Boards of Trustees (BOTs) investigating the emancipatory potential that applications of information and communication technologies (ICTs) may have on their governance processes,

ii)   analyse appreciative inquiry through application(s) of critical theory, with specific reference to the investigation above so as to deepen understanding of the research method, and

iii)   reflect on my personal development, as achieved through my engagement with participants and the research process.

Stemming from an interest in improving school governance I was keen to identify current use of ICTs by BOTs and to work with them to identify potential applications. Appreciative inquiry with its focus on enhancing existing positive organisational attributes seemed to provide an appropriate structure for my investigation. At the back of my mind however, a concern was formulating: Does this method of research deliver the benefits the literature espouses? What influence would the positive orientation have on the research process and on the power dynamics within the research environment? Complementary streams of critical thinking and reflexivity were invoked to assist my analysis.

Applications of ICTs which may appear 'helpful' to BOT governance processes are identified in this report. However, uncritical uptake of these applications may not necessarily be consistent with the emancipatory intentions I aspire to. Framed within Habermas' theory of communicative action, the potential colonisation of the BOT lifeworld by the system is considered. Domesticating influences may potentially constrain democratic processes at local school and societal levels.

The participatory action research process undertaken facilitated a deepened understanding of governance for all involved. Identification of time and funding constraints indicates

BOTs may be prevented from reaching their true potential. Attempts to enhance governance through additional applications of ICTs will be of minimal effect unless efforts are made to better understand and resource the governance efforts of Trustees. Purported empowerment of the community as mandated in the Education Act 1989 comes with a heavy cost, for schools and individuals. Care must be taken to ensure that 'efficiency' gains are not made at the expense of democratic processes.

Critical analysis of appreciative inquiry as a research method highlights the influences of power and language use within the research process. Appreciative inquiry should be seen as a process for, rather than a master of change. The contribution of appreciative inquiry to organisational and personal transformation may be drawn from the ontological basis of the approach rather than from the technicalities of a specific form of implementation. I suggest the focus on what is 'good' be made more complex, to recognise that appreciation may also mean 'to know, to be conscious of, to take full and sufficient account of'. Application of an enhanced definition of appreciation has deepened my understanding of not only the situation under investigation but also the research process itself. Through my enhanced concept of 'appreciation' embedded and sometimes obscured influences were highlighted, better understood, and at times transformed to serve the emancipatory aspirations of participants.

In keeping with the reflexivity mandated by my commitment to critical theory and action research, I applied this enhanced definition of appreciation to my personal development during my engagement with participants and the research process. My struggles to apply my chosen social constructionist and critical theory lenses to this work are evident in my attempts to work with the largely functionalist literature in this field and the influence of my undergraduate education. Recognising the theoretical and personal developments I gained as I travelled the three paths of my PhD journey, the scene is now set for me to challenge the predominance of functionalist, mechanistic metaphors which dominate organisational literature. In doing so, I seek an alternative approach to understanding organisational activity; and a new vocabulary through which I might extend my understanding, and negotiate new and emancipatory meaning(s) with others.

Acknowledgements

Individual knowledge is not a private achievement, but owes its origins to community participation (Gergen & Gergen, 2003 p.3)

Thank you to Tom Scott and the Alexander Turnbull Library for allowing me to reproduce his cartoon as figure 9.1.

Special thanks to the participants – my travelling companions for this journey. I would not have been able to complete this work without you, and I thank you for sharing your time, ideas and schools with me.

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Chapter 1
Introduction – It's about the journey!

The Station

Tucked away in our subconscious is an idyllic vision.

We are travelling by train – out the windows we drink in the passing scenes of children waving at a crossing, cattle grazing on a distant hillside, row upon row of corn and wheat, flatlands and valleys, mountains and rolling hillsides and city skylines.

But uppermost in our minds is the final destination.

On a certain day, we will pull into the station. Bands will be playing and flags waving. Once we get there, our dreams will come true and the pieces of our lives will fit together like a completed jigsaw puzzle. Restlessly we pace the aisles, damning the minutes - waiting, waiting, waiting for the station.

"When we reach the station, that will be it!" we cry.
"When I'm 18."
"When I buy a new car!"
"When I put the last kid through college."
"When I have paid off the mortgage!"
"When I get a promotion."
"When I reach retirement, I shall live happily ever after!"

Sooner or later, we realise there is no station, no one place to arrive. The true joy of life is the trip. The station is only a dream. It constantly outdistances us. "Relish the moment" is a good motto, especially when coupled with Psalm 118:24:"This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

It isn't the burdens of today that drive men mad. It is the regrets over yesterday and the fear of tomorrow. Regret and fear are twin thieves who rob us of today. So stop pacing the aisles and counting the miles. Instead, climb more mountains, eat more ice cream, go barefoot more often, swim more rivers, watch more sunsets, laugh more, cry less. Life must be lived as we go along. The station will come soon enough.

Author Unknown.

1.0   Introduction

Appreciative inquiry (Ai) is a research method with a focus on positive organisational attributes that may fuel change. Its visibility has increased dramatically in recent years (Dick, 2004). Applications of Ai as an action research method range from small localised inquiries such as those focused on change management within a school (van Buskirk, 2002) or community (Ryan, Soven, Smither, Sullivan, & van Buskirk, 1999) to much larger projects such as Gibb and Mahé's (2003) account of establishing a global interfaith organisation, the United Religions Initiative. Yet despite increased applications and scholarship, appreciative inquiry remains an action research process with little self reflection or critique. Bushe and Khamisa (2004), Rogers and Fraser (2003) and van der Haar and Hosking (2004) contribute to the few evaluations of appreciative inquiry as a research method documented in literature.

Little indication has been given in scholarship as to why such paucity exists. Among the few reflections published however, the mantra of a positive orientation within an inquiry process has been called into question. Rogers and Fraser (2003) for example ask whether appreciative inquiry focussed entirely on the positive risks distortion, in the way a plant may grow lopsided as it reaches for the light. Concern for practical outcomes motivates Gergen and Gergen (2003, p. 158) to ask: "What happens to us - for good or for ill - as we honour one as opposed to another account?".

My own introductory reading of Ai scholarship raised similar concerns. The challenge to a traditional problem solving approach was appealing, but would a focus on only what was seen to be good prove to be too 'Pollyanna-ish'? Was this approach too 'good' to be 'true'? Was the approach robust enough to provide a theoretical framework from which I could develop a thesis? I was intrigued, and hence undertook not only to initiate an appreciative inquiry but also to make a theoretical contribution through my consideration of the research process itself. My chosen research topic therefore incorporates critique and reflection of the research process I undertook. In this report I focus on the emancipatory potential that the uptake of information and communication technologies (ICTs) may have on the governance processes of school

Boards of Trustees (BOTs) *and* through a critical analysis of the research process I consider the potential contribution of Ai to this emancipatory aspiration.

I became interested in the potential contribution Ai applications may be able to make towards emancipatory organisational processes. Through critical analysis of the appreciative inquiry undertaken within this investigation, I advocate for enhanced definitions and applications of the concept of appreciation. I suggest the focus on what is 'good' be made more complex, to recognise that appreciation may also mean 'to know, to be conscious of, to take full or sufficient account of'. In doing so, the potentially productive tension between the intentions of critical theory (such as the uncovering of abusive power) and appreciative inquiry (such as a focus on inspiration) may contribute to the development of new research and practitioner activities (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000). The counter balance provided by such tension may reduce the risk of misrepresentation which may occur should one approach dominate indiscriminately.

Application of a critical perspective to the paradigm of appreciative inquiry may appear paradoxical. Indeed my initial impression was that the two approaches were almost contradictory. Ai seems almost evangelically focussed on 'the positive' (Dick 2004). Critical theorists, however, seek out power imbalances, exploitation and violation – profiling outcomes which may often seem debilitating in their negativity. As my reading and reflection on the relevant theoretical foundations and applications matured, I began to identify similarities/synergies between the approaches and to value more the apparent contradictions. Treating the apparent contradictions as a paradox enabled me to explore the perceived theoretical tensions rather than be constrained by them.

Emancipation is an important theme woven throughout this thesis. Flood's (2001) expression of concern for people's well being and the development of their potential resonates with my own aspirations. I take as given that emancipation from exploitation is a necessary aspect of human well being and a pivotal value for societies which aspire to manifest democratic ideals. My emancipatory aspirations are complemented by my stance described more fully in chapter 2, that critical theory need not be perceived as negative in its focus. Thus, in the first instance I am

interested to consider how applications of ICTs might assist BOTs achieve their potential, and indeed contribute to the well being of Trustees and their school. Beyond this, critical consideration will be given to the influences on and from the environment within which Trustees govern, and how appreciative inquiry might be applied to facilitate emancipation.

As this research progressed I developed a deeper interest in what I now perceive as a covert form of exploitation. This form of exploitation may be better articulated as a form of domestication which may be manifest across multiple levels. Such domestication may be conceptualised as a gradual, more subtle, yet no less powerful form of control than overt expressions of domination or exploitation in which the forms of power and control are more readily observed and named. Domestication is a form of control where a body/person of power seeks to 'tame' and influence the behaviour of another. The concept is developed by critical theorists to bring to light less immediately perceptible infringements of the human freedom/emancipation aspired to within democratic societies.Within the organisational context of this thesis the expectations and actions of government may effect such a domestication of BOTs and the communities they are intended to serve. The risk that the potential influence and ideals of principals may dominate/domesticate Board processes is also identified. Where such domestication is an outcome of government processes which simultaneously espouse democratic ideals and commitment to partnership, we have at least a paradox, at worst conditions of hegemony. In the tradition of critical theorists I became interested in learning how to expose such paradoxes, to bring them to light in order that we may collectively contribute to their transformation.

Critical reflection on my own development and involvement within the research process highlighted the limiting effects of the naturalised functional paradigm that prevailed in my undergraduate education. The scholarship of critical theorists helped me review the pressures I observed in the paradoxes between stated ideals of the education reforms and research participants' experience of these in a way that adherence to a functionalist mode of thinking would not have facilitated. Despite participants in this research demonstrating significant levels of commitment to the ideal of community governance, sufficing at tasks, limited levels of preparedness for meetings and re-alignment of perceptions of 'trust' were among the outcomes of

school governance I observed. My subsequent reading of the literature indicates that my observations of these dynamics are not unique to the participants of this investigation. Flood (2001, p.140) observes:

> First, people may feel that they have become instruments of re-engineering in today's drive for efficiency and effectiveness. Secondly, people may feel there is little meaning to them in participatory work practices when intrapsychic forces (Argyris & Schon, 1996 (1978)) and cultural forces invisibly shape outcomes. Thirdly, people may sense limits to and unfairness in the roles predefined for them by the might of knowledge-power.

An emancipatory contribution to community governance processes may be achieved through challenging these dynamics. Applications of appreciative inquiry may facilitate such challenges.

My process of inquiry is described in this thesis as a journey comprised of several paths. While not original (see for example Trafford & Lesham, 2002), I have found the metaphor of a journey to describe the PhD process to be both useful and symbolically appropriate. Drawing inspiration from Homer's epic poem (Montiglio, 2005), I see this journey as a personal odyssey – an intellectual and at times spiritual exploration. Reason (1988a) observes how metaphor can provide a framework within which we might organise our perspectives on life. Looking beyond a framework metaphor and its implied rigidity I envisage my application of this trope to be more organic and fluid. The use of metaphors as integrated into this report is thus illustrative of the generative potential that metaphors may convey. Insights and actions that were not present before (Morgan, 1997) emerged as my journey progressed. Building on Morgan's (1997) assertion that metaphors may be invoked to describe an active quality, conceptualising my PhD activities as a journey has expanded my horizon of understanding of the research process, the conversations that I have become involved with, and the ways in which I make and negotiate meaning in this process with others. To this end, I have found the metaphor of a journey to be a powerful and useful idea through which I have begun to 'appreciate' the inquiry process in the expanded context advocated through this thesis.

Marshak (1993) relates the metaphorical journey to transitional change which can be both symbolic and creative. Elsewhere in literature (see for example Kim & Mauborgne, 1997) a pioneering spirit is seen as contributing towards both the intent and outcome of the journey metaphor. I believe my application as presented in this thesis resides somewhere between the two. Marshak's (1993) application begins to articulate the changes I have undergone at a personal level, but it is through my pioneering journey into the unknown and/or less charted theoretical domains that I contribute both to organisational scholarship and practice. Just as Marshall (2004a) describes her 'learning journey' as a means of both articulating and developing inquiry, through this thesis I begin to articulate to others my own scholarly developments.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) suggest that a metaphorical journey may imply a lineal progression towards an identified goal. I do not claim my travels to be this 'clear-cut', 'orderly' and/or 'obvious'. Extending Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) metaphor however, I outline and identify the 'paths' that shaped my journey. Paths create a surface by which others might (re)trace the directions I have travelled. Breaking the journey down into distinct pathways in this way is akin to Fox's (1983; 1991) presentation of the four paths to creation spirituality and Reason's (2000) related applications of the four paths of action research. Having identified these paths, the metaphor is further maintained as I identify the 'landscape' within which the journey took place. In doing so I identify both the structure of this document and the contributions made to scholarship.

1.1   The Journey

The opening prose of this thesis encourages us to enjoy 'the journey'. My PhD journey comprised three paths, each of which I (eventually) realised I need travel if I was to begin to identify, experience, and articulate to others the depth of transformational change which the research process may initiate.

Within this research report therefore I

i)   reflect and report on my involvement with four New Zealand primary school Boards of Trustees (BOTs) investigating the emancipatory potential that applications of information and communication technologies (ICTs) may have on their governance processes,

ii)   analyse appreciative inquiry through application(s) of critical theory, with specific reference to the investigation above so as to deepen our understanding of the research method, and

iii)   reflect on my personal development, as achieved through my engagement with participants and the research process.

I do not claim to make an equal contribution in theoretical and/or practical knowledge from each path travelled, but I recognise the necessity of each in their contribution to my own development and the development of this thesis. My action research oriented investigation makes practical and theoretical contributions which may inform the practice of school Trustees specifically and community Trustees generally. Through my discussion presented in this thesis I highlight the need for greater appreciation and debate by Trustees and other stakeholders of school governance of the current context in which BOTs govern. I also contribute to scholarship through my critical analysis of appreciative inquiry as a research method, based on my own experiences and reflections. Critical appreciative processes (CAPs) are introduced, the application of which may assist researchers and practitioners alike as they focus on emancipatory ideals intended to enhance what Reason and Bradbury (2001b) describe as human flourishing.

Each path of my journey is presented as a distinct area of exploration, for example my interaction with four BOTs contributes towards second person action research practices, while my reflections may be seen as a form of what Reason and Bradbury (2001a) describe as first person action research. This representation is done to aid the reader, with a view to clarifying the respective activities involved with each phase of the journey. These distinctions between each path are made for analytical and heuristic reasons. My lived experience of the distinctions was not always so obvious at the time.

The original path chosen for the investigation is my interaction with four primary school BOTs. My motivations for the investigation were driven from my own experiences as a Trustee of the frustrations and understanding of the responsibilities allocated to Boards as part of the governance of their school, together with a professional interest in purported benefits of ICTs espoused in management literature. Could these purported benefits also be realised in the wider not for profit/community sector? I approached the research recognising the hard work and valuable effort school Trustees contribute to their schools and the greater community. I (naively and/or simplistically?) hoped to 'help' make 'good efforts' even 'better'.

This first path was illuminated primarily through my initial understanding of the principles of appreciative inquiry. I sought to identify opportunities to enhance what was good; not focus on problems. To this end, I simplistically equated 'help' with what I now recognise as aspirations of efficiency and effectiveness: the freedom to do an even better job within the (perhaps inadequate) parameters already set in place. It was only after my analysis, reflection and understanding of issues which emerged during interaction with participants deepened that interest in the emancipatory potential of Ai processes emerged. The dynamics articulated by Flood (2001, p.140) were indicative of my own engagement as a Trustee and with the participants in this investigation. I became focused on the tension I observed between aspirations of community governance in education and the government's responsibility to assist those mandated with the task to govern.

The example of school governance is but one manifestation of the way in which societies that purport to value democratic ideals organise themselves. School governance can thus be seen as an illustration of how democratic processes are enabled and/or constrained within Western society. Seemingly ordinary, everyday activities of governance and management may enhance or diminish those democratic ideals. Domesticating influences may potentially constrain democratic processes at local school and societal levels. Our understanding of these outcomes and any subsequent responses we may have to them contributes to the social organisation of our world.

As my analysis and reflection on the contextual aspects of school governance deepened so too did my awareness of imbalances of power and the potential for exploitation within the environments of the participating BOTs. My engagement with critical analysis drew my attention to emancipatory ideals that might challenge the neoliberal assumptions still prevalent since the reforms to education governance which took place in New Zealand during the 1980s and 1990s. This growing awareness influenced the way in which I reflected on and transformed my original research intent, and the way in which this report is organised.

In chapter 2 I discuss the methodological assumptions which informed this investigation. Theoretical similarities between appreciative inquiry and critical theory are outlined within the wider context of action research. This chapter provides an important milestone not only for the structure of my thesis, but it also traces my introduction to and subsequent engagement with critical theory. My earlier research experiences had seen me shy away from critical theory because my perceptions of its negativity made me uncomfortable. Consistent also with reservations about the assumed expertise of researchers expressed by Kemmis (2001, p.93), I was wary of garbing myself in a mantle of arrogance. Who am I to propose potential answers to questions people were not necessarily asking themselves? Would such action be contrary to the aspirations of emancipation I espoused earlier? Thus, in chapter 2 I also consider the importance of first person action research practices and associated concepts of reflexivity. Through making explicit these various theoretical approaches, I identify the commitments and interpretations I have undertaken in the development of this thesis.

The landscape of literature through which I travelled is varied, but can be identified as comprising three main areas which required review. Scholarship associated with organisations within the community/not for profit sector (of which school BOTs are a pertinent example), approaches towards and issues associated with community governance, and the growing area of information and communication technologies are reviewed and presented in chapters 3, 4, and 5 respectively.

It is common to consider contemporary societies as constituted through the interactions of three main organisational spheres: government (the public – or first sector), business (the market– or second sector) and the community (or third sector). A macro perspective is applied in chapter 3 as I begin by reviewing scholarship which seeks to identify the sphere described as the not for profit/community or third sector. My focus is then narrowed, as I consider the social and economic reforms which took place in New Zealand following the election of the fourth Labour Government in 1984. These reforms provide the political context within which school BOTs were established. The significance of the disparity I now perceived between the stated intentions of the reformers and my own experience and observations of the reforms in practice concerned me. My interest in the theoretical distinctions between the concepts of devolution, decentralisation, and delegation and the subtle differences of power implied in each of these deepened. Interactions with Trustees later on raised further issues of domestication. What a lot of 'D' words to reflect on! Democracy, with its complex principles of freedom and responsibility to participate in the governance of our lives provides a conceptual umbrella under which these multifaceted interactions reside.

Comprised primarily of elected representatives from the school community, BOTs are mandated to provide governance at the individual school level. In chapter 4 I review how governance within the not for profit/community sector is portrayed in the literature, before identifying and reviewing influences specific to governance by school BOTs.

The 'black box' approach often applied to the label of information and communication technologies (ICTs) is challenged in chapter 5. Within this chapter I seek to identify what this metaphor indicates. My application of critical theory ensures that the interconnectedness of human interaction is made explicit, challenging the reified, deterministic approach uncritically portrayed by some scholars. Specific consideration is given to applications of ICTs within the not for profit environment, identifying influences which may contribute to the uptake (or not) and types of applications which may be introduced within not for profit organisational processes.

Thus, chapters 3, 4 and 5 provide a background to the landscape within which much of my journey takes place. In chapter 6 I re-view this foundation with a view to shaping the research questions which informed my inquiry, and identify areas of scholarship to which my own investigation makes practical and/or theoretical contributions. For example, this action research investigation honours the interests, interactions, activities and concerns of participating BOTs at local school level. In doing so it provides a different perspective of school governance than does the aggregated information presented in published longitudinal studies.

Specific consideration of the structure and process of my research method for this investigation is discussed in chapter 7. Although my intention was for the investigation to be participant driven, initial planning was still necessary and is presented here in a manner consistent with the 4D cycle of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000). Research questions, information gathering and sharing, and methods of analysis are also discussed.

In combination, chapters 8 and 9 contribute towards the culmination of the first path of my research journey. Here I report on my interactions with four primary school BOTs from within the greater Hamilton, New Zealand, area who participated in this investigation. The participation of each Board is profiled in chapter 8. Each group is presented as a unique case study. Specific consideration is given to common research themes of governance, community, and technology which emerged during the discussions. In chapter 9 I discuss my interaction with each participating BOT. Observations as to how the environment negotiated by each group of Trustees compares to that profiled in the literature are presented. A greater understanding of

governance was gained by all involved, including myself. The dominance of fiscal matters, issues of resource dependency and power relations within the Board context emerge as areas for closer consideration in this chapter. My growing awareness of how purported democratic intentions of community control are perceived and responded to by participating Trustees is presented. In doing so, I highlight the need for greater appreciation and debate of the current context in which BOTs govern. Observed outcomes within this investigation lead me to question the implications of contemporary forms of volunteer governance on the individuals and organisations involved. I begin to contemplate the risk of further domestication of civil society should democratic processes become weakened through decentralised means of control.

The second and third paths I travelled are described in chapter 10. Here I present my critical analysis of the appreciative inquiry and how my engagement with the process transformed my practice as a researcher and teacher. During the course of this research I moved from my then unintentional adherence to the functionalist principles underwriting much of the literature and practice associated with organisational efficiency to paying closer attention to deeper issues of whether such efficiencies might contribute to well being or systemic compliance. My enhanced awareness was facilitated through my reading of the work of social constructionists and critical theorists.

Through interaction and engagement with research participants in this investigation I have contributed to the development of Ai as a research process as I encourage application of critical appreciative processes (CAPs) (Grant & Humphries, 2006). Such an approach need not be perceived as negative. Applications of critical appreciative processes illustrate how a greater awareness of the influence of power and language might be negotiated as the research process unfolds. Through this process of reflection, challenge and transformation personal and organisational emancipation may be enhanced, highlighting the important contribution critique can make to the manifestation of the emancipatory ideals of democratic societies.

Consistent with the extended application of appreciation which I advocate, these reflections do not just focus on that which I perceive to be 'good', but seek to also consider what I have come to know and understand more deeply. Throughout this thesis I strive to present a transparent account of my perceptions of the research process, as I describe both what I perceived to have 'worked' and what didn't! I found my reading of literature had left me ill prepared for the more emergent nature of research. Scholars seem reluctant to share their perceptions of failure and/or difficulties encountered within the inquiry process. Through sharing my reflections of 'the good, the bad, *and* the ugly' (Grant, 2003) I to contribute to scholarship and also, I hope, to the development of future researchers.

As my journey along the three paths which comprise this investigation progressed, I came to realise that as suggested within the prose shared at the beginning of this chapter, there is no static destination for my development, be it theoretical or personal. Thus, rather than be constrained through presentation of a 'conclusion' the final chapter of this document combines reflection and anticipation to consider 'new beginnings'. A journey such as that described here is but a stepping stone to further searches and adventures. Thus, concerns and motivations for future research and my personal development are presented in chapter 11.

And so I invite readers to share this journey with me, through reading and reflecting on my thesis. I begin by identifying the methodological assumptions which informed this investigation…

Chapter 2
Methodology

Research is a personal, political, and social process (Reason & Marshall, 2001)

2.0   Introduction

In choosing a method of research, researchers implicitly or explicitly commit not only to the conventions of the particular research method chosen, but also (often implicitly) to the ontological and epistemological assumptions from which the method is generated. Methodology is the study of research method. Through an overt focus on methodological concerns of their chosen method, researchers make explicit the context within which their research is situated and its contribution to human understanding. Methodological awareness is a valuable mental resource (Seale, 1999) so making my methodological interests and concerns explicit serves to inform my own practice. It also provides an explicit set of assumptions and commitments against which readers can evaluate this research as I

i)   reflect and report on my involvement with four New Zealand primary school Boards of Trustees (BOTs) investigating the emancipatory potential that applications of information and communication technologies (ICTs) may have on their governance processes,

ii)   analyse appreciative inquiry, through application of critical theory, with specific reference to the investigation above so as to deepen our understanding of the research method, and

iii)   reflect on my personal development, as achieved through my engagement with participants and the research process.

In this chapter I outline the connections I have made between action research (first and second person practices), appreciative inquiry, critical theory, reflexivity and reflection within the research process. My commitment is to research *with* and *for* people rather than presenting a seemingly detached view of an 'other' and their world. An emancipatory agenda consistent with the interpretation and aspirations described in chapter 1 emerged as my analysis, reflection and understanding of interactions with participants deepened. This concern necessitates the incorporation of social and political processes. My own curiosity and quest for personal growth and enhanced understanding (in whatever form it may take) provides a personal dimension to this investigation.

According to Reason (1988a) metaphors provide a framework from which we derive meaning. Reason (1994) explores extended epistemologies, different ways of knowing. In chapter 1 I have explained my engagement with the metaphor of 'a journey'. This chapter is one story associated with that journey. As my journey progressed I found myself facing three paths, all of which needed to be travelled - yet each seeming to require a different approach. Robertson (2000) describes a similar experience as she relates the three strands of her action research project which developed concurrently. For simplicity, each path I have travelled is presented as a distinct area of exploration, although my experience was that the demarcation between paths was not always so obvious. This chapter traces, by way of reflective account, the emergent process of this action research - tracing the extended methodologies which have developed as my PhD journey has progressed.

My study began from a seemingly straight forward interest in the potential improvement of BOT governance processes. That I should have begun with such a functionalist intent and research approach is not surprising given my training in disciplines of management largely based on an instrumental logic of western empiricism. It is also the lexicon of most organisational practitioners. Stemming from my then current involvement with school BOTs, my initial research question focused on the potential applications of ICTs may have to enhance the governance processes of BOTs. I was keen not only to identify current use, but also to work with BOTs to identify potential applications. My intention to work in conjunction with BOTs was

the beginning of an action research investigation, the method of which is described more fully in chapter 7 of this thesis.

> Action research seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities (Reason & Bradbury, 2001b, p.1).

Although action research provided an appropriate platform for a participant oriented investigation, I was faced with a dilemma. Typically research, be it qualitative or quantitative, is problem oriented. I was not starting with 'a problem'. Rather I was in search of opportunities. Appreciative inquiry, through its challenge to this problem oriented stance appeared to provide an answer to my dilemma. With applications within the not for profit sector well documented in literature (Mantel & Ludema, 2000; Murrell, 1999; van Buskirk, 2002), and the approach appearing consistent with the processes of self review that school BOTs are required to undertake regularly, the scene appeared 'set'. Despite this apparent 'fit' however, there was still concern at the back of my mind: Does this method offer all the benefits the literature espouses? What influence would the positive orientation/bias promoted by appreciative inquiry have both on the research process and sources of power within the research environment? By invoking a stream of critical thinking and reflexivity, another path of inquiry was initiated.

My time in the field working with participants, as described in chapter 8 of this thesis, (the 'proper' research - or so I thought) came and went, leaving me conscious that my investigation was still incomplete. As I began to reflect on the appreciative inquiry model and its implementation, the experience of 'the process as data' (Marshall, 2004b) became apparent. I became aware that as part of my critical analysis of appreciative inquiry as a research method I needed to reflect on the research process undertaken, including *my* engagement with it and influence on it. A third path incorporating first person action research, researcher positioning and reflection had emerged!

In the following sections I consider each path in turn, exploring the theoretical frameworks and influences whose applications I endeavour to invoke as a means of guiding my methodological approach. In doing so, I begin to articulate some of the choices which have guided this investigation. I have taken a narrative approach while writing this section, as I found this method aided my reflection. As Marshall (2004) observes, this journey is my own, articulated as my awareness of its construction has unfolded. The narrative format provides the opportunity to weave these reflections with more propositional ways of knowing. Narrative is recognised as an important component through which reality may be negotiated and subsequently constructed (Gergen, 1994), so it is appropriate that I begin with an overview of my own social constructionist paradigm, the 'world' within which this journey takes place.

2.1 Social Constructionism

The creation/generation of knowledge is not the exclusive domain of academics. Gergen and Gergen (2003) suggest the origins of this activity reside in community participation. Meaning and knowledge are negotiated as we each interact with our environment(s). A variety of different dialogues unfold among participants who each bring a unique set of values and beliefs to the interaction (Gergen & Gergen, 2003). Rather than focus on knowledge as belonging to specific individuals, social constructionists encourage recognition and understanding of relationship as central to knowledge and well being (Gergen & Gergen, 2003). Gergen's (1994) discussion of knowledge as a communal possession reinforces this understanding. Interaction between individuals is a key contribution to social constructionism for it is through social processes that knowledge may be developed and sustained. Each process (and therefore social construction of knowledge) has the ability to invoke a different form of action (Burr, 1995).

"Our understanding of the world is not an interpretation of what is, but a summary of attitudes formed by social interchanges within the present historical context" (Rohmann, 2000, p.364). Thus, each BOT participating in this investigation will be influenced by the discourses invoked by Board members and other stakeholders about the nature of suitable processes for their organisation, which in turn may evoke a relational ontology (Gergen, 1994). As such, any "relevance and meaning ascribed

will be specific to the community of voices in which they are debated" (Ludema, Wilmot, & Srivastva, 1997, p.1048). The importance of this observation is highlighted by Morgan's (1993) opening illustration of a mirror, depicting how "we are often trapped by the images we hold of ourselves". Building on this statement I suggest that a BOT's approach to governance may be influenced by the lexicon(s) Trustees adopt, either knowingly or subconsciously.

Campbell (2000) observes that an organisation is itself a social construction, changing continuously through the interactions going on within and around it. Building on the work of Latour (1993), Campbell highlights the importance of recognising the multiple domains that contribute to this construction:

> An organisation is also real people, policies and rules, desks and computers, and budgets that create realities [actualities] and constraints that become the substance of socially constructed conversations. The 'constructed' and the 'material' world cannot and must not be separated from each other (Campbell, 2000, p.29).

Morgan (1986) has demonstrated how the use of diverse metaphors enables the generation of multiple perceptions. For example in our everyday language, as well as our theorising, organisations are variously described as 'machines', 'organisms', 'psychic prisons', or 'brains'. Each metaphor invokes a different perspective of how knowledge and action may be created within the organisation. Daley, Netting and Angulo (1996) observe a tendency in such metaphors however, to overlook or gloss over the human side of the organisation. In doing so, this oversight may fuel passive, deterministic perceptions which fail to honour the interactions and activities of people as they contribute to the social construction of our/their environment.

Approaches to social constructionism are continually developing, and have no single slate of assumptions to which all must adhere (Gergen & Gergen, 2003). Just as Gergen (1994) identifies areas of scholarship contrary to his own view of social constructionism, I also identify the socially constructed grounding points which influence this thesis and disregard others. Given the importance of language to social constructionism, my investigation encouraged and explored the potential influence 'vocabularies of hope' (Ludema, 2001) and other positive oriented approaches consistent with appreciative inquiry may have on the research process. People are

active (not passive) participants in the negotiation of meaning, and this is reflected in their language. "The way we represent things to each other matters crucially. If language provides the structure and content of our thought, then in a fundamental way what we say is what we think" (Burr, 1995, p.43-44).

Political, economic, social and cultural contexts (internal and external to the organisation) must also be taken in to account as potential influences on the social construction of an organisation and its environment(s). Socially constructed phenomena are influenced politically and morally (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000). Thus it is important to consider underlying factors beyond language. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000, p.130) warn researchers of the danger of developing too narrow a focus on one dimension in the study of the reality constructed, be it language, political, historical or social relations; to the extent that 'they limit the horizon too narrowly'. My adoption of a reflexive approach to analysis and interpretation as introduced in section 2.2.2b helps to address this concern.

While recognising the social construction of each situation (for example each case study in the investigation) is context specific and negotiated within a combination of social, historical, political, cultural and economic influences, it is also important to attribute the influences of my own processes of understanding that I bring to each context. My interpretations of empirical material I encounter are themselves socially constructed phenomena, produced in part by dominant perspectives I (explicitly or implicitly) may adopt (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p.130). Understanding arises in the space between perfect familiarity and absolute strangeness (Kerdeman, 1998). A context of 'pre-understandings' (be they work, family or individual circumstances) will in turn influence my efforts to deduce meaning/understanding of any new situation I face (Gadamer, 1975). For example, the influences of my 'white middle class' upbringing are but one dimension of the 'pre-understanding' I apply to my understanding and interpretation of the decile system within which each school BOT must operate. "At the same time, interpretation would be unnecessary if everything already were familiar. Interpretation is stimulated by difference and distance…Genuine learning consists in questioning what we think we know" (Kerdeman, 1998, p.245-246). Having recognised the influence of my personal 'horizon of understanding' (Gergen, 1999b), I must now challenge and/or expand this

horizon as my research progresses. The significance and impact of this task is developed in sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3, the second and third paths of this journey.

The investigation presented in this thesis is but one account of a reality constructed through the research process. Undoubtedly, participants, my supervisors, and family would contribute alternative representations of the process.

> Constructionism does not ask to be accepted because it is true. Rather, constructionism invites collaboration among people in giving sense and significance to the world, and pressing on toward more inclusive futures together. Alternative 'truths' are not thereby abolished; they are invited as participants in the dialogue (Gergen, 1999b, p.228).

Within the realms of qualitative research, this call for participation and interest in the negotiation of multiple and competing perceived realities has contributed to the emergence of new research practices. The following section outlines the broad area of action research before considering appreciative inquiry, an action research approach that is of direct relevance to this investigation.

2.2   The three paths of my journey

2.2.1   The first path

2.2.1a   Action Research

Action research has become an umbrella term for a range of orientations which shape particular research practices (Reason & McArdle, 2004).   The research activity undertaken is done in conjunction *with* and *for* the participants (rather than be a study *of* them), often with the aim of achieving social change (Reason, 1994; Reason & Bradbury, 2001a). Characteristically depicted either as a cyclical or spiral process, action research approaches seek to integrate theory with practice and reflection. Various iterations are under development. Some researchers, for example, focus on organisational development while others focus on social reform. However, the link between knowledge generation, action, and collaboration between community stakeholders and the researcher are common components of the concept. Greenwood and Levin (2000) aptly describe the process as 'co-generative' and identify the potential action research approaches have to recreate the relationship between

universities and multiple stakeholders in society. Through these relationships, knowledge may be generated and shared. Such potential is developed in the investigation described in this thesis.

I entered the research process recognising the richness and diversity participants contribute. As echoed by Brydon-Miller, Greenwood and Maguire (2003), respect for people and the knowledge and experience they bring to the research process was a key motivation behind my decision to adopt an action research perspective. I am conscious of Reason's (2000) observation that processes of knowledge creation may be monopolised by those who have power, who may seek knowledge creation that might serve their own interests. Social relations risk distortion whereby circumstances may disempower some in the community while adding to the power of a dominant group (Reason, 2000). With this in mind, I sought to not only develop a greater understanding of the emancipatory potential that applications of ICTs may have on school governance processes, but by working with BOTs I invoked action research processes which might democratise ways of creating practical knowledge (Reason, 2000), enhancing Trustees' practice in ways consistent with aspirations for their organisation.

Zaournazi (2002) suggests democracy is based on a network of interaction, and sustained through continual dialogue. Mulgan (2004, p.35) assumes that within a democratic society such as New Zealand "all citizens should have the right to flourish". I share these aspirations and seek to develop them within any research environment I help create. Of specific significance to this investigation are the relationships and interactions of participants across sectors of society, for example the dynamics between members of the community (such as the participating Trustees in this investigation) and government, and how applications of ICTs may help/hinder these interactions and associated outcomes.

Action research may take place on multiple levels, identified accordingly as first person, second person and third person action research:

First-person action research/practice skills and methods address the ability of the researcher to foster an inquiring approach to his or her life, to act with awareness and to choose carefully and to assess effects in the outside world while acting…

Second-person action research/practice addresses our ability to inquire face to face with others into issues of mutual concern…Second person inquiry starts with interpersonal dialogue and includes the development of communities of inquiry and learning organisations…

Third-person action research/practice aims to extend these relatively small-scale projects…Third person strategies aim to create a wider community of inquiry involving persons who, because they cannot be known to each other face to face…, have an impersonal quality. Writing and other reporting of the process and outcomes of inquiry can also be an important part of third person inquiry (Reason & Bradbury, 2001a, p.xxv-xxvi).

The research described in this thesis incorporates aspects of first and second person action research, while the formal presentation of this thesis itself presents a form of third person action research practice. Second person action research was the initial focus, investigating with school BOTs the emancipatory potential that applications of ICTs may have on their governance processes. As noted earlier, and as will be discussed more fully in section 2.2.3a, the element of first person action research became apparent only as the research process developed. "All knowing is value laden, everything is from a perspective…it is what we do to become more critically aware of our perspectives that is an important part of action research" (Marshall, 2003). Realisation of 'the process as data' (Marshall, 2004b) left me conscious of the need to also reflect on my own engagement with, and influence on, and in the research process.

Despite the contribution and potential of action research identified by scholars such as Reason and Bradbury (2001a), the approach has been critiqued as being 'weak in theory', 'little more than consultancy' and lacking 'impartiality and validity'. Karim (2001, p.34) notes that the "need to produce immediate and practical research findings puts pressure on participants, and may lead to scant attention to methodological rigour". Reflecting such concerns, Brydon-Miller *et al* (2003) recount how some sectors within academic institutions appear less than encouraging to those seeking to pursue action research.

Greenwood and Levin (2000) argue that action research provides an opportunity to integrate theory and praxis. Reason and Bradbury (2001a) identify a vast, multi-disciplinary theoretical base for action research; including pragmatic philosophy, the practice of democracy, constructionist theory and liberationist thought. Further, the reflective nature of the action research process provides opportunity for critical theory and reflexivity to be applied within the process. Action without reflection and understanding is blind, just as theory without action is meaningless (Reason & Bradbury, 2001a). Concern regarding methodological rigour such as that expressed by Karim (2001) can be applied to any research situation regardless of the approach taken. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure potential weakness within any particular approach is addressed through sound research design, and continuous monitoring of and reflection on the chosen research process.

The relativist ontology and subjective epistemology identified as the philosophical grounding for this thesis, combined with the co-generative process of action research clearly identifies that any outcomes and outputs will be context specific and recognised as but one interpretation of a number of possible realities that may have been negotiated. Marshall (2004a) proposes perceptions of 'quality' to be a more appropriate consideration of action research processes than 'validity'. Reason and Bradbury (2001c) encourage scholars to move beyond idealistic concerns for 'truth', suggesting instead concern for engagement, dialogue, pragmatic outcomes and emerging reflexivity contribute to what is important. The method of research employed; including notions of ethical behaviour, perceptions of usefulness, and the conclusions drawn, should reflect the perceptions of participants as well as be appropriate to one's ontological and epistemological positions and the beliefs which underpin these. Reason and Bradbury (2001c) and Reason (2003) encourage researchers to be clear in the decisions made throughout the research process. In doing so, the quality of inquiry becomes transparent to researchers, participants and readers.

2.2.1b   Appreciative inquiry

As a mode of action research, appreciative inquiry (Ai) challenges the problem-oriented approach often applied within organisational development; or indeed invoked by many in their overall approach to life! Any intervention within an organisation is recognised as creating change. Ai scholars (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000; Ludema, 2001; Ludema, Cooperrider, & Barrett, 2001; Ludema et al., 1997) highlight how 'deficit discourses' and the traditional problem solving approach can typically lead to an exaggerated focus on the weaknesses of the organisation – an approach which Cooperrider and Whitney (2000) suggest may become a degenerative spiral. As a tool for organisation change, development and inquiry, "appreciative inquiry provides a positive rather than a problem oriented lens on the organisation, focusing members' attention on what is possible rather than what is wrong" (van Buskirk, 2002, p.67). Appreciative inquiry has its foundations in the conceptual/ontological position of social constructionists, who work from the premise that language, knowledge and action are inextricably linked. Organisations are considered as the outcomes of their members' interactions within historical, cultural, social, economic, and political occurrences.

Cooperrider and Whitney (2000, p. 4) use dictionary definitions as a means of introducing appreciative inquiry:

> **Ap-pre'ci-ate**, v., 1. valuing; the act of recognising the best in people or the world around us; affirming past and present strengths, successes, and potentials; to perceive those things that give life (health, vitality, excellence) to living systems. 2. To increase in value, e.g. the economy has appreciated in value. Synonyms: valuing, prizing, esteeming, and honouring.

> **In-quire**' (kwir), v., 1. The act of exploration and discovery. 2. To ask questions; to be open to seeing new potentials and possibilities. Synonyms: discovery, search, and systematic exploration, study.

The above definitions are a useful introduction to the concept of Ai. They do not however, highlight the depth and multiple dimensions of the approach. Summing up appreciative inquiry is difficult. Proponents such as Cooperrider and Whitney (1999) advocate the approach may be a philosophy of knowing, a methodology for managing change, and/or an approach to leadership and human development. Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987, p 131) observe how the action researcher who adopts this mode of

inquiry "…is drawn to affirm, and thereby illuminate, the factors and forces involved in organising that serve to nourish the human spirit". With my intention to also apply a critical theory perspective within this thesis, I will explore the extent to which applications of appreciative inquiry may also contribute towards emancipation and flourishing within our communities. Figure 2.1 contrasts the traditional action research process with the appreciative inquiry process.

Figure 2.1 Contrast between traditional action research and appreciative inquiry

Problem Solving	**Appreciative Inquiry**
"Felt need" Identification of Problem	Appreciating and valuing the best of "What is"
↓	↓
Analysis of cause	Envisioning "What might be"
↓	↓
Analysis of possible solutions	Dialoguing "What should be"
↓	↓
Action planning (Treatment)	Innovating "What will be"
Basic Assumption: An organisation is a problem to be solved	*Basic Assumption:* An organisation is a mystery to be embraced
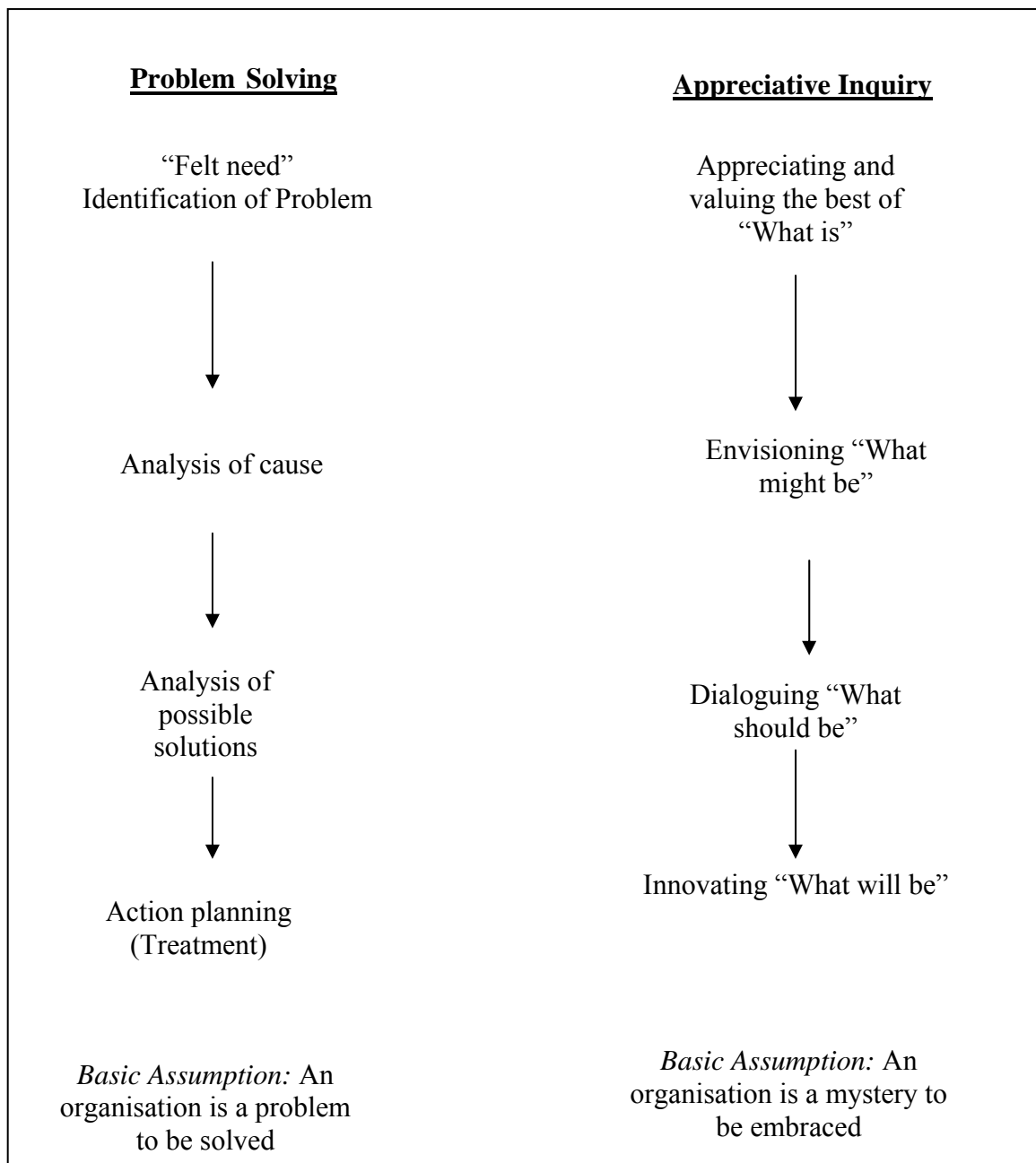
Source: Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987)

Stemming from Cooperrider and Srivastva's (1987) revised action research assumption that organisations are a mystery to be embraced, rather than a problem to be solved, scholars and practitioners have developed a variety of typologies that may represent the appreciative inquiry process. For example, Cooperrider and Whitney (2000) describe the 4D cycle (see figure 2.2), while Mohr and Jacobsgaard (cited in Watkins & Mohr, 2001) provide the 4I Model.

Figure 2.2   Appreciative inquiry 4D cycle
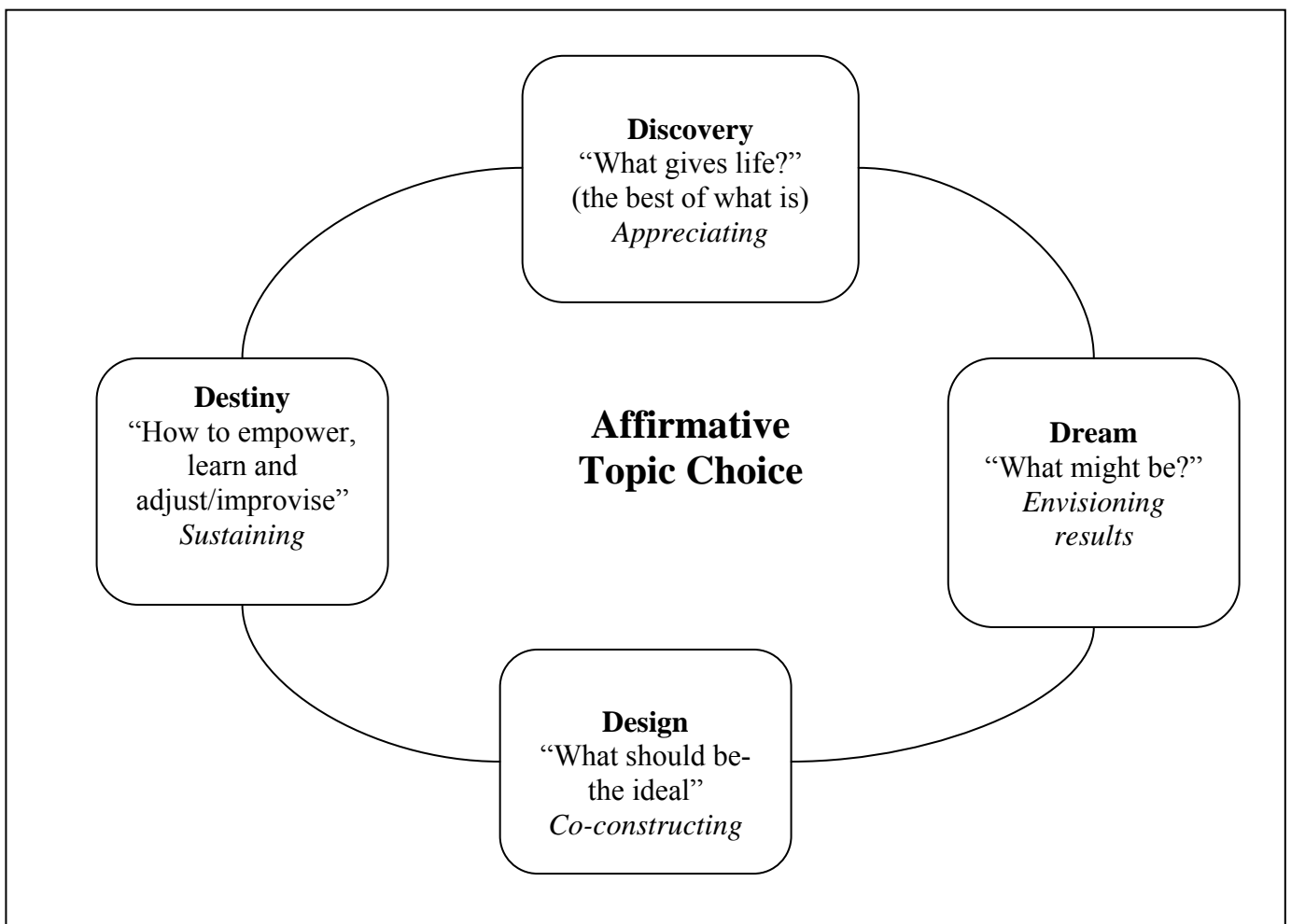
Source: Cooperrider and Whitney (2000)

"Appreciative inquiry is based on the premise that organisations move in the direction of what they study" (Ludema et al., 2001, p.191-192). Participants are encouraged to tell stories that help identify what is good in their organisation, providing a platform from which to move toward new action. Selecting a positive topic to explore is an essential starting point (Ludema et al., 2001). Once the topic has been identified, the typical opening questions may be "Describe a time when you feel the team/group performed really well. What were the circumstances during that time?" and/or "Describe a time when you were proud to be a member of the team/group. Why were you proud?" (Hammond, 1996). In organisations where a large number of participants are to be included, the process may involve waterfall interviews between pairs of colleagues. The core task of this phase is to identify what is working well in the organisation (in relation to the chosen topic) so that this foundation of strength can be built on as the process develops.

As the process moves into the envisioning and dialoguing phases (dream and design in the 4D model) participants are encouraged to dream of the ideal approach/situation (for their chosen topic) and how this position may be achieved. Several iterations of this phase may be required before the innovating (destiny) phase is entered. By this point it is anticipated that participants have not only begun to focus on how their vision can be implemented by building on the strengths identified in the preceding stages, but also have a greater awareness of their powers of interpretation and imagination, and the impact this world view has on their lives and the organisational worlds they create.

Five core principles and scholarly streams have been identified by scholars as central to Ai:

1) The constructionist principle: "Simply stated – human knowledge and organisational destiny are interwoven. To be effective as executives, leaders, change agents etc we must be adept in the art of understanding, reading and analysing organisations as living, human constructions. Knowing (organisations) stands at the centre of any and virtually every attempt at change. Thus the way we know is fateful" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000, p.17).

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2) <u>The principle of simultaneity</u>: "Here it is recognised that inquiry and change are not truly separate moments, but are simultaneous. Inquiry is intervention. The seeds of change – that is what people think and talk about, the things people discover and learn, and the things that inform dialogue and inspire images of the future are implicit in the very first question we ask. The questions we ask set the stage for what we 'find' and what we 'discover'…It is not so much "is my question leading to right or wrong answers?" but rather what impact is my question having on our lives together…. Is it helping to generate conversations about the good, the better, the possible…?" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000, p.18).

3) <u>The poetic principle</u>: "An organisation's story is constantly being co-authored. Pasts, presents, or futures are endless sources of learning, inspiration or interpretation – precisely like, for example, the endless interpretive possibilities in a good piece of poetry or a text" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000, p.18).

4) <u>The anticipatory principle</u>: "The image of the future guides what might be called the current behaviour of any organism or organisation" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000, p.19). The placebo effect discussed in medicine is a good example of this concept. People who believe their treatment will help them, typically have a better chance of recovery than those with a less positive outlook, regardless on what the 'actual;' therapeutic qualities of the treatment are supposed to be.

5) <u>The positive principle</u>: "Building and sustaining momentum for change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding….the more positive the question we ask in our work the more long lasting and successful the change effort" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000, p.20). The well known 'Pygmalion effect' provides an example of this principle, where students labelled as 'high potential' significantly out performed their classmates, when in fact they were no different from their class mates (Fitzgerald, Murrell, and Newman; 2001).

Watkins and Mohr (2001) combine these five core principles with five generic processes in their discussion of the "DNA of appreciative inquiry":

- Choose the positive as the focus of inquiry
- Inquire into stories of life giving forces
- Locate themes that appear in the stories and select topics for further inquiry
- Create shared images for a preferred future
- Find innovative ways to create that future

(Watkins & Mohr, 2001)

These core processes need not necessarily occur in an orderly, linear sequence. "They overlap and repeat themselves without predictability" (Watkins & Mohr, 2001, p39). While the two dimensions of principles and processes are continuously being refined, an understanding of the theoretical bases they provide is essential to the successful implementation of the appreciative inquiry process.

Appreciative inquiry, in the form of the 4D cycle (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000) described above, is the primary research method for the investigation described in this thesis. Appreciative inquiry has been applied to individuals, families, organisations and even entire countries (Rogers & Fraser, 2003). Applications include Mantel and Ludema's (2000) study into organisational development, Bushe (1998) and Ryan et al's (1999) investigations of change management, and Jacobsgaard (2003) and McNamee's (2003) evaluation studies. I describe my chosen research method in more detail, with specific reference to this investigation, in chapter 7. The approach is appropriate given my research objectives of understanding and enhancing not for profit governance. The appreciative inquiry cycle fits well with the self review process BOTs are required to undertake. Ultimately my research seeks to identify opportunities rather than focus on problems. Ludema, Cooperrider and Barrett (2001, p.178-179) propose that applications of Ai may bolster (internal) democratic and self organising processes within an organisation. There is potential within this investigation to see if these activities may in turn inform and enhance the processes of self governance and management undertaken by school BOTs.

Theoretical developments in organisational behaviour scholarship which complement Ai are reflected in the area described as 'positive organisation scholarship' (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003; Luthans, 2001, 2002a, 2002b; Peterson & Luthans, 2003). Scholars such as Schwartz and Post (2002) have in turn highlighted the significance of positive approaches to many areas of management and leadership, as well as the role of hope within organisations and the potential it can bring. Such developments could be seen as indications that leaders within organisations are becoming more open to considering holistic areas of well-being – beyond the restrictions of traditional work related functions. At a more practical level, initiatives such as community asset mapping (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) could be seen to correlate with appreciative inquiry. At a spiritual level, Reason (2000) identifies similarities between appreciative

inquiry and the via Positiva, one of the four paths of creation spirituality introduced by Fox (1991).

In their review of the literature, van der Haar & Hosking (2004) report that there is little published research critiquing the appreciative inquiry process itself. They identify three quantitative empirical studies: Bushe and Coetzer (1995), Head (2000), and Jones (1998). All three of these studies consider situations prior to and after an appreciative inquiry, comparing the changes induced by Ai with changes influenced by alternative change methodologies. Bushe and Khamisa (2004) provide a further critique as they focus on evaluating the 'effectiveness' of Ai as judged by their definition of specific social change. The authors' examined twenty cases of published appreciative inquiries which sought to achieve change in social systems. Of the cases studied, 35% resulted in what the authors deemed to be 'transformational change'.

A common critique of appreciative inquiry is that it is 'too Pollyanna-ish' or excessively focused on 'warm, fuzzy group hugs' (Fitzgerald, Murrell, & Newman, 2001). Pratt (2002, p.119) calls our attention to "the need to honour the multiple and undivided realities of human experience in organisations", and Reason (2000) questions the 'danger of ignoring the shadow'. Rogers and Fraser (2003, p.77) question whether Ai encourages "unrealistic and dysfunctional perceptions, attitudes and behaviour". Golembiewski (2000) purports that Ai is currently under evaluated and discourages analysis. Other shortcomings identified by Golembiewski include a lack of linkages to other theory and practice, lack of a 'critical imperative' and sparse availability of research literature.

Despite the seemingly appropriate match between the method and my research objectives, at a personal level my response to a first reading about Ai was: is this too 'good' to be 'true'? Is it too 'Pollyanna-ish'? As my interest in this research method grew, so too did my questions. Was the growing body of Ai literature and 'increased popularity' (Dick, 2004) support for an innovative approach to change management or was it evidence of a 'management fad' such as those considered by Collins (2000; 2003)? I was curious as to whether Ai could provide a robust foundation for a thesis. Dick (2004) observes Ai literature to be almost 'evangelical' about its own advantages. Hence at a theoretical level, possible bias from the positive orientation of

an Ai provides opportunities to consider the influence 'vocabularies of hope' (Ludema, 2001) may have on the research process in general, and governance processes specifically. Does an appreciative inquiry risk distortion by its emphasis of the positive, as does a plant that may grow lopsided as it reaches for the light? (Rogers & Fraser, 2003).

Van der Haar (2002) begins to address some of the concerns raised in literature, arguing that appreciative inquiry and any subsequent evaluation should not be understood as two separate and independent activities. Rather she suggests we might think of them as an interwoven and ongoing process. Van der Haar (2002) suggests focusing on discourses of evaluation that incorporate the performative nature of language and dialogue, reflection and opening up towards multiple possibilities, the co-existence of multiple social realities, ethics and power. This work is extended in van der Haar and Hosking (2004) where a responsive evaluation is presented. Consistent with their identified relational constructionist view, the authors "recognise and give space to multiple local realities (as ontologies), emergent ongoing processes, and reflexivity" (van der Haar & Hosking 2004, p1032). In doing so, they seek to honour the multiple expertises and local knowledge(s) that may contribute to the appreciative inquiry process.

Rogers and Fraser (2003) set out to 'appreciate appreciative inquiry' with an aim to developing "a rounded understanding of its strengths and limitations from different perspectives and to increase its value to evaluators…" (Rogers & Fraser, 2003, p.75). The authors focus primarily on Ai as a means of evaluation, acknowledging that the approach is better suited to certain situations; such as long standing programmes which may require an infusion of positive energy, or when the purpose of the evaluation is not to identify unknown problems but to identify strengths and build courage (Rogers & Fraser, 2003). As such Rogers and Fraser identify that perceptions of a 'successful' appreciative inquiry may be influenced by the implementation process and the extent to which key principles are adhered to.

Although all of these works (Bushe & Khamisa, 2004; Rogers & Fraser, 2003; van der Haar, 2002; van der Haar & Hosking, 2004) begin to address the gap in scholarship relating to the analysis and/or evaluation of appreciative inquiry, none incorporates a practical application of the method by the authors themselves. My critical analysis of appreciative inquiry as a research method, based on my own experiences and reflections, thus contributes to this area of scholarship.

Lacey (1996) suggests the concept of 'analysis' is ambiguous. Honderich (1995, p.28) takes a similar stance suggesting "there is no one method or set of methods that can be claimed as definitive of it [analysis]". There are however, defining [paradigm specific] ways in which analysis may be expected to be undertaken, so that any careful, detailed and rigorous [paradigm specific] approach which throws light on the nature and implications of concepts under consideration (Honderich, 1995) might be considered to be 'analysis'. Although analysis may be seen as an essential and distinct activity, separate from evaluation and action (Pages, 1999), I propose analysis makes an important contribution to both.

Consistent with social constructionist epistemology and the need to recognise influences unique to the inquiry in question, I suggest that any analysis is only meaningful to a particular investigation. While I find many of the points raised by van der Haar (2002) and van der Haar and Hosking (2004) pertinent, they do not all fit with my own values and/or research experiences. I perceive a danger of being caught with no ground/platform to stand on if multiple representations of reality are identified without also recognising their foundations and interpretations. Everyone's experience within, and perceptions of, the research process are unique. In this instance I choose to relate only *my own* experiences and reflections. Bushe and Coetzer (1995) argue that the full merits of Ai should be assessed by methods that are consistent with its central assumptions. To this end, I suggest consistency can be seen between analysis as a means of inquiry and the poetic principle of appreciative inquiry identified earlier in this section. There is potential for endless interpretative possibilities, providing sources of learning and/or inspiration. Further, van der Haar and Hosking (2004, p1027) suggest Ai premises may facilitate 'critical' processes – "where critical means being sensitive to multiple constructions of identities and relations (including power), and action to open up possibilities". Bearing in mind my

concern with the too 'good' to be 'true' view of Ai, this invitation to a critical perspective intrigued me. I chose to investigate what a critical, reflexive analysis of Ai might be. This choice invited my exploration of critical theory, contributing towards the second path of my PhD journey.

2.2.2   The second path

2.2.2a   Critical theory

Before I identify the theoretical influences within my interpretation of critical theory, it is important to acknowledge one of the 'stumbling blocks' I have had to overcome on my journey. Reflection on my initial approach to research, evidenced within my early writing and previous research experiences, highlighted my tendency to draw away from using the term 'critical theory' - as it seemed to me instinctively to relate primarily to the work of esteemed scholars such as those associated with the Frankfurt School. I often felt uncomfortable with the negativity I perceived in this field of scholarship. Through their contemporary application of critical theory, Alvesson and Deetz (2000) provided me with a lift over my stumbling block. " (Critical) Theory" they write "is a way of seeing and thinking about the world, rather than an abstract representation of it" (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p.37). My discomfort with the term diminished. Conceiving of critical theory as a 'lens' rather than a 'mirror' is helpful. We are able to use theories to direct our attention and to focus our vision. "What are we able to see or think about if we talk about it in this way rather than that?" (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p.43). My chosen theories become like various spectacles for my journey. I am mindful that by choosing one lens rather than another, I affect what might be seen and what might be rendered out of focus/invisible by that choice.

While literature has tended to at times 'lump together' a range of concepts under this label (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000), Carr (2000) proposes the term 'critical theory' has a 'two-fold' meaning. Primarily, it is used to refer to the work in philosophy and social science of scholars such as Horkheimer, Ardono, Fromm, Marcuse and Habermas associated with the Frankfurt School (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Carr, 2000). Founded at the end of the 1920s, much of the early work of this Institute sought to address the social and political challenges faced by Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. Although the geographic location of the members varied during and after

World War II, their efforts to challenge the social theories of the time continued. While each of these scholars had their own focus, their collective work is recognised for its pronounced interest in disputing taken-for-granted social realities (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000).

In line with and incorporating this focus is a second, more general, meaning of 'critical theory' – namely a process that aims to produce a particular kind of knowledge that seeks to realise an emancipatory interest, specifically through critique of consciousness and ideology (Carr 2000, p.209). Akin to the paradigm described by Burrell and Morgan (1979) as 'radical humanist', critical theory draws attention to the political dimension in research (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000). This broader definition allows the work of such scholars as Derrida, Foucault and Lyotard to be included under the critical theory umbrella, with human emancipation a common theme throughout critical theory literature. Critical theory assists in drawing insights into the everyday, practical manner in which power is deployed and potential conflicts suppressed (Alvesson & Willmott, 2003). It is this second approach to critical theory that I believe can contribute towards an analysis of appreciative inquiry as a research method.

Bridging an apparent paradox

Applying a critical perspective with its attendant reputation for negativity to the paradigm of appreciative inquiry may appear paradoxical. Indeed my initial reaction was that the two approaches were almost contradictory. However, as my reading and reflection on the relevant theoretical foundations and applications matured, I began both to identify similarities and to value apparent differences. I treated the apparent contradiction as a paradox.

In everyday discourse a paradox might be seen as an interesting and thought provoking contradiction (Poole & van de Ven, 1989). Poole and van de Ven (1989) encourage researchers to recognise the value in such situations. Perceived theoretical tensions might be considered so as to enhance understanding and applications of theory, rather than constrain them. The energy generated from working with/through the paradox may manifest alternative insights that one would not have reached by ignoring the paradox, or by working with just one dimension of it. The idea that

seemingly contradictory or opposing concepts spring from a common source differentiates paradox from conflict (Smith & Berg, 1987) and in doing so may provide life giving or emancipatory opportunities. For example, although they appear to reside in opposing paradigms, both appreciative inquiry and critical theory share a common research objective. Through their commitment to change, researchers in both paradigms seek to encourage and facilitate flourishing within our communities.

Appreciative inquiry and critical theory share an epistemological base in the premises of social constructionist theories. Both deem language to be central to all action. Meaning is negotiated between participants. Just as "breaking up established ways of using language is a vital task for critical research" (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p.55), appreciative inquiry challenges researchers and participants to move beyond the problematic discourse often associated with the research process. Building on, and recognising how power may be gained (or lost) through applications of language, both approaches highlight the importance of reflection in the research process, opening doors to new possibilities (Carr, 2000).

"Appreciation is not just looking at the good stuff" (Rogers & Fraser, 2003, p.75). Rogers and Fraser (2003) encourage an enriched understanding of Ai, developed through considering different perspectives. Patton (2003) observes how 'dreams and wishes' (such as those generated in the dream phase of the 4D appreciative inquiry cycle depicted in figure 2.2) often identify existing weaknesses from the perspective of the participating dreamers. Thus, in addition to signifying value, appreciation also means 'to know, to be conscious of, to take full and sufficient account of'. Implications arising from this enhanced interpretation of 'appreciation' will be discussed in chapter 10 of this thesis. I suggest application of critical theory may help to uncover influences we may not be conscious of, such as to consider 'hidden' sources of power, and thus to gain an enriched appreciation of the situation and processes under investigation.

As part of their efforts to look beyond what is 'taken-for granted' and to challenge what appears to be 'familiar' and 'accepted', critical theorists employ a range of approaches such as dissensus, resistance reading, and the application of negative dialect. All of these approaches appear in direct contrast to those promoted within traditional appreciative inquiry scholarship. Alvesson and Deetz (2000, p.182) note the need for critical research to guard against "the fallacy of hyper-critique, the one sided and intolerant approach in which only what is seen as the imperfections of the world are highlighted". Critique, they argue, need not equate with criticism and negativity and contributions of empirical research may reduce the tendency of negativity in much of critical theory. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) however, warn of the difficulty of combining critical theory with empirical work.

Through the inclusion of a critical theory perspective in my analysis of empirical material, as well as through my analysis of appreciative inquiry as a research process, I contribute to the field of scholarship encouraged by Alvesson and Deetz (2000). I also begin to address Reason's (2000) expressions of unease that through its emphasis on the positive those involved in an appreciative inquiry risk ignoring 'the shadow' and depth(s) of understanding that may reside there. A negative bias need not be the primary influence in an application of critical theory. I recognise my ability as a researcher to influence the research process. "Critical theory does not have to be based on a fundamentally negative view of society, but perhaps on a recognition that certain social phenomena warrant scrutiny based on an emancipatory cognitive interest" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p.127). I propose appreciative inquiry and critical theory have the potential to provide balance to their respective applications, reducing the possibility of distortion which may occur when only one theoretical lens is applied within an investigation. With this in mind, I turn my attention to potential applications of critical theory that may assist my analysis of appreciative inquiry.

Dimensions of critical theory

Critical theorists focus on the exposure and transformation of what they understand to be processes of domestication, domination or exploitation. Counter to the expressed ideals of democratic societies, these processes may be easily recognised by the wider community, or they may require deeper analysis and explanation, particularly where the conditions of hegemony might be argued to exist. At any time, in any situation, moments of liberatory action may be identified and emancipation enhanced. The dynamic is never static. Fluctuating levels of emancipatory or domesticating processes may be experienced in families, organisations, communities and nations. Emancipation may have political implications for some, spiritual implications for others (Humphries, Black, & Fitzgibbons, 2006). Within the social constructionist view of human endeavours, researchers (in the broadest definition of this term), are always active in these processes.

Kemmis (1993) proposes that the work of Habermas may provide a useful framework for critical analysis that does not weigh down the researcher with negativity, and provides a directive towards emancipatory possibilities. Such an approach complements my own desire to not shy away from the explanatory power of critical theory, not to be demoralized by the focus on the challenges that such analyses may bring, and to be inspired by the transformative contribution that has its potential in the situation under analysis. The transformative aspirations of both critical theorists and appreciative inquiry as brought together in this thesis contribute both to the understanding and enhancing of the work of BOTs *and* to the organisational processes of societies aspiring to democratic ideals.

Habermas' theory of communicative action is proposed as a useful approach for the critical analysis of fieldwork in general (Forester, 2003) and action research specifically (Kemmis, 2001). The participative and positive environment encouraged by the appreciative inquiry approach creates a communicative space within which 'ideal speech' i.e. communication which promotes unconstrained consensus ('truth'), unimpaired self representation (freedom), and universal norms (justice) (Love, 1995, p.54), may occur. Generating a variety of forms of participation may increase the means through/within which this communicative space may develop. Focusing on the communicative practices, i.e. actions of both speakers and listeners, may assist with

establishing what differences these practices can and do make (Innes, 1995 cited in Forester, 2003). Kemmis (2001) explores the relevance of critical theory to action research practices, noting the compatibility of the emancipatory and critical focus of Habermas (particularly his theory of communicative action) to those action research practices which seek to connect with personal and political influences.

Habermas' conception of the lifeworld encompasses the 'taken for granted', 'who we are' and 'what we value' everyday sphere where social interaction takes place amid cultural, social and personal influences. The concept of the lifeworld sits well with an action research environment such as that which may be the location of an appreciative inquiry. Social, cultural and personal dimensions may take different shapes and forms, but all combine to contribute to relationships and interactions within the lifeworld. Indeed the lifeworld *is* interaction, transmitted and renewed through language. Creating a communicative space to facilitate open dialogue is of primary concern to those who seek to contribute to societies that express democratic ideals across all forms of organisation.

When language and interactions are use to provide a balanced range of opportunities for participation an ideal speech situation is encouraged (Twiname, Humphries, & Kearins, 2006). An ideal speech situation assumes unforced consensus is emergent and that appropriate forms of action may be pursued (Alvesson & Willmott, 1996). Consensus is not however, assumed to be constant, or achieved 'once and for all'. Indeed, consensus is an ideal that may never be achieved. Sanctions, restrictions and inactivity may impede the ideal sought. People may be unwilling or unable to engage in open debate. Uncritically chosen or externally imposed lexicons may either facilitate or impede dialogue. If those involved are not able or willing to speak openly and effectively, if some are unable to impute their meaning to concepts under discussion, little understanding let alone consensus is likely to be achieved.

Brand (1990, p.34) propose that the lifeworld "cannot be reduced to a storehouse of frameworks of interpretation". I too perceive the sphere of the lifeworld as organic, ever changing, as the interactions of our daily lives renegotiate our realities. A focus on an 'everyday world of social interaction' is consistent with my interest in a social constructionist approach to my work. This approach allows me to consider the

significance of the sphere in which the activities of the participants in this investigation takes place. Such representation is, to me, more meaningful than an abstract conception of action which gives little regard to daily activity or social context.

In addition to the sphere of the lifeworld, Habermas also identifies a complementary sphere of activity: 'the system'. "The system, in short, works through institutions and collective actors, through structure and actions" (Swingewood, 2000, p.207). Within this sphere, steering media such as money and power may take over the integrative role of language (Brand, 1990) located within defined, and at times reified, areas of operation such as 'the state', 'the economy', and 'the organisation'. Neither the lifeworld nor the system is seen by Habermas to be more important than the other - it is the interconnection between the spheres, and the resulting tensions, which he deems important. "The tension between the lifeworld and the system is both an index of potential crisis and emancipation" (Swingewood, 2000, p.234). However, expansion of the system undertaken to accommodate social tensions such as those driven by capitalist modes of production is of concern to Habermas. He describes such activity as the colonisation of the lifeworld (Brand, 1990).

Examples of Habermas' concern about the colonisation of the lifeworld by the system are increasingly being explored within organisational theory. 'Management', for example, is portrayed by Alvesson and Willmott (1996) as a metaphor harnessed to the colonising processes of corporate capitalism. These authors express concern for how lifeworld values may be suppressed through pressures of commercialisation. In a similar vein, I suggest the pressure on not for profit organisations such as schools to adopt business models illustrates how the lifeworld of community organisations may be under threat. From a methodological perspective Alvesson and Deetz (2000) draw on the work of Habermas to demonstrate the incompletion of the positive potentialities of the Enlightenment. Might this be a precursor to, or a mandate for, engaging in the transformative potential of appreciative inquiry? Indeed, Habermas' positing of an ideal lifeworld – a state of free and equal, undistorted communication (Swingewood, 2000) can be seen to complement the dream phase of the 4D appreciative inquiry cycle (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2000). It is the influence of system imperatives such as power, perceived status, and/or money which complicate

interactions. Continuing the example of the 4D cycle of appreciative inquiry, the potential tension between the lifeworld and system spheres identified by Habermas, may be taken into account as an appreciative inquiry enters the design and destiny phases.

Two further characteristics of Habermas' work fit well with my proposed enrichment of appreciative inquiry theory through its association with a critical paradigm. A Habermasian approach to fieldwork does not presume that ideal conditions and/or discourse will necessarily eventuate in the field (Forester, 2003) – a premise well suited to the challenges of participant driven action research practices such as appreciative inquiry. Relief from the burden of achieving 'the ideal' allows the researcher to investigate the actual communicative practices which shape relationships (Forester, 2003) rather than be constrained by preoccupations of expected outcomes. Further the critical approach portrayed by Habermas appears consistent with that of the ideals of appreciative inquiry. Alvesson and Deetz (2000) acknowledge the 'affirmative agenda' of the theory of communicative action, while Kemmis (1991, 2003) suggests the same offers 'humane, convivial and rational resources' for analysis and/or evaluation.

An emancipatory intent is common to both critical theory and appreciative inquiry. Both approaches encourage researchers and participants to look beyond (and indeed challenge) accepted 'norms', when implementing change to encourage and facilitate human flourishing (Reason & Bradbury, 2001a). Concern for exploitive and/or domesticating practices which encroach upon wellbeing and/or constrain achievement of potential may be framed within discussion of the lifeworld and systems and potential colonisation. I identified in chapter 1 my growing awareness of how my perceptions and aspirations of emancipation have changed and developed within this investigation. This awareness has seen my interest develop beyond a simple desire to 'help' BOTs - to encompass and contribute to a wider discussion on the need for greater appreciation and debate of the current context in which BOTs govern. Emancipation is also an aspiration at a theoretical level within my critical analysis of appreciative inquiry. "Laying out the driving interests and mechanisms of knowledge production and defence is central to understanding how they work" (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p.47). Hence, through applications of critical theory such as those

approaches identified above, I might begin to better understand not just how an appreciative inquiry might be developed, but to consider also the knowledge and power influences which might be negotiated as the process unfolds and on what basis such negotiation might be used to contribute to the flourishing of communities.

Consideration of critical theory and appreciative inquiry processes as described in this and the preceding sections, highlights the need for me to embrace a reflexive methodology. This understanding enables the researcher to adopt a more open and varied approach to the analysis and interpretation, as will be presented in chapters 9 and 10 of this thesis. Reflexive methodology is outlined briefly in the following section.

2.2.2b Reflexivity

As a craftsperson might use different tools to achieve different outcomes, so too do I use a variety of theoretical approaches at various stages of the research process. A critical perspective, questioning power and politics will be evident in the thematic analysis stages of this investigation. However; restricting my method of interpretation to only one approach may limit my 'horizon of understanding' (Gergen, 1999b). By adopting a reflexive methodology a more comprehensive, encompassing approach is taken, potentially incorporating critical, hermeneutic, and post modern orientations (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000), thus providing greater depth of insight.

Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) advocate reflexivity to be both multidimensional and interactive, emphasising a broader, multilevel area of reflection than that often associated with first person action research processes such as those described in section 2.2.3b. Reflexivity occurs at, and between, multiple levels of interpretation from the initial interactions with empirical material through to reflection on the production of the final text through which the research will be presented to the wider community.

A reflexive methodology comprises two basic characteristics: careful interpretation and reflection (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000). Careful interpretation requires "utmost awareness of theoretical assumptions, the importance of language and pre-understanding, all of which constitute major determinants of the interpretation" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p.5). In short, this part of the approach includes all the concepts identified so far within this chapter as influencing the methodology of this thesis! "The second element, reflection, turns attention 'inwards', towards the person of the researcher…." (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p.5). First person action research practices, including reflection, ensure this element is addressed within this thesis. These practices are discussed in the following section.

2.2.3   The third path

2.2.3a   First person action research

First person action research practice encourages researchers to adopt an inquiring approach to life as well as research, developing self awareness and consciousness with regards to decisions made and actions taken (Reason & Bradbury, 2001a). Reflection plays a crucial role in first person action research practice. "Reflective learning is directed towards increasing self awareness, developing skills, making connections with formal knowledge and exploring the wider context in which the learning is taking place" (Boud et al, 1985 cited in Cooper & Briggs, 2000, p.237).

Reason and Marshall (1987; 2001) describe how development of first person action research practices exemplifies research as a personal process. My own experience resonates with this view when I read how "research contributes to personal motivation and development" (Reason & Marshall, 1987) for the impetus for embarking on my PhD journey was to achieve a long time goal; perhaps with a subconscious attempt at what Reason and Marshall (2001) describe as a form of self emancipation or retreat. Recognition of the personal side of research is evidenced within the subjectivity each person brings to the process (Marshall, 1981). Hence, it is through this medium that I make my contribution as a researcher.

"Rather than subjectivity being seen as a negative attribute, qualitative writers recognise that researchers thoughts cannot, and indeed should not, be separated from the research process" (Glaze, 2002, p.154). In spite of such claims, Torbett (2001, p.250) observes how "we rarely experience ourselves as present in a wondering, inquiring, 'mindful' way to our own action", suggesting the difficulty of obtaining this awareness contributes to its infrequent practice. My experiences during my doctoral studies extend this claim. I suggest we must first reach a certain stage of development/intellectual maturity before we are not only able to comprehend both the need for and value of such self awareness, but also be able to channel any feelings of discomfort which arise from this self awareness in a manner which may further both our development and knowledge. In my introduction to this chapter, I described how the 'research proper' (or so I thought) had been and gone before I became aware that something was still 'missing' in the overall process. First person action research practices, reflecting and reporting on the assumptions of my chosen method, my influence within the research process and the impact of the research on who I am [becoming] contributes towards filling this gap.

As intellectual competence develops so too does the ability of the researcher to develop their own frameworks and ideas and present them in their own 'voice'; thus moving beyond the 'safety nets' of an encompassing literature review (Reason & Marshall, 2001). Marshall (2001) proposes inner and outer arcs of attention may help develop the self awareness which contributes to such intellectual competence. Inner arcs relate to issues of perception, framing and patterns of speech I may employ. Outer arcs may involve learning about the situation, self, issues and others in the research process (Marshall, 2001). Evidence of my developing inner arcs is reinforced to me, through my growing recognition that it is through the use of language that people express their aspirations as well as exercise their influence! Increasingly I find myself editing and re-editing my writing, or deliberating as I speak; to ensure I choose what I perceive to be the most appropriate word for the context I face. This conscious choice of lexicon may also influence my power in and on the communication taking place (Fetterman, 1993) and is further discussed in chapter 10. The style in which this thesis is presented is a case in point. While acknowledging the requirements of academia, this is after all *my* thesis, so it is important to me that '*my voice/style*' be clearly evident. According to Marshall (2001, p.434), developing outer arcs of

attention provides the possibility for enlightenment as "I reach outside myself in some way". Through application of my chosen research lenses I have begun to grasp the importance of the overall research context. For example, at first glance certain events seemed to me to be hindering participation in the research process. I now recognise these same events to be important contributors to the unique context within which each case study is situated.

Developing self awareness within the research process is akin to 'researcher positioning'. Researcher positioning has been described in literature in many different ways. For example: Orland-Barak (2002) and Glaser (1978) write of 'theoretical sensitivity'; Fagenson (1990) discusses 'theoretical and methodological biases'; while concepts such as 'insider/outsider' (Bolak, 1996; Horn, 1997), 'researchers and subjects' (Ritchie & Rigano, 2001), and a 'dialogue with self' (Glaze 2002) begin to highlight how a researcher's culture, gender, vocation and even self perceptions may influence the research process. Each influence may contribute to a different outcome or interpretation in the research presented. Encouraged by the work of Whitehead and Delong (2003) I must reflect on how the research fits into my life, how I in turn fit into the research process, and what are the embodied values I bring to my research.

The functionalist focus of the initial part of this investigation, stemming from my then current involvement with a primary school BOT, has already been identified in sections 1.2 and 2.0. Prior involvement such as this illustrates Harris's (2001) suggestion that scholars frequently study organisations of which they have personal experience and/or involvement. Insider/outsider status in the researcher process is often described in the literature in terms of gender, ethnicity, age and/or culture (Bolak, 1996; Fagenson, 1990). Yet I did not consider my position in these terms until my reflections on such scholarship prompted me to do so! Instead my self perceived identity was framed in terms of being a fellow Trustee, a researcher, and a parent. The social construction of a researcher's position is evident when Bolak (1996) observes the continuum along which a researcher may be positioned. There is no clear cut position, and the position negotiated is dependant on both the participants' perception(s) as well as that of the researcher.

In three of the four case studies undertaken in this investigation I was an outsider to the school Board; although by virtue of my own experience as a school Trustee I have an 'insider's understanding' of the legal requirements of governance and some of the issues a Board may face. In the fourth instance, School D, I was an insider, a (then) existing member of the Board. Influenced by my reflections on my position as an insider, this part of the research investigation progressed in an entirely different direction. As community issues distracted the Board's focus from their research participation, my position as an insider allowed me to focus instead on the 'tone' of discourse invoked by the Board. My observations of my 'self' at work began to influence how I came to think of myself, the work of the BOT, the social/political context of this work, and most significantly the shape of this PhD!

My early attempts at self awareness led me to consider *Who am I?* For example in terms of my ideological self, as well as my self as a Trustee, citizen, researcher, and/or doctoral candidate. I believe it is prudent to share with the reader, at this stage of my journey, some of my background that has brought me to begin this journey in the first place. According to Harris (2001) life experiences both enable and inhibit particular kinds of insight, so it is important that the reader is aware of not only the context in which the investigation took place, but the context from which the interpretations and values that I bring to the investigation stem.

Who am I?

As the only child of hardworking Pakeha parents, I grew up in a single industry town in New Zealand. I was considered by those around me to be a high achiever at school, and to some extent I basked in my parents' pride as I successfully completed each stage of my education. As I grew older I became aware of the expectations of those around me that I would 'do well'. Perhaps reflecting these expectations, I set high standards against which I would measure my own perceptions of achievement. After completing high school in 1984 I moved to a nearby university city to undertake a four year Bachelor of Management Studies. My choice of degree was influenced by my having excelled at seemingly 'relevant' topics such as accounting and economics at school. It all seemed the 'logical' thing to do.

After graduation I entered the corporate world full of enthusiasm. Gradually however, I became disillusioned with the self centred, profit driven motives exhibited around me, and which the business leaders my position reported to expected I would adopt. I chose not to return to full time employment following the birth of my daughter in 1994. Two years later I returned to University to complete my Masters of Management Studies. At this time I gained part time employment with a family oriented, Christian based, not for profit magazine distributed free to households around New Zealand. This was an organisation where the management and leadership put people, their staff and their potential readers, first. My passion for the community sector was ignited. I had found an organisation comprised of like minded people! My subsequent work, community, and academic activities began to reflect these interests.

I began my PhD journey in my mid thirties, juggling the responsibilities associated with my various commitments. To those around me I was seen to be (amongst other things) a student, employee, mother, wife, daughter, granddaughter, friend, and by this stage in my life a school Trustee. My studies at Masters level had introduced me to new ways of thinking. I wanted to make a difference. Social constructionism, action research and emancipatory ideals provided alternative lenses through which I could view the world around me. I began to feel more comfortable using these lenses as I became more familiar with them and the insights they gave me on my own maturing world views. I had become increasingly more sceptical of the world around me, and these new (to me) approaches seemed to provide hope for alternatives. The ideals of action research and appreciative inquiry had a motivating influence on me. Deep down there was also a personal desire to achieve more knowledge through formal education, for myself and for my family. Foucault observed that "the main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning" (Martin, 1988 p.9). Although I knew I was embarking on an educational journey which sought to produce some form(s) of knowledge, I don't believe I fully comprehended the extent to which the process would change me as a person.

Why did I embark on this journey?

That my initial research topic should develop from my then current involvement as a school Trustee should not be surprising, as Harris (2001) observes scholars frequently study organisations of which they themselves have experience and/or an involvement. Similarly, it is important to recognise the intent behind an inquiry (Marshall, 2004a). In this instance, my personal frustrations and experiences of a school Board working in isolation were a driving force behind my initial interest in how information and communication technologies might be able to enhance governance activities. My return to post graduate (Masters) study had facilitated my introduction to the Internet. Changes in information gathering processes between this time and my earlier undergraduate experiences were significant. As a busy mother and student I had welcomed the speed and flexibility provided through use of technologies such as online databases and email. Subsequent employment found me researching the reported benefits of e-commerce and e-education. Perhaps similar technologies could be engaged to assist school Boards of Trustees…???

So where to from here?

Neither 'knowledge' nor my 'self' are static or one-dimensional. I now recognise there is no single view or conclusion I could come to and represent as 'truth'. Hence, in addition to the above reflections, questions such as 'what effect(s) does the investigation have on my personal development?' must also be addressed. (These reflections will be set out in chapter 10 as I reflect on the research process.) I must consider the perceptions others in the research process (such as participants, supervisors, and examiners) may have of me. As I travel down this path, I retrace my steps to the social constructionist foundations of this research (Burr, 1995). Orland-Barak (2002) draws on Blumenthal's (1999) metaphor of the researcher possessing 'mobile and multiple selves', which themselves are dynamic and often competing. My challenge within this part of my journey is not only to identify and understand these identities, but to appreciate (in every sense of the word!) and apply the different contributions each is able to bring to my scholarship. From one perspective I find the term 'action research' to be almost deceptive. 'Action' in everyday discourse implies 'physical activity', yet as this journey has progressed the value of reflection has become increasingly obvious to me.

2.2.3b   **Reflection**

Much of the preceding discussion has explicitly called attention to the significance of (self) reflection within the critical paradigm. Little detail as to what this often mysterious/ambiguous term means (to me at least), why it is important, or how it may be accomplished, has yet been included. This section begins to address this gap.

Steier (1991, p.1) suggests that if "researchers and scholars are to take seriously principles of (social) constructionism, these very same principles must be applied by researchers to themselves and their research." I have already declared that this thesis is a representation of my perception of the research process, and hence a social construction. Incorporating reflection into the research process ensures I also scrutinise my contributions within this social construction and the effect(s) subsequent interactions have on 'me'. The links between reflection and first person action research discussed above in section 2.2.3a now become apparent. Indeed, first person action research practices may incorporate all of the reflective concepts discussed here.

The terms reflection and reflexivity are often used synonymously (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000). Typically such scholarship draws "attention to the complex relationship between processes of knowledge production and the various contexts of such processes as well as the involvement of the knowledge producer" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p.5). Specific meanings however, have been attributed to reflexivity and reflection within this thesis. They are treated as subtly distinct concepts. Reflexivity incorporates a multi-dimensional, multi-level approach, whereby interpretation may be applied simultaneously across one or more levels of the research process. Reflection, in comparison, restricts analysis and interpretation to one level of inquiry. For example, the reflection cycles within action research practice may encompass both reflexivity, as discussed in section 2.2.2b, and reflection as discussed here. Thus, literature which often discusses reflexivity may often be applied to reflection and vice versa.

Bartlett (1987) observes that reflection albeit known by various labels, features in scholarship across numerous disciplines and hence takes numerous forms and definitions. Terminology consistent with the view I have taken in this thesis includes 'being conscious of ourselves as we see ourselves' (Steier, 1991), 'bending back on oneself' (Mead, 1962), 'self-reference' (Bartlett & Suber, 1987), 'critical subjectivity' (Reason, 1988b), 'mindfulness' (Kabat-Zinn, 1994) and 'recognising oneself as a social construction' (Steier, 1991). Moon (1999) builds from 'common sense views' suggesting reflection to be a process that incorporates learning, implies a purpose, and is applied in situations where material is ill-structured or uncertain in that it has no obvious solutions. Whilst agreeing with her first two premises, I take issue with her suggested third. Recognition of multiple realities opens the door to the need for reflection regardless of structure or solutions; while interpretation of concepts of structure and uncertainty will differ with each negotiated reality. Reason (1988b; 2000) and Kabat-Zinn (1994) include a spiritual dimension as part of reflection, incorporating practices such as yoga and meditation. Meditation, for example, may still the mind - opening the possibility for deeper insight to develop. Representing reflection in many forms, all of the foregoing descriptions could be incorporated into first person action research as described in section 2.2.3a of this thesis.

Moon (2003) turns to fiction using J.K Rowling's concept of a 'pensieve' to illustrate the process of reflection. In the Harry Potter series, Professor Dumbledore describes the implement to Harry thus:

> I sometimes find, and I am sure you know the feeling, that I simply have too many thoughts and memories crammed into my mind…at these times…I use the Pensieve. One simply siphons the excess thoughts from one's mind, pours them into the basin, and examines them at one's leisure. It becomes easier to spot patterns and links, you understand, when they are in this form (Rowling, 2000, p.518-519).

I often use my daily walk to 'file' my thought processes from the day, and make sense of what has been happening within and around me. At times, this reflection has been 'formalised' in the form of 'thought pieces'. I have found writing these pieces to be one of the most enjoyable and motivating parts of the research/reflection process. In addition, I must also pay tribute to the reflection/feedback which occurs in general discussions with fellow PhD students. With this form of reflection reinforcing both the personal and social dimensions of research, the value of grouping students

together goes far beyond the financial and space saving benefits obtained by the university!

The foregoing begins to build a picture of the multiple forms and approaches that can be taken with regard to reflection, be it as part of a research process, within life in general, or as Marshall (1999) suggests both! I propose such descriptions run the risk of 'falling short' however; instilling a sense of remoteness, and failing to make the process 'real'. Bartlett (1987, p.7) suggests the concept of reflection (or self reference as he describes it) is "best understood informally, by experience rather than by stipulated or hypothetical definition". This stance is consistent with the action research approach I have taken within this thesis.

2.3.   Conclusion

"A constructionist logic would suggest, the ontological, epistemological and methodological commitments upon which we base our inquiry will largely determine what we come to discover, know and contribute to the world of human organising" (Ludema et al., 1997, p.1045). This chapter has identified and acknowledged the commitments and interpretations I have undertaken in the development of this thesis. Recognising research as a personal, political and social process, I have described the three paths along which my PhD journey has taken me. In doing so I introduce my approach to reflexive methodology; reviewing the connections I have made between action research (first and second person practices), appreciative inquiry, critical theory, reflexivity and reflection within the context of a socially constructed research process.

At the beginning of this chapter I identified the three paths that constitute my journey. Working with four primary school BOTs to investigate the emancipatory potential that applications of ICTs may have on their governance processes encompasses the first path. Maintaining this metaphor, before I continue my journey I must review my route, including consideration of markers laid by others. This task is done by way of literature review. Comprised of elected representatives from the school community, the mandate of school BOTs is to govern and manage their individual schools. As such I perceive these groups as contributing to the collection of organisations often

identified as the 'not for profit/community sector' and thus I must review literature pertaining to this area of society. The socio-political context of interest for this investigation includes the education reforms which established school Board of Trustees. Legislation was introduced so that a three tier (national/regional/local) structure was replaced by community control of education administration at individual school level. Hence, governance within the not for profit sector with specific reference to governance of primary schools; and technology applications within the not for profit sector must also be considered respectively. These areas are considered in the next three chapters, with a view to shaping my research questions for the investigation as presented in chapter 6.

The First Path…

In the next seven chapters I focus on the first path of my PhD journey, an investigation into the emancipatory potential that applications of ICTs may have on the governance processes of school BOTs. In chapters 3, 4, and 5 I review literature relevant to the contextual background of this investigation. Chapter 6 represents a junction in my journey. It became a place to pause, and to take stock of the background explored so that I might begin to identify the areas of scholarship and practice this investigation may contribute to. Also at this point of pause and reflection, potential research questions are identified as a precursor to the discussion of research method in chapter 7. Case studies of the participating BOTs are presented in chapter 8, setting the scene for discussion of these interactions in chapter 9.

The First Path…

In the next seven chapters I focus on the first path of my PhD journey, an investigation into the emancipatory potential that applications of ICTs may have on the governance processes of school BOTs. In chapters 3, 4, and 5 I review literature relevant to the contextual background of this investigation. Chapter 6 represents a junction in my journey. It became a place to pause, and to take stock of the background explored so that I might begin to identify the areas of scholarship and practice this investigation may contribute to. Also at this point of pause and reflection, potential research questions are identified as a precursor to the discussion of research method in chapter 7. Case studies of the participating BOTs are presented in chapter 8, setting the scene for discussion of these interactions in chapter 9.

Chapter 3
The Not for Profit Sector

3.0   Introduction

In preparing for a journey it is prudent to review one's route, scanning for potential markers that may have been left by those who have already travelled in a similar direction before you. As I travelled the first path of my PhD journey, an investigation into the emancipatory potential that applications of ICTs may have on BOT governance processes, I needed to consider existing scholarship of relevance.

The governance of schools by BOTs is the focus of this investigation. BOTs comprise elected (voluntary) representatives from the school community. Their mandate, prescribed by statute, is to provide governance and management of their school. Codd, Gordon and Harker (1997) observe how as volunteer representatives of the community these organisations contribute to what is now commonly classified the not for profit/community/third sector of society – hence the need to begin my review by considering this section of society.

My interest began with questions of 'how'. How were BOTs governing? How might these governance activities be enhanced through applications of ICTs? This part of the investigation with its 'how' focus has strong functionalist origins. Its foundations rest within several areas of scholarship including the origins and development of the not for profit/community/third sector; governance within this area of society; and issues associated with the use of ICTs within the sector. Within these areas of scholarship there are several key areas that warrant further examination due to extensive changes that have occurred over the past 20 years. For example, the growing use of contractualism and the changing role of the third sector in the provision of services that were once considered the responsibility of the state are significant contextual factors in the governance of public schools. New Zealand is one country in the OECD

which since the 1980s has undertaken a rapid and wide ranging commitment to neoliberal policies (Kelsey, 1997). Growing concern about the social cost of this economic direction has generated an interest in third way public policies (Chatterjee, 1999; Kelsey, 2002). By considering the contexts in which these issues are manifest into practice within the New Zealand environment, in conjunction with increasing applications of ICTs, interrelationships between these areas of scholarship are able to be explored.

In the previous chapter I outlined the theoretical perspectives I seek to apply in this thesis; social constructionism, action research, appreciative inquiry and critical theory. I found little evidence of these theoretical approaches in the literature describing the not for profit sector at international and/or national level. Functional approaches appear to dominate. Categories of classification and models of interaction are repeatedly applied within the literature reviewed, illustrating what Geyer (2003) describes as attempts of applied reductionist methods which assume physical and social phenomena are primarily linear and therefore predictable. Such approaches overlook the complexity and dynamic nature of relationships and interactions.

I begin with a generalised introduction to the diverse group of organisations in society increasingly known as the not for profit, community or third sector for the focus of schools (as illustrated through the actions of the BOT) is on the education of children, rather than motives of profit generation. In light of changing responsibilities attributed to the not for profit sector, relationships between members of not for profit organisations and government (often driven by public policy) are then discussed. Particular consideration is given to the supposed devolution of power to the community through means such as 'third party government'.

Specific consideration is given to the New Zealand context throughout this review. Kelsey (2002) observes a dearth of critical analysis from the media, academics, churches and non governmental organisations with regard to the rapid and wide reaching embrace of neoliberalism and its outcomes. The few critical analyses she identifies which did emerge failed to spark any sustained debate about alternatives. Public disquiet has grown however; and subsequently New Zealand governments have moved toward 'third way policies'; an ongoing commitment to market

liberalisation but with an expressed acknowledgement of associated social costs and explicit intention to address these. Common to both neoliberal and third way approaches to public sector management is an increasing devolution of responsibilities to communities. Reforms to education, which initiated the launch of 'Tomorrow's Schools' in 1989, were promoted by government as an example of this redistribution of responsibility. In this chapter I discuss the structure of BOTs and the stated intention to devolve power so as to facilitate governance of schools at a local level by the community. Scholarship commenting on the reforms has typically been undertaken by scholars associated with the education sector, and has tended to take a critical stance. This discussion provides a foundation for the associated issues of community based governance and applications of ICTs within the not for profit sector to be discussed in chapters 4 and 5 respectively.

3.1   The Community/Not for Profit/ Third Sector

'Objectifying' the identification of groups of people, the activities they undertake and relationships of their interaction(s) may be an expression of the assumed predictability social scientists have sought to apply to their study of social phenomena (Geyer, 2003). Categories (often functionally based) are 'articulated', 'developed' and 'applied' by scholars, practitioners and the wider community which in turn determines what might be conceived as 'belonging' to specific categories. Dale (1997, p.275) describes these distinctions as "institutions of social co-ordination". 'Boundaries' are established as a means of demarcating the activities and value sets which are 'expected' from those associated with each respective grouping. The distinction between 'state/public' and 'market/private' sectors illustrates society's tendency to categorise. The manifestation of these concepts into practice generates a social order in which public and private sectors are presented as non-problematic categories in organisational studies.

The way in which the activities that cannot be clearly linked to the state ('public') or market ('private') are to be categorised is less certain – although Dale (1997, p.275) observes how any distinction of this remaining category will be conceptualised according to any conceptions of state and market already established [accepted]. The current direction of this discussion has generated a variety of terms, including the

'voluntary', 'not for profit', 'civil society' and 'community' sector. Increasingly, the 'third sector' is being promoted and embedded as a useful way to group, measure, value and evaluate the activities conducted through organisations that do not fit into the public/private sector lexicon. Hall (1992) suggests terms such as 'nonprofit sector' and 'independent sector' were introduced as a purposive action in the 1970s to manage impressions of sector cohesion and legitimacy[1]. Each nomenclature implies a slightly different focus of attention. While the terminology of the theorists tends to suggest that the division between this sector and others in society (such as the public and private sectors) are clearly defined, in practice such boundaries are often blurred and are at times even overlapping (Di Maggio & Anheier, 1990; Saville-Smith & Bray, 1994).

Context is often a contributing factor to the choice of nomenclature. The construction of multiple realities through different contexts, consistent with social constructionism, is both interesting and challenging. Rather than look to roles and functions as a means of classification, I suggest the predominant characteristic when considering if an organisation 'belongs' in the not for profit sector is whether the main mission/intent of the activity or organisation is something other than making a profit to be returned to shareholders[2]. My focus is thus on expressed 'intent and process' rather than a reified sector and 'its organisation'. Representatives from a school community working together as a BOT to ensure a better education for their children provides but one example. 'Not for profit' does not imply that there are no major fiscal issues to be addressed, rather, that fiscal issues, efficiency, and effectiveness require different consideration than they would be given should the primary purpose of the activities or organisation be primarily profit driven. Consistent with expressions regarding the constitution of 'civil society', for the purposes of this investigation, 'community', 'not for profit' and 'third sector' are the terms I use within this thesis. These terms reflect the significance of the participants in this investigation and their contributions of local

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[1] Indeed, this concern with the articulation and measurement of the sector is now expressed through research activity such as the international comparative study of the nonprofit sector led by the Centre for Civil Society Studies in Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA. New Zealand became part of this study in 2004, incorporating the development of 'satellite accounts' as a complementary means of determining the value of the sector to the New Zealand economy.

[2] Although this primary purpose may or may not be of benefit to society in general, the focus of this discussion assumes a positive contribution is made to society.

knowledge; as well as the 'primary purposes' of, and the inter-sector interactions upon, the BOTs participating in this investigation.

The organisations deemed to comprise 'the third sector' encompass a vast, diverse range of organisations whose definitions differ across national and cultural boundaries (Najam, 1996; Salamon, 1994; Salamon & Anheier, 1997). Despite my intention to look beyond roles and functions, the focus of scholarship in this area cannot be overlooked if I am to provide a comprehensive review of relevant literature. Numerous terms or methods of social and/or legal definition are applied to the activities of people seeking to meet some common or overlapping interests which may collectively be termed 'a sector', (see for example Douglas (1987), Salamon and Anheier (1997)) with each implying an associated set of values, roles and functions. Salamon (2002) identifies a range of roles and functions through which the not for profit/community sector contributes at local, national and international levels: service, advocacy, expressive (in terms of providing an outlet for artistic, religious cultural expression) and community building roles are seen to complement the role of 'value guardian'. The role of value guardian is described by Salamon (2002) as combining individualism and solidarity, so as to sustain national values while still emphasising individual initiatives which contribute to the public good. Such an approach, I suggest, falters on several dimensions. Not only must the hegemonic implications of 'national values' be questioned, but Salamon on the whole appears to assume an unrealistic altruistic perception of the sector. Further, Salamon's premise appears to reside within an ontology of Western beliefs. The dichotomy of individual vs. national values may be perceived and experienced quite differently by indigenous people. Building on this concern I suggest that within any culture, a focus on individual initiatives potentially understates the importance of a collective/community approach.

Consistent with the functional and often problem oriented approaches which dominate management research, explanations offered for the emergence of the organisations which contribute to the third sector include government failure (Weisbrod, 1986), contract failure, and information asymmetry (Ben-Ner, 1986). Political issues such as 'experimentation within society' (Douglas, 1987) and 'third party government' (Salamon, 1987) have also been identified by scholars as impetus

for increased activity and services provided by the sector.[1] Douglas (1987) and Block (1990) consider historical foundations, noting the strong links concepts such as charity, philanthropy, voluntarism and religion have with the sector; as well as illustrating that the provision of services such as education and social services by not for profit organisations is not a new concept (Douglas, 1987). Te'eni and Young (2003) observe many of these theories revolve tightly around the contribution/application of information and that therefore the increased use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) might be expected to influence the character and purpose of not for profit organisations in the future[2].

In the exercise of defining and explaining the not for profit sector, Habermas' discussion of the lifeworld, system and public sphere provides a useful analytical framework. 'The lifeworld', he argues, comprises everyday interaction and communication. Shared common understandings, including values, may develop through interactions over time in various social groups, from families to communities (Frank, 2000). 'The system' in contrast, provides institutional structure through mechanisms such as bureaucratisation and monetarisation. Neither sphere of society is seen by Habermas to be more important than the other - it is the interconnection between the spheres, and the resulting tensions which he deems to be important. "The tension between the lifeworld and the system is both an index of potential crisis and emancipation" (Swingewood, 2000, p.234). Looking beyond the potential within such tension, Habermas is also concerned with the processes through which lifeworld imperatives may be dominated/overcome by the instrumental intentions generated from systemic requirements. He describes such domination as the 'colonisation of the lifeworld'.

While scholars such as Arato and Cohen (1988) suggest civil society resides solely in the lifeworld, I build on the stance taken by Frank (2000) that Habermas' conception of the public sphere, a realm of social life in which public opinion is formed, spreads across both the lifeworld and system. The public sphere is said to embody rational communication among free citizens, and access to this sphere is assumed as

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[1] The growth of government/community interactions are particularly relevant to this investigation and will be considered in more detail in section 3.2.
[2] Literature regarding the impact of ICTs on not for profit organisations is considered in section 5.3

guaranteed to all (Swingewood, 2000). Just as Habermas (1992, p.424) emphasises that it "is wrong to speak of one single public sphere, but rather [we must] admit coexistence of different, competing public spheres…" I suggest that the concept of the not for profit sector would be but one diverse/multifaceted component of the public sphere envisaged by Habermas. The influence of both the lifeworld and the system can be seen within not for profit organisations. "A public sphere that functions politically requires more than the institutional guarantees of the constitutional state; it also needs the supportive spirit of cultural traditions and patterns of socialisation of the political culture, of a populace accustomed to freedom" (Habermas, 1992, p.453). As interactions between not for profit organisations and government increase (as is the focus of the next section), so too may the influence of the system. A potential outcome of this increased influence is that through the subsequent colonisation of the lifeworld component, the system component of the public sphere may become more dominant, reducing the space available to the community for communicative action, as well as potentially transforming 'citizens' into 'clients' of the state (Frank, 2000).

3.2   Community - Government Relations

In chapter 2 I identified the democratic ideals of equality, freedom and participation which are assumed as foundational in New Zealand and which infuse this thesis. Consideration of, and reflection on, such interactions is important if we are to deepen our understanding of the ways in which democratic ideals contribute to the well being and potential development (i.e. emancipation) of New Zealand society and its communities. I am interested in how these values are woven into the relationships which occur between and across sectors of society. Of special interest to this investigation is the extent to which these values are perceived and demonstrated in relationships between members of community organisations and government. Although it is recognised that school BOTs engage with a number of stakeholders within their governance activities (for example philanthropic trusts, market organisations, parents, students and potential students) it is the relationship and subsequent interactions between school Trustees and government which will be my main focus. This focus has been chosen so that issues associated with the stated intention of devolution of control to communities may be considered more closely,

which in turn will inform consideration of emancipatory aspirations such as the ability of Trustees to develop their potential to govern, and the way in which the use of ICTs may enhance or diminish these emancipatory ideals.

Various models of government/not for profit sector interaction are profiled in literature (Coston, 1998; Gronberg, 1987; Harlan & Saidel, 1994; Najam, 2000; Saidel, 1989, 1991; Salamon, 1981; Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Young, 1999, 2000) as scholars seek to understand and articulate growth within the not for profit sector. This growth is illustrated through increased activity within the sector as well as the increased interaction between members across sectors of society. Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff (2002, p.7) observe that such frameworks "seek to encapsulate the complexity inherent in the variety and contexts of relationships while still enhancing our understanding of the options and possibilities". Each model proposes a range of different interactions dependent on the strength of the relationship between the parties, as well as factors in the external environment.

A common point among most theories of interaction is that these concepts are often conveyed as a response to 'sector failure'; be it market, government or community failure (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2002). The redefinition of concepts of accountabilities and a pressure to devise and assert forms of 'professionalism' often associated with the parallel intensification of managerialism, increased institutionalism, and the declining number of volunteers (Hudson, 2002), are also identified in the literature as resulting from increased interaction between community organisations and government (Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Stone, 1996).

Najam (2000) considers interaction between the two sectors in terms of co-operation, confrontation, complementarity and co-option. Coston (1998) takes a similar stance, defining eight possible relationship types. A government's resistance to, or acceptance of institutional pluralism, the relative balance of power between the interacting parties and the degree of formality are all recognised by Coston as influencing not for profit/government interactions. While many of these interactions may have a historical basis, Young (2000) observes that interaction between government and the not for profit sector varies across cultures (requiring the overall composite lens applied to vary from country to country) as well as within a nation - just as

government support and interaction in other aspects of society varies. Clarity of the perceived boundary definition between the two sectors may also vary, depending on the level of interaction between government and a specific section of the third sector (Young, 2000).

Several concepts emerge from the models of interaction, highlighting areas of commonality between the theories. 'Complementarity' (Coston, 1998; Najam, 2000; Smith, 2003; Young, 1999) in the relationship is proposed by these scholars to benefit both sectors, and typically describes a situation where government finances services and a not for profit organisation delivers them. However, as 'complementarity' in relations grows, Smith (2003) proposes so too may 'embeddedness' – the blurring of boundaries between sectors to the point that it may no longer be apparent which services are provided through public, private or not for profit channels. Little consideration is given in this literature to the consequences of such blurring. For example, who should expectations of accountability be directed to if it is unclear who the actual service provider is?

While recognising variations may occur across national and cultural boundaries, the models of government/not for profit sector interaction in the literature reviewed above do not readily take into account that these interactions may take place at more than one level and in multiple arenas. Potential conflict may emerge between interactions as they occur at ideological and empirical levels (Salamon, 2002). For example, ideological debate by stakeholders surrounding what is an appropriate response by government to social and economic needs may differ from actual government/community sector interactions with regard to activities such as funding and advocacy. The literature reviewed here tends to restrict consideration of not for profit sector/government interactions to the realms of service delivery and its funding. Complex environments such as issues associated with community governance of a state asset (as is the case of the BOT of a public school) appear to be overlooked. Recognition of - and support for - the sector (Smith 2003), accountability arrangements, and legal status (Ministry of Social Policy 2001) are examples of additional areas of activity and interaction which risk being overlooked.

Smith and Lipsky (1993) argue that any consideration of links between the designations of the 'third sector' and 'government' must take into account the community. These authors suggest that the relationship a community has with a specific not for profit organisation will be influenced by the relationship between that same organisation and government. While this may be the case, the stance taken by Smith and Lipsky (1993) illustrates an isolationist, almost water tight application of 'community' as a category. Communities and the people within them engage in a range of activities across all sectors of society, often simultaneously. Etzioni (1997 p.127) describes these interactions as " a web of affect-laden relationships among a group of individuals, relationships that often crisscross and reinforce one another (rather than merely one-on-one or chainlike individual relationships)". Consider for example, a (community) Trustee from a country school liaising with a (business) laboratory, the (government) Ministry of Health and the (government) Ministry of Education with regard to quality of the school water supply. Scholars often omit to consider and/or portray the complexity of such interactions.

The above observations also fail to take into account that 'community' may mean different things to different people. For example, a community may be defined in terms of geographical location or a group of like minded people with similar interests (Blakely, 1998). There is also a general acceptance in literature (as well as everyday discourse) that community implies shared norms, beliefs values and traditions. [An assumption which many of those people actively involved in organisations such as clubs, churches, etc would perceive as erroneous]. This assumption has in turn led to a frequent implication that those who do not conform should find their sense of community elsewhere (Shields & Seltzer, 1997). Failure to engage with the complex process of development (or disintegration) of a sense of 'community' is but one consequence of the overly simplified categorisation of 'community' associated with the predominating positivistic paradigm of the literature reviewed.

Rose (2000) observes how application of third way strategies of political objectification and instrumentalisation endeavour to act on/influence the sentiments, values and identities of a community. In doing so, new conceptions of community/civility relations and associated power relations between governors and the governed may develop.

3.2.1   Contracting/Third Party Government

The move by governments to shift provision of mandated services outside the direct delivery by government organisation is one of the government/not for profit interactions most commonly discussed in literature. This activity is described by several nomenclatures, including 'contractualism' (Davis, Sullivan, & Yeatman, 1997), 'third party government' (Salamon, 1981, 1987) and 'purchase of service' (Stone, 1996). Sullivan (1997) suggests contractualism infers shifts in the nature of governance, challenging the classical liberal views concerning equality of contractual standing, resourcing and support processes within contractual relations. Salamon (1981; 1987) proposes third party government to be a tool of government action, whereby governments increasingly rely on a wide variety of 'third parties' to carry out its purposes. Stone's (1996) concept of purchase of service refers to policy shifts that enable government agencies to contract with market or not for profit organisations to supply community based services which may in the past have been provided directly by the state.

Theories espousing the 'public good' are often used to support the decision to employ contracting processes. "Government may choose to contract out….because it is unable to differentiate its services in response to the heterogeneous preferences of its citizens" (Young, 2000, p. 154). Young (2000) notes government may claim to be '*unable*', but consideration should also be given to whether government is '*unwilling*' to change its delivery. Supporters of this reformulation of roles and responsibilities argue that community based organisations are more likely to be able and/or willing to meet local requirements than a large government department, as they are believed to offer greater flexibility and hence may be more responsive to changing needs in the community (Stone, 1996). Such issues are not sufficient however, to clarify why government may choose to contract with a not for profit/community organisation rather than a market sector organisation. Ferris (1993) suggests that the not for profit organisation's primary commitment to achieving their mission rather than profit makes them a more favourable option. This stance is echoed by Jones's (1995) discussion of potential opportunism within market companies. Young (2000) suggests the [assumed] ethical foundation of not for profit organisations may provide government with lower monitoring and contract enforcement costs than could be

negotiated with the market sector. Each of these assumptions illustrates that preconceived notions about the values expressed in the literature about each sector, as homogenous categories, are inadequate. The growth of interest in corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the 'cut throat' competitiveness between some community based organisations belies these assumptions!

Salamon (1987) suggests that applications of third party government processes are 'logical', allowing the 'weaknesses' of the third sector to be balanced against the 'strengths' of government. He suggests the third sector is limited in its ability to generate adequate and reliable resources, which once gained are vulnerable to particularism and amateurism. The processes of government are perceived by Salamon as able to overcome these weaknesses. Smith and Lipsky (1993, p.17) provide further support suggesting that in theory

> government funding nonprofit agencies is a mechanism for marrying two visions of the welfare state: promoting community interest, citizen participation in service delivery, and fellowship through voluntary action, while guaranteeing a minimum level of service regardless of income and social status.

Numerous advantages and disadvantages have been articulated for members of those organisations identified as comprising the not for profit sector with regard to contracting with government, although it is the disadvantages which tend to dominate discussions in literature (Salamon, 1981; Stone, 1996). The disadvantages most commonly identified are increased bureaucracy, loss of focus on the organisation's original mission, risk of resource dependency, and loss of autonomy/control (Salamon, 1981; Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Stone, 1996). Salamon (1981) suggests this latter concern is myopic given that managers within philanthropic organisations may be just as likely to impose restrictions as are government officials. Recognising that issues associated with increased use of contracting are more likely to grow than diminish, Salamon (1981) encourages the third sector to refocus this negative conceptual lens. Almost 25 years later, this review, and indeed this investigation, indicates many in the not for profit sector are still struggling with this suggested redirection of attention.

Financial security [at least in the short term] of the organisation, combined with the opportunity for the organisation to grow and potentially serve a broader client base, are advantages identified by Stone (1996) for the not for profit organisation whose members undertake government contracts. Saidel (1991) suggests that involvement in service delivery also provides third sector organisations with the opportunity to participate in associated policy processes. Stone (1996) reports that many not for profit organisations are 'better off' than they were prior to the introduction of government contracting, as they have been able to expand services to serve a larger client base. Such claims fail to critically consider the inherent (market) assumption that 'big is better'.

The terms 'contracting' and 'third party government' (Salamon, 1981, 1987) are at times used interchangeably within literature (Stone, 1996; Young, 2000). Many of the advantages and disadvantages identified are seen to apply equally to both concepts (Coston, 1998). Coston (1998) suggests however, that while closely related, there are differences between the two concepts. Building on Salamon's (1989) observation that government raises resources and sets societal priorities, whereas not for profit organisations organise the production of goods and services, Coston utilises Osborne and Gaebler's (1992) analogy of 'steering' (policy decisions) and 'rowing' (service delivery) to further clarify the distinction between the two. She describes 'steering' as needing to find the best method, while 'rowing' often entails defending ones method (Coston, 1998). Salamon (1981) has described third party government as a 'tool of government action'. As such Coston (1998) highlights that the tools of third party government are not restricted to contracts alone, but may also incorporate initiatives such as loans, loan guarantees and insurance.

Stone (1996) provides a case study illustrating how governance patterns within an organisation changed in response to the changing external environment which occurred through contracting with government. As well as changes to Board composition, of particular significance was the manner in which fiscal matters began to dominate the Board's agenda, while at the same time the boundary spanning activities of the Board reduced. Stone (1996) does not confirm any direct link between these two changes but one could assume that increased time devoted to fiscal matters simply leads to less time available for boundary spanning activities. Consistent with

Smith and Lipsky (1993), Stone (1996) also observed increased power and participation by the CEO in relation to governance activities. The typology of Board roles presented by Harlan and Saidel (1994) supports these observations, adding that Boards may engage in multiple roles simultaneously. Governance activities of the not for profit Board will be considered in more detail in chapter 4. However, these initial observations highlight additional issues to be considered as this investigation develops.

Stone (1996) also observed the pressure of resource dependency on the not for profit organisation committed to a government contract. Saidel (1991) considers the issue of resource interdependence in depth and while suggesting that the relationship between not for profit organisations and government is interdependent (for example government relies on the contracting not for profit to provide important client information and analysis) she observes that the relationship is typically asymmetrically weighted in government's favour.

The foregoing discussion begins to provide insight into the theoretical conceptions of not for profit/government interactions, signalling areas for further consideration as my investigation progressed. Functional approaches which seek to categorise activities dominate the theoretical basis of much of the discussion in literature. As highlighted earlier, specific aspects of these interactions will differ across national and cultural boundaries. With this in mind, I now discuss what is increasingly articulated as the New Zealand not for profit/community sector and the relationships its members have with government in more detail. After providing a brief background, I consider the period of government reform begun during the 1980s with a general focus on the expressed commitment by government to devolution and decentralisation. Devolution and/or decentralisation of power to community stakeholders was a primary stated objective of the social, economic and political reforms which instigated a new era of contracting between the New Zealand government and not for profit organisations. These reforms will be considered with specific emphasis on how the changes impacted on the education sector. It is through these reforms that BOTs, the focus of my investigation, were instigated. Reflection on the current status of government/community interactions in New Zealand concludes this chapter.

3.3 Aotearoa New Zealand Context

Harris (1995) observes how, given its small population, New Zealand has a remarkably robust and varied community sector. Hudson (2002) also observes a strong presence of the third sector in New Zealand. She notes community organisations and the sector in general face challenges such as increased expectations with regard to the provision of services, depleted access to funding, unrealistic accountability requirements, stretched volunteers and difficulty obtaining new members amid governance structures that do not reflect the needs/values/orientations of groups in the sector (Hudson, 2002). Similar challenges were identified in the Grant Thornton 2003 and 2005 surveys of the New Zealand not for profit sector. These successive studies found difficulties relating to financing and fundraising emerged as the leading issues, followed by concerns about governance and the role of Trustees (Grant Thornton, 2003, 2005). Hudson (2002) suggests the combination of such challenges has seen organisations within the New Zealand community/not for profit/third sector become reactive rather than proactive.

As well as the ethnic diversity expressed through community organisations throughout the Western world, the community/not for profit/third sector within New Zealand has additional diversity through the specific aspirations and contributions of iwi/Maori community and voluntary groups that are focussed on Te Tino Rangitiratanga. The special character these contributions bring, as well as Crown obligations stemming from the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi, influence many aspects of the sector. The Treaty of Waitangi undertook to recognise Maori self determination, which in turn is reflected today through organisational processes and interactions between iwi groups and other stakeholders that are generated from a Maori or sometimes decolonising ontology. A very specific example pertinent to this sector is the consideration that Maori have a distinct understanding of community and voluntary work. The concept of 'voluntary' work is European in origin and not one that sits comfortably with Maori culture and values (Ministry of Social Policy, 2001). Contributions of Maori need to be recognised beyond the realm of 'community groups'. Together with the Crown they are Treaty partners and Maori expect this relationship to be recognised.

New Zealand scholars provide snapshots of insight into their diverse national not for profit environment. Humphries (1998) observes the sector's 'long and proud' history - with contributions to sport and recreation, the arts, lobby and watchdog groups, and information services. Hawke and Robinson (1993) and Saville-Smith and Bray (1994) pay particular attention to issues regarding the voluntary welfare sector of New Zealand. Saville–Smith and Bray (1994) acknowledge that the state/not for profit interface appears consistent with other Western societies, and as such suggests government funding of the not for profit sector will continue to expand, increasingly through contracting mechanisms. This move towards contract provision of services by non-government departments, (as will be discussed later in section 3.2.1), has contributed to both the growth and contributions of the third sector within New Zealand society. Humphries (1998, p.10) observes how such changes are "challenging the sector to reconceive its traditional values". Malcolm, Rivers and Smyth (1993) also suggest the changes bought about through increased contracting with government are changing the philosophy and applications of the sector. The authors argue that there is increased pressure on not for profit organisations to adapt to the demands of their majority funder (often government). Such pressure increases the risk that the primary task of the organisation will become distorted or, at worst, overlooked altogether.

An investigation examining the voluntary inputs of 10 New Zealand voluntary agencies highlights the value added contribution organisations in the not for profit sector make to New Zealand society. The 10 agencies studied estimated they had carried out 7.63 million hours of volunteer work over the period of a year (Reid, McGowan, Snively, Collins, & Buchanan, 2004). The sample of 10 agencies also highlighted a diversity of operational structures. Organisations with only a few volunteers, typically had their volunteer contribution focused at governance level (Reid et al., 2004).

In 2004 the New Zealand government undertook to participate in the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector, 2005). An international project, based at the Centre for Civil Society Studies at the Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies, Baltimore, USA, the research encompasses and compares the areas identified by those involved with the project as

forming the not for profit sectors in over 40 countries. A combination of qualitative and quantitative information will be collected in an effort to begin to document the scope and contribution of the not for profit sector in New Zealand, as well as produce a set of 'satellite accounts' to facilitate in-depth analyses of a part of the economy that Statistics New Zealand and the Office of Community and Voluntary Sector agree is currently not well described in New Zealand's national accounts. The first set of outputs should be available in 2007. An outcome of the project anticipated by those involved is improved visibility for 'the sector' within New Zealand and greater understanding by all of the value volunteers, members and organisations contribute to society and the economy (Ministry of Social Development, 2005). Involvement in such empirically based research can be seen to illustrate what Moore (2001) describes as attempts by both the not for profit sector and government to build perceptions of legitimacy, of 'the sector' itself as well as its relationship(s) with government.

The richness of the New Zealand community/not for profit/third sector has begun to be reflected in the scholarship which has been identified here. In-depth consideration of this work is beyond the scope of this review; however the literature thus reviewed begins to highlight the array of interactions which contribute to activity within the community/not for profit/third sector. The presence of multiple stakeholders whose circumstances must be taken into account during decision making processes is a defining characteristic of the community/not for profit/third sector. Perceptions of these interactions are shaped by the ideological overlay(s) we choose to adopt. Of particular interest to this investigation is the relationship between members of the community/not for profit/third sector and the New Zealand government. Consideration of the manner in which this relationship has changed over the last two decades, as presented in the following section, provides an important background to this investigation.

3.3.1　　Government reforms in Aotearoa New Zealand

New Zealand's move towards neoliberalism in the 1980s invites critical consideration of the corresponding emerging literature of not for profit/third sector governance. The situation within New Zealand differs however in significant ways from that of other Western economies. Community/government interactions within New Zealand do not have the additional complication of federal/state systems as do interactions in the United States of America, Canada, or Australia. Further, the system of local government in New Zealand is not devolved to the same extent as that of the United Kingdom. Any interactions must however, take into account the obligations of the Treaty of Waitangi 1840, signed by representatives from a number of iwi and the British Crown. The Treaty provided the British Crown with a mandate to govern New Zealand, although Maori signatories believed the document also ensured Maori would retain control of their assets, culture, political and economic development (Humphries 1998). Although the Treaty has not been made a formal part of the New Zealand constitutional system, successive governments have recognised the importance of the document to the development of New Zealand as a nation. Many statutes refer to it, and in 1975 Parliament enacted the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975, establishing the Waitangi Tribunal as a means of inquiring into Maori claims relating to breaches of the Treaty. Many Maori not for profit organisations are established under iwi/hapu systems, which reflect kaupapa Maori, honouring Maori protocol rather than Western belief systems. Obligations of the Crown with respect to the Treaty (for example with regard to self determination and Maori sovereignty) must therefore be taken into account in government/not for profit interactions. Similarly, interaction between Maori and non-Maori organisations invites reflection on the protocols that govern these relationships.

As the colonial government became established in New Zealand, successive governments implemented a pattern of intervention in the economy. Commentators report how initially these initiatives were

> justified not on philosophical grounds, but on purely pragmatic grounds….There were desirable activities which were needed, but in New Zealand conditions they were unattractive for the private sector, so that there was no option but for government to undertake the activities concerned (McKinlay, 1990, p.8).

With local governments comparatively weak, and the strong Maori political movements and community undermined by colonisation (Te Momo, 2003), the dominance of central government and widespread acceptance of the need for government to intervene continued into the 1980s. McKinlay (1990) suggests that within central government there was heavy reliance on functionally structured government departments and government owned corporations rather than community orientated institutions. As such, power and service delivery were seen to be highly centralised (McKinlay, 1990).

By the time the fourth Labour government was elected in 1984 this record of government intervention, combined with changes in the world economy such as the 1974 oil crisis and England's entry to the European Common Market in 1973, had left the New Zealand economy in what some proclaim to be a relatively difficult position. "The government faced high budget deficits, and interest rates were soaring while the value of the New Zealand dollar was plummeting" (Schick, 1996, p.11). Advocating that conventional economic and/or political remedies such as fiscal stimulus and more government intervention had not worked, the newly elected government presented plans for major reforms (Schick, 1996).

The reforms that followed over the subsequent decade have been well reported both within New Zealand and overseas (Aberbach & Christensen, 2001; Boston, Martin, Pallot, & Walsh, 1991; Collins, 1987; Kelsey, 1997; McKinlay, 1990; Schick, 1996). While in-depth analysis of the reforms is beyond the scope of this review, it is important to consider not only the main activities undertaken, but also the context within which the change took place.

McKinlay (1990) suggests that it was unclear as to whether the government had a consistent framework in mind when initiating reform. Boston (1991; 1996) argues that these reforms were underpinned by neoliberal economic theories of public choice, agency, transaction cost, managerialism and new public management. The principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, a range of equity related issues (Boston et al., 1991) and overseas events such as the programme of privatisation undertaken by the Thatcher led government in the United Kingdom (McKinlay, 1990) are also identified as contributors to the reform process. Boston (1991) warns against the tendency in

literature to focus on a primary framework (in this instance, the neoliberal, economic influences of the reforms) which risks overlooking the cultural and historical forces that are also involved. In spite of such warnings, the neoliberal, economic focus (and associated critiques of it) continues to dominate this area of scholarship.

Schick (1996, p.11) observes that the New Zealand reforms took place in three overlapping stages, "first they freed the private sector from extensive government regulation, then they restructured the commercial operations of government along market lines, and finally they decontrolled the state sector and the labour markets." Reflecting a market driven lexicon, 'accountability' and a drive for 'increased efficiency' were key areas of focus across the reforms. The final wave of structural reforms had a strong 'business' focus, seeking to enhance managerial discretion and accountability within core operations, as well as introduce contract like arrangements. Evidence of the continued influence of these reforms can be seen in the now emerging preoccupation government officials and managers in market (and increasingly not for profit) organisations have with issues such as 'risk management'.

Power sharing between the government and 'community' as an expanded form of accountability was proposed by a State Services Commission task group as a key means to improving the effectiveness and hence responsiveness of the delivery of social service programmes. The concept of power sharing was seen by proponents to be particularly beneficial to disadvantaged groups. Some groups who had felt peripheralised or disadvantaged in the previously government dominated area of service delivery believed there was a possibility for more traction in a system of devolution. For Maori groups specifically focussed on the restoration of self determination that they understood to be guaranteed in the Treaty of Waitangi, a renegotiation of government/Maori relationships provided new opportunities to assert Te Tino Rangitiratanga in all forms of social, political and economic organisation – and with this – a challenge to the Western, mechanistic metaphor dominating organisational considerations.

The lexicon typically used to describe this proposed power sharing included terms such as 'devolution', delegation' and 'decentralisation'. Although numerous and very different possible interpretations of each of these concepts may be applied across nations (Dale, 1997, p.273) and cultures, differences between these terms may be glossed over in general daily discussion. However; agreement to their respective definitions is crucial to one's interpretation of the resulting reforms. Martin (1991, p.268) defines devolution as "the transfer of power, authority and responsibility from a national to a sub national level". " Delegation is used to describe the process under which someone who has formal legal authority authorises another party to exercise that authority" (McKinlay, 1990, p.15). Martin (1991, p.268) thus defines decentralisation as "the delegation of power and authority to lower levels, with the ultimate responsibility remaining at national level" respectively. McKinlay (1990) observes how decentralisation has geographic implications. Kelsey (1997, p.291) describes government attempts at decentralisation and/or devolution as "the privatisation of dependency". Promoted as a means of "empowering the community", she observes this "double speak" to be an under funded means of shifting a burden [of responsibility] from the state to volunteers, who are assumed to have limitless capacity for unpaid labour "in the community.

Health and education were among the sectors that saw the transfer of many service delivery functions to separate, non governmental agencies. An extensive network of 'contractualist devices', such as charters, were introduced by the government to govern the relationship between 'principals' and 'agents' within the public sector; as well as between the public sector and external (e.g. not for profit) organisations (Boston, 2000). The charter/contract approach provided a framework for interactions with people/institutions that have access to taxpayer funding. While government perceived the charters and contracts as vehicles for a new form of responsibility, the new environment created was seen by some as a recentralisation of power (McKinlay, 1990). The degree of devolution or decentralisation provided within a particular portfolio/sector tended to vary depending on the approach taken by the individual minister concerned. For example, McKinlay (1990) reports how the Department of Health oversaw several changes to Area Health Board structures as successive ministers had varying degrees of confidence in the process, and each sought to amend the structure accordingly. Boston (2000) observes how, as with the state owned

enterprise reforms, this restructuring of service provision saw a change in government focus from inputs to outputs.

The contracting process is seen by neoliberal advocates to provide government with a means of ensuring mandated services are provided, while reducing direct costs to government and the number of government staff required to do so. Contracting activity has the potential to diminish the authority of government, for at times important decisions will be made outside the realm of government. The perceived advantages and disadvantages of this change in the balance of power may depend on one's assumptions as to the extent to which a state government should or could deliver services to communities and the extent to which such communities can or should retain control over these. Scholars such as Peters and Pierre (2000) and Argyris (1998) have questioned the ability of top levels of a hierarchy to devolve power effectively to provide empowerment benefits. Further they suggest that empowerment, in the forms often attained through change, provides few if little benefit to its intended recipients. The stated intention of devolution of power to school BOTs, as discussed below, provides a useful example through which to consider these issues.

Some scholars describe the social and economic reforms which took place in New Zealand during the 1980s and 1990s as being "more or less a completed process" (Curtis, 2003, p.6). The pace of change has now slowed and heralds a new phase in policy and interactions (Curtis, 2003). As structures and processes changed through the reform process, so too did the language of government. Kelsey (2002, p.55) reports on efforts to banish "uncomfortable constructs such as class, colonisation, racism, and patriarchy" from political lexicon, while focus was seen to intensify with regards to building 'social capacity' and strengthening 'civil society'. Reflecting on the strong neoliberal foundations of the reforms, Larner and Craig (2002) and Curtis (2003) observe the increasing and somewhat ambiguous use of terms such as 'partnership' within government discourse. Ministry of Social Policy (2000) also reports a range of hazy definitions of 'community' and 'partnership' within literature, noting a strong assumption throughout literature that there is something valuable in the process of partnership. Calls for 'partnership' and increased focus on 'the community' have been associated with the lexicon of the 'third way', a composite

political path most commonly linked to the Blair (and to a lesser extent, the Clinton) governments. According to Giddens (1998) the third way offers a new mixed economy that promotes synergy between public and private sectors, utilising the dynamism of markets but with the public interest in mind.

Dean (2004) suggests third way discourse promotes individual responsibility and a notion of active citizenship. Rose (2000, p. 1400) observes how increasingly "it is the language of community that is used to identify a territory between the authority of the state, the free and amoral exchange of the market, and the liberty of the autonomous, rights bearing individual". As such, he suggests such discourse seeks to reconstruct citizens as moral subjects of/for responsible communities. In doing so, the notion and language of community may be reframed and 'objectified' by instruments of political processes (Rose, 2000). Is the use of the lexicon such as 'partnership' an attempt to 'soften' government discourse as it seeks to achieve a better relationship with 'the community', or is it as Kelsey (2002) suggests an euphemism for conferring responsibility without power on school Boards and others who were contracted to deliver services for the government? Motivated to consider this question more critically, I now turn my discussion to reviewing the reforms to education administration in New Zealand. I do so with a view to describing the context and intentions behind the changes made by government, as well as outcomes which have eventuated.

3.3.2   Education reforms in Aotearoa New Zealand

Introducing his analysis of the New Zealand education reforms, Lewis (2004) observes how schooling provides a powerful exemplar through which to consider the restructuring of the state.

> Education is a central institution for the production of identity and the self. Schools are, perhaps, the only social institution through which we all pass….They have important economic functions, and play enduring and central roles in patterns of socialisation, social control, cultural reproduction and legitimation (Lewis, 2004, p.151).

Olssen and Matthews (1997) argue that the increasing influence of Treasury on government education policy in New Zealand became evident in 1984 and continued through to 1987. The brief prepared by Treasury for the incoming government of 1987 included a substantial document outlining the perceived need for change in the current education administration system. Despite a favourable OECD view of the New Zealand education system in 1982 (OECD, 1983), Treasury provided government with a critical analysis of the sector in 1987 purporting the system to be inefficient, bureaucratic, self serving and preventing localised decision making (Codd, 1990). In response government appointed the Taskforce to Review Education Administration, headed by businessman Brian Picot.

In keeping with the rise of the economically driven focus common within Western organisations in the 1980s and 1990s, the Picot Committee was mandated to address several major goals (Ramsey, 1992). The first was to establish an administrative system that was deemed more 'efficient' and more 'responsive' to those who used it. The second (in line with recent government reforms and the terms of reference of the committee) was to consider devolution. Commitment to principles of equity and fairness in education, along with the belief that efficiency savings could be made from within the existing structure complemented the basic goals and assumptions that guided the taskforce in their review process (Ramsey, 1992). The resulting report of the taskforce, commonly referred to as the Picot Report (1988), provided the foundations for the subsequent education administration reforms. The reforms were closely followed by curriculum and qualification reviews. While collectively, these three areas of change impacted widely across society, the administration reforms are the focus of this review.

Following consideration of the Picot Report (1988) reforms to education administration became known as 'Tomorrow's Schools' (Lange, 1988) in reference to the briefing paper prepared by the then current Prime Minister and Minister of Education, David Lange. Harrison (2004) identifies four pillars of the reforms:

- parental voice at the school level;
- delegation of powers to the school level;
- contractual relations between the school level and the government;
- parental choice with regard to which school their child attends.

A three tiered structure, encompassing the central Education Department, twelve regional education boards and local school committees was replaced through the stated intention of devolution of control to communities. Just as earlier government reforms had introduced calls for increased 'accountability' and 'efficiency' by those charged with service delivery, elected representatives from within the school community now faced a similar challenge. Boards of Trustees were established under the Education Act 1989 for the purpose of providing governance at individual school level. Responsibility for management of schools was given to BOTs so that they have "complete discretion to control the management of the school as it thinks fit" (Education Act, 1989). Boards are responsible for the governance or strategic activities of the school and responsibility for day-to-day management activities is delegated to the school principal (Education Act 1989, s76).

Safeguards to protect democratic participation in education were to be further provided for in the 1989 Tomorrow's Schools reforms through the establishment of an Educational Policy Council. To balance the power of central government, provision was made for local education forums to be held to discuss decisions before they were made. A national Parent's Advocacy Council was set up to assist parents who were having difficulty having complaints heard locally. None of these safeguards survived beyond 1991 (Snook, 1997) when they were disestablished by the then incoming government. Consistent with Martin's (1991) definitions noted earlier, Boston et al (1996) suggest this supposed transfer of power from government to community would be better described as decentralisation rather devolution. Illustrating Smith's (2003) concern for embeddedness (the blurring of boundaries identified in section 3.2), Boyd

(1997) and Codd (1990) observe such decentralisation helped to ensure that local pressure groups and any community dissatisfaction would now be directed at Boards of Trustees rather than at the government.

Consistent with the increased use of contractualism and third party government discussed earlier, Tomorrow's Schools introduced the concept of a school charter, promoted by some as "a contract, a statement of educational mission and a device for ensuring accountability" (Codd & Gordon, 1991, p.25). "The charter would serve as a contract and as the basis for the partnership between government and the school and its community" (Lange, 1999, p.13). From the government perspective the charter provided the means through which the devolution of state power would be achieved. In light of this triangular network of interactions, the charter was seen as providing "concrete meaning to the abstract notion of 'partnership' between government and community" (Codd & Gordon, 1991, p.21). Subsequent amendments and reiterations have seen the formal status attributed to the charter change. After legal advice and cabinet approval the standing of the charter was changed by government in May 1989 from a 'contract' to an 'agreement' with two signatories, the chairperson of the BOT and the Minister of Education. Codd and Gordon (1991, p.27) suggest this change seeks to "avoid the possible legal contestation by any third party, such as parents or community groups"[1].

The status of school charters was further changed in 1990 when the 'agreement' became an 'undertaking' through which:

> Boards of Trustees would undertake to meet the requirements of the National Education Guidelines. The State no longer had any reciprocal obligations to the schools or Boards of Trustees. By 1993, the 'partnership' aspect of the charter had been almost completely eliminated (Snook et al., 1999, p.31).

Boundaries between the state and BOTs and the nature of these respective power relations were now defined in terms of a legal contract rather than the more open (and more contestable) lexicon of a 'partnership'. BOTs from around the country attempted to contest the lack of consultation and resulting iterations. However, the coercive power of government prevailed. "The power to determine the nature of the contractual

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[1] An agreement can only be contested by signatories.

relationship continued to reside completely with the state" (Codd & Gordon, 1991, p.32) As such Codd and Gordon (1991) suggest the charter serves as little more than a symbolic document.

National administration guidelines (NAGs) and national education guidelines (NEGs) outline the responsibilities of the BOT[1]. Both sets of guidelines are deemed to automatically be included in a school's charter. These prescriptive elements are then intended to be supplemented by local goals and values identified in consultation with the school community. Government evaluation of a school and its BOTs' performance (by the Education Review Office) includes evaluation of how the school is fulfilling charter commitments. Policy development by the Board, and hence programme development and implementation by teachers is expected to flow through from the ideology espoused in the school charter. The charter, as a foundation document of the school, helps to convey the school's culture, goals and ideals to the community. Planning and reporting requirements introduced by government in 2004 also require a school to document and report on annual and strategic goals as part of the charter, with the charter now required to be sent to the Ministry of Education on an annual basis as part of the school's accountability requirements. This work is expected to be driven and undertaken by the Board.

Initially membership of BOTs was restricted to parents of current children attending the school. McKenzie (1999, p.10) suggests this restriction was a deliberate attempt to ensure the Boards were "a historical, market sensitive instruments uncluttered by special interest groups such as school alumni, representatives of other educational institutions, and other community sector groups". Difficulty in recruiting/attracting Trustees saw this restriction to membership amended in 1992, allowing Boards to draw members from the wider community. The then Minister of Education is noted at the time as hoping that more business people would become involved, but Gordon and Whitty (1997) report that this has not been the case. This new structure was seen by some as a means of reducing perceptions of provider/producer capture, effectively reducing the power of teachers (Ballantyne, 1997). Framed within the context of the preceding social and economic reforms, the demands placed on BOTs were similar to

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[1] See Appendices 1, 2 and 3.

those of the authorities controlling State Owned Enterprises (SOEs), while the tasks facing school principals was similar to the newly appointed SOE Chief Executive Officers (Rae, 1990).

Government activities such as contracting and third party government in conjunction with the third sector has been said to shift sources of power outside of government. Smith and Lipsky (1993) observe that such changes appear to have shifted power away from the not for profit Board and toward the organisation's chief executive. They note Lipset's concern that "to the extent that the contracting regime reduces internal democracy with nonprofit service organisations, citizen representation within society may be fundamentally effected" (Smith & Lipsky, 1993, p.92). Peters and Pierre (1998) refer to this trend as 'governance without government'. This concern is a direct contrast to the empowerment of community through devolution, the underlying philosophy of the New Zealand 1980 social, economic and political reforms. Recognising this concern, the balance of power and role of the school principal (who effectively sits as CEO on the BOT) became an issue to be critically considered as my investigation progressed.

Despite devolution being a stated objective of the reforms, the Education Act 1989 provides that power, which can be exercised over BOTs, still resides in the Minister of Education. This power includes the ability to remove a Board if, in the Minister's judgement, it fails to perform adequately (Boston et al., 1996). In such an event, the Minister of Education would then appoint a (paid) commissioner to manage the school until a new election is held. The Minister of Education also has the power to require amendment of a school charter or withhold approval of the document, which may in turn see operational funding withheld. Applying Emerson's (1962) theory of reciprocal power dependence, Saidel (1991, p.544) proposes "the power of state agencies over nonprofit organisations equals the dependence of nonprofit organisations on state agencies for resources". Interpreted within the decile based system which funds New Zealand schools according to the government assessed socio-economic status of the community they serve, this could be seen to suggest that government has less power over a decile 10 school (which receives the lowest proportion of funding per student) than a decile 1 school (which receives the greatest proportion of funding per student). While my investigation will help ascertain whether

this perception is shared by the BOTs participating in this investigation (my initial intuition was to the contrary), the concept is indicative of but one factor in the complex relationship between government, schools, and their BOTs.

Consistent with the market driven reforms, parents were given the ability to choose between schools, anticipating that schools would have an 'incentive' to pay attention to the needs/demands of their 'clients' (Smelt, 1998). Schools that were perceived by 'the community' to be performing well were expected to thrive and grow as they attracted more students. Commentators of the reforms have suggested that the emphasis on 'choice' has led to 'alarming inequalities' developing between schools at opposite ends of the socio-economic scale (Snook et al., 1999). Snook et al (1999) argue that it is schools which exercise choice, not parents. Enrolment schemes established to prevent overcrowding at 'good' schools may disproportionately select students from dominant ethnic groups and higher socio-economic backgrounds, thus further disadvantaging the minorities and low socio-economic communities. The implications of schools competing for students must be considered carefully. Fiske and Ladd (2000b, p.9) observe a decline in professional collegiality: "Principals and even teachers have become less willing to share pedagogical and other ideas with their counterparts at schools with which their school is competing for students". I was interested to investigate whether this decline in co-operation also extended to BOTs.

While portrayal of the parent as 'consumer' may be seen by supporters of the market economy as a form of empowerment, it is also appears contradictory to the government's simultaneous portrayal of parents as 'partners'. Burns (2000) discusses the overlapping rights and duties of customers, consumers and citizens within the changing context associated with third way policies which may profess to devolve power to localised democracies. Burns (2000, p.966) suggests that while traditionally the customer relationship has been between an individual and a provider organisation, a consumer relationship encompasses the relationship between an individual and a product, and that citizenship has traditionally been concerned with the relationship between an individual and the state. Changing contexts emerging from third way initiatives may reconfigure these relationships so that individuals serving in a purportedly devolved environment (such as a school BOT) may find themselves on the other side of the citizenship relationship (i.e. representing the state). As such,

Burns (2000) suggests parents may have [and perceive] different rights and obligations depending on whether they are perceived as 'customers', 'consumers' or 'citizens'. Accordingly, it may also be assumed that each identity has associated with it different power relations. The relocation of power relations is identified across a range of relevant literature. Codd, Gordon and Harker's (1997, p.272) observation that Tomorrow's Schools reforms merely relocated power relations from the central state towards the boundary of 'state/civil society' is similar to Rose's (2000) discussion of the 'community/territory' encouraged by third way policies noted earlier in section 3.3.1.

The promoted objectives of Tomorrow's Schools envisaged a triangular relationship, composed of partnerships between:

- Professionals (e.g. teachers) *and* parents (represented by the BOT);
- Board of Trustees *and* the school community;
- School Management (BOT and the principal) *and* government.

These partnerships are further complicated given that no formal definition(s) of what was expected at each level of interaction were provided in the initial documentation (Rae, 1990). As such, each party will undoubtedly bring different ideologies and expectations to the relationship. Harrison (2004) suggests that since consumer control of suppliers/professionals is unusual in the business sector, issues of control (i.e. through choice) and partnership (as described above) may prove problematic within a 'market based' school environment. At the onset of the reforms teaching professionals expressed concern over the abilities of non-teaching community members with regard to decision making and resource allocations within the school (Bates, 1990; Lange, 1999; Robinson, Timperley, Parr, & McNaughton, 1994). Wylie (1999) reports that at an individual level most schools appear to have negotiated a good relationship between staff and the BOT. Assumptions of 'partnership' on a larger scale appear however, to be unfounded.

Consideration of the proposed partnership between the BOT and community requires closer definition of what comprises the school community. Community may describe a mix of complex interactions which may take place simultaneously across one or more section(s) of society. Slattery (1985) recognises a common identity and a common set of values as defining features of a community. Blakely (1998) suggests

that a community may be defined on a geographic basis, or based on common interests and/or identities, such as sport. Harold (1992) observed that the concept of the school community has several dimensions, potentially combining aspects identified in both Slattery's and Blakely's definitions and more. For example, a bilingual school identified a philosophical boundary: "anyone who believes in the kaupapa (purpose) of our school is seen as part of the community" (Harold, 1992, p.4). A government requirement of this proposed partnership is for the BOT to communicate *and* consult with the local community. Government expectations (for example as expressed through Education Review Officers) imply that the wider community (including local Maori) are to be included at this level, although the degree to which individual schools achieve these objectives in practice varies greatly (Harold, 1992; Wylie, 1999).

Consistent with the basic ideals of democracy, BOT representatives are assumed to provide a formal voice for the school community [however it is defined]. The extent to which these nominated representatives reflect the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the community must be considered carefully. For example, in schools which have a mix of cultures, does the Board reflect this multi-cultural dimension or is it dominated by one ethnic group? The levels of involvement between Board members and the community may vary between schools. Just as Wylie (1997b) reports increased turnover of Trustees as well as increased difficulty in schools getting parents to serve as Trustees, increasing pressures of work, family and other commitments may also inhibit a parent's or caregiver's ability and/or willingness to support school activities, e.g. attend Board meetings, fundraising and so on.

The extent to which community opinion is acknowledged and reflected through Board activity must also be considered. 'Capture' is an ever present risk, whereby community members may become Trustees with an ulterior motive in mind – reflecting the weakness of particularism (Salamon, 1987) identified in section 3.2.1. National Education and Administration Guidelines require BOTs to consult with their communities, but as noted above community members may not always be willing and/or able to participate in such consultations. For example, it is often assumed by government and education providers that parents with a high socio-economic

background will be more involved in their children's schooling. However, my own experience within a decile 10 school, (i.e. highest socio-economic background in terms of Ministry of Education funding) fails to support this assumption. *Any* parent in paid employment may be restricted in the amount of time they have available to support school activities.

Although the reforms which the New Zealand education sector has undergone have received world wide attention (Butterworth & Butterworth, 1998), their outcomes have been difficult to assess. Fiske and Ladd (2000b, p.312) acknowledge "the core ideas of Tomorrow's Schools that have persisted over time – self governance, parental choice, market competition – proved to have both benefits and complications". Some aspects have been more successful than others. Butterworth and Butterworth (1998) identify the need to consider not only whether the reforms have succeeded in terms of their stated aims, but also whether those aims have proven 'appropriate' for New Zealand. They do not however, expand their discussion to consider who might make such evaluations or how 'they' might do so. Snook et al (1999) suggest that the reforms failed to meet their own demands of clearly specified objectives, objective measurement of results and strict accountability. For example, an absence of national test data makes it difficult to determine if overall student achievement has improved (Fiske & Ladd, 2000b). Thus, McKenzie (1999) suggests scholarship combines wide acceptance for the concept of the self managing school amid dissatisfaction with the growth of central (government) control over schools. I was interested to gauge the current perceptions of the BOTs participating in this investigation.

Reports of research regarding the situation(s) of individual schools are minimal. Thrupp, Harold, Mansell and Hawksworth (2000) studied the cumulative impact of the reforms on seven schools. Semi-structured interviews with teachers, senior management and BOT members concluded that problems associated with social inequality are perceived to have been neglected and/or left to intensify. The Ministry of Education financed a longitudinal study of the impact of the marketisation of education on primary and secondary schools. Commonly referred to as the 'Smithfield Project', this study was conducted in three phases. Phase one (1992-1993) examined the creation of an 'education market' in New Zealand, with specific consideration to issues of parental and school choice. Phase two (1994-1996) examined the impact of

parental choice and a competitive market on school effectiveness. Phase three (1997-1998) considered the relationship between secondary school performance, student outcomes, post compulsory education and the labour market (Lauder et al., 1995). Ethnic and socio-economic polarisation was identified during analysis of student enrolment patterns (Fiske & Ladd, 2000a) suggesting social exclusion theory provides a more appropriate explanation of patterns identified during analysis than might neoliberal and/or public choice theories (Lauder et al., 1995).

The New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) also conducted a series of studies over the first ten years of BOTs (Wylie, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1997b, 1999). Principals, teachers and Trustees from 239 primary and intermediate schools were surveyed. While most BOTs are reportedly 'happy' with current Board structures, concerns have been raised over increased pressure and workloads, poor government resourcing and the lack of trust between schools and government (Snook et al., 1999; Wylie, 1997b, 1999). Resourcing issues were further highlighted when the New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) commissioned NZCER research into school effectiveness (Wylie & King, 2004). As with other issues noted in the earlier parts of this review, I was interested to see the extent to which these perceptions were shared by the Trustees I worked with as part of this investigation and how they may influence applications of ICTs within the BOT context.

3.4 Conclusion

Through a review of relevant literature this chapter has provided important contextual and historical background information pertinent to this investigation. The first section of this chapter began to identify the origins and development of what is often described as the not for profit/community sector. Understanding the background to this sector is important as BOTs are drawn from and represent school communities. Consideration was given to interactions between members of community/not for profit organisations and government, specifically the increasing use of contracts and 'third party government'.

The social and economic reforms begun by the fourth Labour government of New Zealand when it came to office in 1984 (and continued by subsequent governments through into the 1990s) provided impetus for growth within the New Zealand not for profit/community sector. Government reforms to education administration saw the establishment of a new community group; elected representatives from the school community forming a BOT with a legislated mandate to provide governance of their local school. Although largely undefined, 'community' and 'partnership' are identified through this review as key concepts associated with the governance activities of BOTs. Distinctions between definitions of 'devolution' and 'decentralisation' and 'delegation' have also been reviewed.

The responsibilities of governance of schools now allocated to BOTs are an example of the sweeping changes that accompanied the move from overt management by government towards a neoliberal reorganisation of the New Zealand socio-political and economic context. In this chapter I have set the scene for my investigation into the emancipatory potential that applications of ICTs may have on the governance processes of school BOTs. While my original research question was to understand how applications of ICTs may assist BOTs enhance their governance activities, I now understand the formulation of this research question is an example of the ahistorical and apolitical perspective of a functionalist training. This chapter has provided a historical and political context that has re-oriented my focus so that I also begin to consider more critically the environment within which BOTs govern. For example, to what extent has the purported devolution of power to BOTs been achieved? What are some of the implications of this outcome? How might increased use of ICTs exacerbate and/or enhance power and control issues?

Many of the issues and concepts identified within the 'general' not for profit literature are readily applicable to school BOTs, while Reid et al's (2004) observation that the concentration of volunteer efforts in many organisations encompasses governance activities highlights the implications of this investigation may be relevant beyond BOTs and be of interest to the wider community sector. Perceptions of weakness through particularism and amateurism (Salamon 1987) were reflected in early concerns about the newly established Boards comprising representatives from the school community. The domination of fiscal matters as part of governance activities

and decreased time devoted to boundary spanning activities have been identified as two of the disadvantages the Board of a not for profit organisation which contracts to government should be aware of. These concerns, and the associated issues of resource dependency, balances of power, and involvement of the school principal (CEO) are all areas which must be considered within my investigation. The competitive influence of neoliberalism on school governance, to the extent that school leaders may be hesitant or even unwilling to share knowledge with colleagues at other schools through fear that this knowledge may be used to 'poach' students and hence funding is alarming to me. I became interested to see the extent to which such attitudes are/are not manifest within the BOTs I worked with.

More than a decade after the introduction of the education reforms, just as the structure of school charters has continued to be adapted by successive governments, so too has the general environment within which school BOTs operate. Despite these changes the brief of BOTs - to govern - remains the same. This chapter has highlighted how government/community interactions such as contracting may influence governance structures and processes. The following chapter considers the issue of governance within the community/not for profit sector more closely, with specific focus on the role of governance faced by school BOTs.

3.5   Reflection

This chapter has been one of the most difficult sections of the thesis to write. Reflections to ascertain if the struggle was at a practical or theoretical level provided valuable insight.

Much of the material for this chapter built on earlier reviews of the literature, which I had undertaken in the initial stages of my PhD journey. Within subsequent re-views I now found myself working with material which I identified as primarily functional/positivist in orientation, which no longer sat comfortably with my developing social constructionist and critical approaches to thinking. Likewise, I found little evidence of an appreciative stance taken within the literature reviewed. Influenced by the functionally dominated literature, my earlier functionalist training 'battled' with my emerging thought processes, as I endeavoured to articulate my own

voice within this review. Recognising this 'battle', I am intrigued how commentators who were so closely associated with the education reforms have provided seemingly remote and disassociated accounts of changes which took place.

Subsequent revisions have found spaces for my developing thought processes, yet still my discomfort with sections of this chapter remains – reinforcing the time has come for me to look beyond a functional lexicon. I am beginning to recognise the need for not only an alternative approach to understanding organisational activity, but also a new vocabulary through which I might extend my understanding.

Chapter 4
Governance

Governance is too complicated and dynamic to be reduced to some inviolate division of labour (Chait, 1993)

4.0   Introduction

Contextual information introducing the grouping of organisations often referred to as the 'not for profit sector', as well as the social, economic and political environments in which school BOTs were established was outlined in the previous chapter. As such, the setting in which this investigation into the emancipatory potential that applications of ICTs may have on school BOT governance processes has begun to be identified. Building on this background, my focus within this chapter now turns to the challenges of governance faced by school BOTs in the early part of the 21st century.

I begin by briefly considering governance generally, before specific consideration of how governance within the 'not for profit sector' is portrayed in literature. Narrowing my focus further, I conclude with a review of identified influences on the governance of school BOTs. As with the previous chapter, the literature reviewed begins with a strong functional orientation. However, as my own theoretical lenses and competencies have developed, I have been better able to identify like minded scholars. Thus, the literature reviewed in this chapter can be seen to encompass a range of theoretical influences, from functional to social constructionist.

4.1   Governance

A Board of Directors is essential for most organisations regardless of which sector the organisation operates in (Gies, Ott, & Shafritz, 1990). While the name given to the body charged with overseeing the organisation may vary, (for example Board of Directors, Board of Trustees, Executive Committee) typically the establishment of 'the Board' has its roots in both traditional and legislative requirements. Specific factors such as the size, name and means by which people may be appointed to this body will differ between organisations, yet the challenge all 'Boards' face remains the same - governance.

Governance as a process may take place at either a societal (e.g. national) or organisational level (Kakabadse & Kakabadse, 2001) whereby

> elements in society wield power and authority, and influence and enact policies and decisions concerning public life, and economic and social development. Within this definition, governance is considered as a broader notion than government, involving interactions between formal institutions and those of civil society (GWGIIAS cited in Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 2001; p16).

The foregoing articulates the magnitude and influence of governance activities goes beyond outputs and may have far reaching implications across society. Connections between Board performance through governance and organisational effectiveness has been recognised in scholarship in recent years (Bradshaw, Murray, & Wolpin, 1992; Herman & Renz, 1999, 2000; Nobbie & Brudney, 2003). Nobbie and Brudney (2003) propose that a thoughtful, deliberate process which encourages Board members to closely examine procedures of governance may be helpful to the group. Scholarship which advances our understanding of governance processes (regardless of which sectors and/or levels of society are considered) makes an important contribution to organisational theory.

Governance activities may encompass interactions within many spheres of society including institutions, communities, families and the economy. Larner's (2003) suggestion that governance increasingly refers to the move away from state power to 'networked' forms of power, identifies the changes increased use of contracting between government and not for profit organisations and/or third party government (as discussed in chapter 3) has had on perceptions of governance processes. It is these processes of governance within not for profit organisations (specifically BOTs) which are considered in this chapter.

The increasing market orientation permeating social and economic policy in many Western countries was illustrated in my chapter 3 discussion of reforms introduced by successive New Zealand governments since the mid 1980s. Dominant lexicons associated with these approaches may lead some to consider corporate governance as being synonymous with the task of governance in general. Indeed, Dart (2004, p.307) observes not for profit organisations are often encouraged to become more 'business like' without, he warns, consideration being given to what the socially constructed category of 'business like' may involve. Eikenberry and Kluver (2004, p.132) support this concern, suggesting that the adoption of approaches and values of the market sector by not for profit organisations may harm democracy and citizenship. The authors propose that the influence of market values may place "little or no value on democratic ideals such as fairness and justice", and thus may constrain the ability of a not for profit organisation's members to create and maintain a strong community.

4.2 Not for profit/community/third sector governance

The diverse and dynamic collection of organisations which may be seen to comprise the category termed 'not for profit sector' has already been highlighted in the preceding chapter, so it is not surprising to find that governance within not for profit organisations is also multifaceted. Kakabadse and Kakabadse's (2001) focus on choice, opportunity, decision making and accountability as dimensions of governance is relevant to Boards operating in the third sector. Saidel and Harlan (1998) add the importance of mission and environmental relations (such as interactions with government). Gies et al (1990, p.178) take a broad approach in their definition suggesting "governance is the function of oversight and administration that takes place when a group of people come together…for a nonprofit organisational purpose". Renz (2005) describes governance as "the process of providing strategic leadership to a nonprofit organisation". Noting that no single definition is universally acceptable, MacDonald (1996, p.9) defines governance as "the processes by which organisations are directed, controlled and held to account". Carver (1997) is adamant that the voluntary status of many not for profit Boards must not detract from the responsibility and accountability associated with members' roles and responsibilities. The immensity of this role and its obligations are apparent when Gibelman, Gelman and Pollack (1997) discuss the very public consequences of inadequate performance demonstrated by several high profile not for profit Boards in the United States. With specific concern for transparency and accountability in interactions brought about through the devolution of service delivery by government to community groups in New Zealand Buchanan and Pilgrim (2004) profile public policy dilemmas such as the controversy surrounding Donna Awatere Huata MP and her alleged inappropriate use of Pipi Foundation funds.

Comparisons between the definitions identified above and the GWGIIAS definition cited by Kakabadse and Kakabadse (2001) earlier in this chapter suggest approaches to governance within the not for profit sector focus primarily on decision making and accountability, and in doing so may not take full account of associated issues of power. Indeed, McCambridge (2004) suggests the power of not for profit governance is often under estimated. A dominant focus on structural [or as Habermas may

describe – systemic] concerns may constrain a Board's creativity and ability to engage their stakeholders in dialogue regarding their collective dream(s) and strategies which may help the organisation achieve such dreams. Such oversights potentially marginalise the interests of the community the Board seeks to represent. Democracy may be weakened and Boards may function without the power and influence they might otherwise have. Careful consideration must be given to the influences through which such constraints are exercised. Consistent with the emancipatory aspirations of this investigation, application of a critical theory lens when considering power relations within Board interactions will help inform such considerations.

A range of approaches to the practice of governance may be taken across the diverse spectrum of not for profit/community organisations. Bush and Gamage (2001) propose that a governing body's level of activity lies on a continuum; ranging from an inactive governing body who fulfil only the minimum statutory requirements; to a proactive governing body, where governors want to be directly involved in all policy matters and may seek to influence operational management. The organisation's position on the continuum may be influenced by the motivations, attitudes and working relationship of the Board chairperson and senior management of the organisation, for example the principal and senior teachers of a school (Bush & Gamage, 2001).

Scholars such as Alexander, Morlock and Gifford (1988); Alexander and Weiner (1998); Steane (2001); and Steane and Christie (2001) have identified differentiating characteristics of philanthropic/community and corporate governance approaches. In addition to tangible variances such as the number of members and length of tenure; less tangible differentiating aspects have also been identified. Efforts to incorporate a representative slice of the organisation's members[1] and the value or ideological foundation of the organisation are two key areas for distinction (Steane & Christie, 2001). It is the strong values component, a defining feature of many not for profit organisations, that suggests sociologically driven theories of stewardship (Axelrod, 1994; MacDonald, 1996) and trusteeship (Axelrod, 1994) are more appropriate models to explain not for profit Board member motivation than the economically

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[1] These efforts may be self regulated by members or in the case of a government established Board such as school Boards of Trustees, prescribed by statute.

focused agency theory (Eisenhardt, 1989a) commonly applied in corporate governance situations (Olsen, 2001; Tricker, 1994). "Stewardship theory defines situations in which managers are not motivated by their individual goals, but rather are stewards whose motives are aligned with the objectives of their principals" (Davis, Schoorman, & Donaldson, 1997, p.20). Such motivations must be aligned with both the legal and ethical frameworks within which governance activities may be situated.

Legal and ethical frameworks provide both guidance and boundaries for the not for profit Board. Both structures may exist independent of each other, yet it is their combined effect, which ultimately influences the interactions which comprise the Board and its governance activities. Any organisation is an artificial person (Gies et al., 1990), so it is through the legal framework that both the Board and organisation obtain a legal identity and responsibilities. Steane (2001) observes the influence of legal frameworks and other regulatory practices in determining the formal structure of the organisation, as well as the structure and demography of the Board. While such frameworks may lead to a degree of isomorphism (Steane, 2001), many not for profit organisations endeavour (or indeed are required) to ensure their Board is also representative of its members/community (Alexander & Weiner, 1998). The ethical framework of governance may be less tangible, but is of equal importance. Indeed, given the significance of values to many organisations within the not for profit sector (Young, Hollister, Hodgkinson, & Associates, 1993) some would suggest it is this second 'structure' which may ultimately determine both the practices and effectiveness of the not for profit organisation (Alexander & Weiner, 1998; Drucker, 1990b).

A key indicator of the ethical framework is the lexicon adopted within the third sector. Typically a member of a not for profit Board is described as a 'Trustee' not a 'Director'. "Board members may view their service as a public trust…What motivates them is not the fear of falling short, but satisfaction at the prospect of effectively advancing the social purposes of their organisation" (Bell, 1993; cited in Axelrod, 1994; p120). Stewardship (Axelrod, 1994; MacDonald, 1996), and guardianship (Saidel, 1993) are further examples of terminology within the sector that describe a Board's interpretation of their accountability requirements. Carver (1997) emphasises the social obligation of trusteeship, suggesting accountability must embrace moral as

well as legal expectations. This view is consistent with Drucker's (1990b) description that a not for profit Board shares 'ownership' of the organisation in partnership with other stakeholders. The legitimacy of the Board, as perceived by each group of stakeholders, will be influenced by both the legal and ethical frameworks. Reflecting the subjectivity of legitimacy, each stakeholder group may determine the Board's legitimacy based on their perceptions of how decision making processes such as policy design and administration complement/contradict these frameworks (Jones, 1995).

Alexander, Morlock and Gifford (1988) highlight the separation of governance and management functions as a key differentiator between corporate and not for profit governance. Carver (1997) suggests governance is a unique form of management – differentiated by structural and interpersonal factors. In practice however, many not for profit organisations find the lines of demarcation between these two areas are often blurred and in a continual state of flux. Considering models of self-governance within schools, Bush and Gamage (2001) suggest any distinction between governance and management is further complicated by the range of issues facing schools. They suggest that at best

> the distinction between governance and management provides only a rough guide to the role of the governing body and success depends on good working relationships, particularly between the principal and the chair of governors, and on finding a balance, which is comfortable for both the governors and senior staff (Bush & Gamage, 2001, p.41).

Effective leadership can play an important part in maintaining the balance between governance and management, yet literature provides conflicting reports as to how the not for profit Board might best be led. Miller-Millesen (2003) applies agency theory in her consideration of the relative power distribution between the Board and the organisation's chief executive officer. "The extent to which either the Board or the chief executive might recognise their preferences is dependant on the relative power distribution between the two" (Miller-Millesen, 2003, p.531). Saidel and Harlan (1998) build on the work of Axelrod (1988), Drucker (1990a), Herman and Heimovics (1991) and Fletcher (1992) emphasising the pivotal role of the nonprofit executive in leading the Board. "If a nonprofit organisation is to be effective [however this may be ascertained], it is usually the chief executive who must engage the Board in clarifying their respective and mutually shared roles and responsibilities in the

organisational leadership process" (Herman & Heimovics, 1991; cited in Saidel and Harlan, 1998; p251). Such assertions contrast Taylor's (2000) opinion that it is a conflict of interest to have the CEO sit as a voting Board member, let alone function as Board chair. What is agreed on in literature is that the relationship between the Board and CEO provides a key influence on the Board's activities and subsequent interactions between Board, staff and external stakeholders such as government (Saidel & Harlan, 1998; Taylor, 2000).

Acknowledging and understanding the differences between governance and management is important for all parties involved. Tricker (1994) contends that the distinction is 'clearly activities oriented'. He identifies three central ideas:

- Governance has an external focus, whereas management has an internal focus
- Governance assumes an open system, whereas management assumes a closed system
- Governance is strategy oriented, whereas management is task oriented.

(Tricker, 1994)

Kakabadse and Kakabadse (2001) see the Board's relationship with stakeholders as a defining feature of governance. Yet the significance of these interactions is, I suggest, often not fully recognised in practice. Middleton (1987) highlights the not for profit Board's role in regulating exchanges of information and resources across boundaries. This boundary-spanning role occurs as a result of the unique position held by the Board. To many people outside the organisation, the Board is perceived as being an integral part of the organisation, indeed in some cases as the organisation's representative in the community the Board is 'the organisation'. Yet to those within the organisation itself, the Board may be seen as the 'external' link. The Board's position on the organisation's periphery requires that boundary spanning responsibilities be handled carefully and effectively if the balance between internal and external environments is to be maintained. Earley and Creese (1999) utilise the metaphor of a bridge to demonstrate the importance of this role for the school Board. They suggest the Board may act as a bridge between the school and community, potentially providing a two way conduit.

Manev and Stevenson (2001, p.185) define boundary spanning as "communication carried out through individual ties crossing the organisation's boundary and connecting members with members of external organisations". This activity not only provides vital information to help understand the environment in which the organisation is operating, but also a "key channel for the organisation to influence its socio-political environment" (Manev & Stevenson, 2001, p.185). Leifer and Delbecq (1978) present a typology of boundary spanning activities, suggesting the level of activity initiated is dependant on the type of information required and the level of uncertainty within both external and internal environments.

Social and economic exchanges, be they between Board members, the Board and the executive, or the Board and external stakeholders such as government or the community will influence the Board's approach to the inter-organisational/boundary spanning role (Middleton, 1987), as will the Board's demographic profile (Kovner, Wagner, & Curtis, 2001; Middleton, 1987; Smith, Smith, Olian, & Sims, 1994). Kovner et al. (2001) highlight information as a critical resource in this role, stressing that the quality of information received and the manner in which it is processed will influence outcomes. Gies et al (1990) suggest that Board members acting as information channels are a vital component of their overall role and responsibilities.

For many not for profit organisations, including schools, government and its various departments are a frequent and vital external contact (Saidel, 1993; Saidel & Harlan, 1998; Stone, 1996). Increased use of 'contractualism' (G. Davis et al., 1997) and/or 'third party government' (Salamon, 1987) between government and not for profit organisations was discussed in chapter 3. These interactions and associated boundary spanning activities may be interpreted within a power framework. Orr (2001) describes how a community based organisation developed and utilised relationships with organisations such as government, school systems and corporations. In doing so 'a broad, powerful base' was established cultivating what Orr (2001) portrays as 'relational power', (a concept similar to that proposed by Foucault (1980)), highlighting Middleton's (1987) observation of interdependence. Yet empirical reports by Saidel (1991) and Stone (1996) suggest interdependence does not necessarily equate to equality. Given that government agencies determine levels of funding, evaluate schools *and* may even replace a BOT if they deem it necessary, the

balance of power within these interactions often appears weighted in government's favour. While acknowledging resource dependence may be a necessity of this relationship, Stone (1996) warns not for profit Boards of the danger of focusing on this dyadic exchange alone. The external environment comprises a multitude of stakeholders and influences, thus requiring the Board to develop a multi-dimensional approach to any interaction and its associated information flows.

Miller-Millesen (2003) applies resource dependency theory to the concept of boundary spanning, noting that the theory is applied differently to the study of not for profit governance than is the case with corporate governance. She concludes although the theory is useful

> in understanding the Board's role in linking the organisation with the environment, managing and interpreting the flow of information, and enhancing the organisation's public image, resource dependency is deficient in its ability to explain the full range of Board behaviour. The theory underestimates the complexity of organisational life by assuming that the only legitimate sources of power and influence are resource based (Miller-Millesen, 2003, p.536).

A great deal of not for profit governance scholarship overlooks the significance of boundary spanning activities, taking instead a prescriptive approach to defining more tangible and familiar 'roles and responsibilities' of the not for profit Board. For example, Taylor (2000) identifies 'principles of good governance', while Axelrod (1994) and Stolz (1997) offer lists of 'roles and responsibilities' of the not for profit Board. Similarities can be noted between the two lists with both featuring responsibilities relating to the organisation's mission, performance, and resource management as well as representing the organisation to the community. Self assessment and monitoring of the Board's own effectiveness are also advocated. Kovner, Wagner and Curtis (2001) contribute a similar list, highlighting the importance of information (as received and processed by the Board) in fulfilling these functions. Isomorphism which may occur in the structural or procedural dimensions of not for profit organisations through the application of such prescriptive lists may be seen as indicative of the coercive, mimetic, or normative processes identified within institutional theory (Di Maggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Miller-Millesen, 2003).

Plumptre and Laskin (2003) classify such prescriptive approaches as 'policy governance' likening these approaches to that developed by Carver (1997). The authors challenge any suggestions that such lists/approaches might be universally applied across the diverse range of not for profit organisations. Rather, these authors propose not for profit Boards move from 'model based' to 'mission based' governance, whereby the governance framework of the organisation is tailored to their objectives, traditions and goals. Inglis, Alexander and Weaver (1999) also propose a framework where responsibilities of the Board are grouped into meaningful clusters as an alternative to 'extensive and cumbersome lists'. Three related activities feature in their typology – strategic activities (future focused with an eye to the external community), resource planning (both externally and internally focused) and operations (internally focused). The authors present their typology as an inverted pyramid, depicting the narrowing focus of activity from strategic through to operational concerns. Framework approaches such as those proposed by Plumptre and Laskin (2003) and Inglis, Alexander and Weaver (1999) support Chait's (1993) claim that governance is too complicated and dynamic to be reduced to some inviolate division of labour.

Miller-Millesen (2003, p.528) observes "the literature on nonprofit Board governance is rich with prescriptive advice about the kinds of activities that should occupy the Board's time and attention". She identifies three key organisational factors that influence Board behaviour: age or life cycle stage, stability, and professionalisation. A framework of organisational theory is applied so as to better understand the assumptions which underlie these actions. Recognising that no one theory can explain all Board behaviour, Miller-Millesen (2003) proposes a typology integrating agency, resource dependence and institutional theories. In doing so she hopes to move the focus away from what Boards *should* be doing, towards encouraging descriptive findings on *what* they actually do, and *why* and *how* they undertake these activities.

The use of frameworks such as those presented above begins to introduce an element of diversity to the study of governance activities which thus allows for the unique contributions, circumstances and processes of each BOT to be recognised. Bradshaw (2002) reframes governance activities even further by applying a social constructionist lens to the relationships between a Board and the staff of the

organisation. Reconceptualising an organisation through the metaphor of a 'storytelling entity' (Boje, 1995; Boyce, 1995; Bradshaw, 2002) governance becomes the process of questioning, challenging, testing and refining the organisational story. "Thus, the governance function is an engagement in the politics of the organisation aimed at keeping the system adaptive and learning" (Bradshaw, 2002, p.476). An unchallenged story may support embedded/established power sources which in turn facilitates further entrenchment. Hence the proactive approach proposed by Bradshaw (2002) provides a means through which processes of power such as hegemony may be challenged. Fragments of multiple stories may be recognised to coexist, allowing the organisation to "avoid creating hegemonic discourses that privilege some over others" (Bradshaw, 2002, p.481). Bradshaw also applies her reframing approach to leadership and management within the not for profit organisation, suggesting that when considered along with governance an organisation may become more "… creative, adaptive, reflexive and resilient…" (Bradshaw, 2002, p.480).

Variables such as the size of a Board, board demographics, experience and tenure of members have all been identified in more functionally oriented literature as influences on Board roles and responsibilities as well as perceptions of legitimacy held by stakeholders (Axelrod, 1994; Harlan & Saidel, 1994; Olsen, 2001; Smith et al., 1994; Steane & Christie, 2001; Weiner & Alexander, 1993). Such influences are also important within a social constructionist paradigm such as that proposed by Bradshaw (2002), as each may influence the perspective from which an organisation's story is told and/or interpreted.

Bradshaw's (2002) approach complements the theoretical and methodological approaches I have identified in chapter 2 as informing this investigation. The use of storytelling is consistent with my social constructionist epistemology, and aligns well with the storytelling component of appreciative inquiry, my chosen research method. Indeed, storytelling has become increasingly evident within management scholarship in recent years with organisational theory identifying the activity as contributing to such concepts as organisational identity (Jones, 2001), policy (Hyman, 2000; McDonough, 2001) and the construction of power relations within an organisation (Boje, 1995). Perceiving governance within the not for profit/community sector as a dynamic and complex process moulded by interactions of actors within the

organisational story not only begins to capture the complexity of the activity at a theoretical level, but also begins to honour the many contributions of the volunteers involved at a practical level. With this in mind, I will now consider the specifics of governance within the environment of a school BOT.

4.3. School Boards of Trustees in Aotearoa New Zealand.

A BOT operates within a legal and ethical framework (Gies et al., 1990). Legal frameworks, be they at local or national government level, often prescribe many of the accountabilities (public and otherwise) the not for profit Board must fulfil. Section 75 of the Education Act 1989, under which New Zealand School Boards of Trustees are established, prescribes that "except to the extent of any enactment of the general law of New Zealand provides otherwise, a school's Board has complete discretion to control the management as it sees fit". A school BOT must also adhere to the National Education Guidelines, National Education Goals and National Administration Guidelines. Deemed by government to automatically be included as part of a school's charter, O'Rourke (1993) details how these guidelines form a major part of the contractual arrangements BOTs have with the Crown. The National Education Guidelines, National Education Goals and National Administration Guidelines are summarised in Appendices 1, 2 and 3.

Alexander and Weiner (1998) suggest accountability requirements such as those imposed through charter and statute requirements may constrain governance configurations within a Board. Such requirements risk diminishing the multiple dimensions of accountability identified by Choudhury and Ahmed (2002) that a not for profit Board may face. With specific consideration to the context within which a school Board governs, issues of who the Board is accountable to may become blurred through requirements imposed by a dominant stakeholder. Hence, accountability to government may be allowed to dominate over accountability to other key stakeholders such as the community. Such dominance in turn raises concerns about domestication of community organisations by the state.

In contrast to the 'wealth, work and wisdom' formula which Oster (1995) observes is commonly used to appoint Boards in the United States, the structure of a school BOT is defined by statute. Under s 76 of the Education Act 1989, the principal is automatically appointed to the Board, given their role as 'Chief Executive Officer (CEO)' on the staff. A staff representative who has been elected by their colleagues also holds an 'insider' seat. Secondary schools may choose to have a student representative on the Board. The remaining members come from the school community (e.g. elected parent representatives, co-opted members, and proprietor's representatives in the case of a school of special character) and are thus considered to be 'outside' the organisation structure. The term of office for an elected Board is three years, with the last national round of elections held April 2004. Some flexibility was introduced to the election process in 2000, when changes to legislation provided Boards with the option to stagger elections and thus hold an election for half of its Trustees every 18 months. (The rationale behind these changes was to reduce the disruption and uncertainty that may occur in the event of an entirely new group of Trustees coming to office). Boards may also choose to co-opt members or hold by-elections to replace Trustees who leave during the term of office.

As is the case with any not for profit Board, a school BOT must address expectations from multiple stakeholders. Within a school environment key stakeholders include the Ministry of Education, staff, students, parents and caregivers, prospective parents and students, and neighbours of the school. All have views as to how the organisation's resources should be deployed to fulfil both the Board's legal responsibilities as defined by statute, and individual stakeholder concerns. Drucker (1990b) proposes resources be distributed in a manner consistent with the organisation's mission. Thus, school Board decision-making might be assumed to be guided by recognised local values recorded in the school charter in an effort to maximise stakeholder satisfaction.

Miller-Millesen (2003) contends that Board behaviour is influenced by two key environmental factors: the resource/funding environment and the institutional/regulatory environment. In the case of school BOTs (and indeed any not for profit organisation providing contracted services for government) both these environments are substantially influenced by government. Coupled with the evaluation role of the government funded Education Review Office, school BOTs

might perceive the balance of power in Board/government interactions to be weighted in favour of government, rather than illustrate suggestions of devolution or decentralisation as described in chapter 3.

Difficulties not for profit Board members may encounter distinguishing and maintaining a demarcation between governance and management were noted earlier. Such difficulties are also manifest within the school environment. Although Lange (1988) speaks of the partnership between professionals and the community, Barrington (1992) suggests that a higher proportion of New Zealand school principals saw governance and management as overlapping or not always mutually exclusive, than did school Trustees. Creese (1999) further illustrates the difficulty of defining governance within the school environment, noting that OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education, UK) suggested two contrasting interpretations of the concept in 1995. Similar confusion was also evident in New Zealand schools in the early 1990s (Barrington, 1992). Robinson et al (1994, p.75) observe that

> the act which promulgated the Tomorrow's Schools reforms did not incorporate the governance/management distinction….The result of giving both parties management responsibilities is that it is harder to demarcate territory; the partnership between the Board and the staff cannot be established by legal division, it must be established through negotiation and experimentation.

Leadership of a school BOT is prescribed in that the position of chair must be held by a community/parent representative rather than the principal or the staff representative. Harris (1993) highlights the interdependence between the not for profit Board and senior members of the organisation. Middleton (1987) describes this interdependence as a 'paradoxical relationship'. Interaction between Board and staff may take place on a number of levels, both formally and informally. Both parties need the support and assistance of the other if they are to fulfil expectations and responsibilities (internal and external) associated with their position. For example, a Board cannot determine if the school is providing adequate instruction and resources for literacy and numeracy if staff do not provide information regarding programmes taught, student achievement levels, and comparisons with national averages. Likewise, staff may have difficulty teaching effectively if they are not adequately resourced and supported by the Board. The need for Board and management to work together is described succinctly in

NSCSSC's (2001) analogy of the Board and senior staff rowing the boat in the same direction.

The interdependence between Board and staff should not however, be interpreted as equality or stability (Harris, 1993; Middleton, 1987). Barrington (1992) attests to the difficulty many New Zealand schools have had determining the appropriate balance and/or distinction between governance and management. Tension can easily mount when one party frequently attempts to 'disown' issues by drawing the demarcation line between governance and management. For example, a BOT may believe they are 'doing the right thing' by leaving the 'hands on' implementation of the new school uniform to staff, while staff may see it as yet another policy task that takes them out of the classroom. High profile media coverage throughout 2004 reported several instances of alleged principal domination within New Zealand secondary schools, which in turn seriously affected the focus and perceptions of credibility of the schools, pupils and wider communities involved (Larson, 2004; Welch, 2004). Middleton (1987) identifies tension as an inherent component of the Board/executive relationship, as are socio-economic factors and perceptions of professionalism. She thus describes the relationship between the Board and senior staff as 'a dynamic interaction', reflecting a 'complex shifting of power' rather than the stable 'partnership' envisaged by Lange (1988).

In keeping with the prescriptive approach typically taken by practitioner oriented publications, support material prepared for school BOTs appears to have a narrow focus. Publications and training focus on areas of functional activity. Portfolios among Board members are often aligned to the National Administration Guidelines (see appendix 3). Support for school Trustees is available through New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) at regional and national levels. Through voluntary membership, the association provides member Trustees with written material regarding trusteeship and various employment related issues. A range of services is also provided including an advisory service, training provision and representation to government on issues of concern to member Boards.

The Ministry of Education also produces resources to assist Boards understand their accountability requirements (see for example Ministry of Education (1999; 2001)). When introducing new requirements these resources are often supported by training/information sessions throughout the regions. Increasingly electronic resources such as Te Kete Ipurangi (a bi-lingual web site of resources), Leadspace (an electronic discussion forum for school leaders) and 'The Thinking Template' (an electronic template to guide schools through the planning and reporting requirements introduced in 2003) have become available. These initiatives will be discussed further in chapter 5, although little formal information concerning the level of uptake of these resources is available.

Governance related factors were considered as part of a government contracted longitudinal study undertaken by researchers from the University of Waikato during the early years of BOTs (1989-1992). Case studies from 13 Waikato and two Wellington based schools as well as two national surveys of 48 secondary schools contributed to the research. Grouped under a collective title of "Monitoring Today's Schools" (MTS) the implementation and impact of the reforms in education administration is presented through 16 research reports (Mitchell, 1993). Specific consideration is given to how these changes affected areas such as the initial election of Trustees in 1989 (Harold & McConnell, 1990), educational perspectives of the first group of school Trustees (Middleton & Oliver, 1990), governance and management (Barrington, 1992), charters and policies (Hall & McGee, 1991; Mansell, 1992), school-community relationships (Harold, 1992), and Maori issues (Jefferies, 1993). These reports provide important insights into the activities undertaken during the early years of school BOTs, however no subsequent updates of the research have been made to ascertain what changes (if any) more than a decade of experience has brought to governance activities. While acknowledging variations among individual schools, conclusions in the final report highlighted the extra workload of principals, teachers and Trustees; the confusion and tension associated with efforts to distinguish governance and management roles, and the pivotal role of the principal in balancing the requirements and accountabilities of each (Mitchell, 1993).

As noted in chapter 3, New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) has also undertaken research reviewing the development of school BOTs. As with the Monitoring Today's Schools project, this research also took the form of a longitudinal study, which in this instance had a ten year duration. Reports from the studies suggest that while most New Zealand school BOTs are 'happy' with current Board structures, concerns have been raised over increased pressure and workloads, poor government resourcing and the lack of trust between government and schools (Snook et al., 1999; Wylie, 1997b, 1999). Resourcing issues have been further highlighted in NZSTA commissioned research undertaken by NZCER investigating school effectiveness (Wylie & King, 2004).

Mitchell (1993) emphasises how the Monitoring Today's Schools project reports 'perceptions' rather than 'reality'. Both the MTS and NZCER research reports provide aggregated information obtained across a range of schools. Large scale approaches such as these provide useful information at the macro level, although Mitchell (1993) warns that the participating samples should not be assumed to be representative of the New Zealand education system as a whole. A macro level focus is also unable to incorporate local detail and specific nuances exhibited at individual Board level. Mitchell (1993) acknowledges that the breadth of scope of the MTS project precluded an in depth study of any one theme and that some aspects of the reforms were not addressed at all.

4.4   Conclusion

A common theme evident within scholarship of not for profit governance is that governance is an interactive, dynamic activity. Not for profit Boards are accountable to multiple stakeholders. Difficulties not for profit Boards have defining and maintaining a demarcation between governance and management was highlighted, as was the pivotal position held by the CEO and his/her relationship with the organisation's Board. Research reports examining the first decade of school BOTs illustrate how these concerns are also prominent within the environment of purported self governing schools. Limited consideration has been given within the not for profit governance scholarship reviewed to associated issues of power. Application of a

critical perspective, such as that described in chapter 2, to empirical issues identified within this investigation will help address this limitation.

Developing 'better' governance [however this may be perceived] demands a level of thoughtfulness (Nobbie & Brudney, 2003). Although Nobbie and Brudney (2003) consider the merits of a prescriptive 'policy' approach, they acknowledge thoughtfulness and frameworks facilitated through alternative approaches may be equally promising. The question of whether appreciative inquiry, the method chosen for this investigation, may provide similar beneficial outcomes will be explored in chapter 10 as I discuss and reflect on the contributions made through my research process.

Literature on not for profit/community governance is rich with prescriptive advice about what kinds of activity Boards should focus on, although there is a growing body of research seeking to understand and describe not for profit Board governance (see for example Miller-Millesen, 2003; Ostrower & Stone, 2001). Much of the literature reviewed has been task oriented, reflecting the traditional functionalist paradigm often associated with management scholarship. Bradshaw (2002) moves beyond this focus however, and through a social constructionist lens represents an organisation as a story telling entity, whereby governance becomes the process of questioning, challenging, testing and refining the organisational story. Bradshaw's (2002) approach complements the theoretical and methodological approaches I have identified in chapter 2 as informing this investigation. The use of storytelling is consistent with my social constructionist epistemology, and also aligns with my chosen research method – appreciative inquiry. Perceiving governance as a dynamic and complex process moulded by the interactions of actors within the organisational story not only begins to capture the complexity at a theoretical level, but also begins to honour the many contributions of the volunteers at a practical level. Consideration of the unique environment of each BOT participating in this investigation is something the aggregated information presented in research reports such as the MTS and NZCER series' have not been able to achieve. A focus on what each Board is actually doing, supported by understanding how and why these activities occur contributes towards Miller-Millesen's (2003) call for deeper, richer consideration of Board activity.

Governance and associated processes of interaction are dynamic, the approaches of which may vary considerably. Tools, methods, or processes that may enhance or inhibit a not for profit Board in fulfilling these activities warrant consideration. In preparation for an investigation of the emancipatory potential that applications of ICTs may have on school BOT governance processes, issues associated with the use of ICTs within the not for profit sector are reviewed in the next chapter.

4.5   Reflection

My frustration at the functional prescriptive orientations which seem to dominate the literature continues. While snippets of critical theory and social constructionism are evident, there is still a noticeable absence of their widespread application within this field of scholarship. I am beginning to see a light at the end of the tunnel though, so all is not lost. Laying aside assumptions of what 'better governance' may entail for the moment, I find the suggestion emerging in recent literature that a 'thoughtful, deliberate process' can enhance understanding and applications of governance encouraging. My chosen process of appreciative inquiry is very different from the prescriptive approach profiled by Nobbie and Brudney (2003), so there is additional scope for my work to make a contribution. At the pragmatic level, my hope to enhance a Board's understanding of governance can be addressed, while the application of appreciative inquiry in this manner may provide a theoretical contribution.

I find Bradshaw's (2002) approach to governance refreshing, despite not having found any accounts of its application. To apply such an approach within a school governance environment I suspect would be quite adventurous. I envisage many Trustees might see the approach as being 'quite alternative' as it is far from the tidy, prescriptive approaches advocated in much of support material provided by government and associated training providers. Not only would the storytelling approach fit well with the appreciative inquiry process, but the idea of storytelling seems to me to be incredibly complementary to development within a school environment.

Chapter 5
Information and Communication Technologies

ICTs, it begins to appear, are everywhere- and nowhere too

(Webster, 2002)

5.0   Introduction

A contextual background for my investigation into the emancipatory potential that applications of ICTs may have on the governance processes of school BOTs has been established in the proceeding two chapters. Not for profit organisations have been considered, as has their changing environment influenced by increased contracting relations between these organisations and government. Specific consideration has been given to the context in which school BOTs were established through the introduction of the Education Act in 1989. Specific attention was devoted to making explicit the mandate of such Boards to govern and their relationship(s) to the state and their communities.

My attention now turns to information and communication technologies (ICTs) and reports in literature regarding how/if these tools may be used by not for profit organisations such as school BOTs. Despite the increasing scholarly focus on ICT implementations generally, there is a paucity of clear definition as to what the umbrella term of ICT is perceived to include. Within this chapter I aim to establish a working definition of ICTs which may guide both myself and the other participants in this investigation.

The effects of the particular choices to use ICTs across society will be considered briefly before detailed consideration is given to ICT applications within not for profit/community organisations. My focus is then narrowed further to consider the ICT initiatives and facilities currently available to New Zealand school BOTs.

Reflection on the approaches taken within the literature reviewed and the questions and challenges this scholarship generates for me conclude this chapter.

5.1 Information and communication technologies: what are they?

Despite the tendency within traditional scholarship to categorise 'things' within predetermined boundaries observed in the previous two chapters, the literature does not provide a precise definition as to what exactly is to be included within the umbrella term 'information and communication technology' (ICT). Webster (2002) expresses his surprise at how many scholars operate with underdeveloped definitions of their subject. Often an all encompassing 'black box' approach appears to be applied. Information and communication technology is recognised as a 'thing', the composition of which is generally taken as accepted with little or no further discussion entered into. Whether such lack of definition is beneficial or detrimental to scholarship is open to debate. I believe it prudent however, to establish some flexible boundaries in this instance to provide guidance for myself and other participants involved with my investigation, to ensure we all have a similar understanding of what the starting point for this part of the journey may be. To achieve this understanding I briefly consider some of the approaches taken and definitions applied to each of the concepts within the integrated ICT umbrella. I begin with 'information'.

5.1.1 Information

> Our images of information affect the way we are able to think about the world we live in, because today we define the world in terms of information and information processing (Boland, 1987, p.365).

Information is often perceived in quantitative terms, and is 'something' that is exchanged or received. 'Data' may be 'processed' (Webster, 2002) whereby the value added through the processing activity may be perceived to transform 'data' into 'information'. A sole focus on the quantitative aspects of information obscures many issues. Roszak (1986) suggests that when information is considered to be a purely quantitative measure of communicative exchanges qualitative concerns with regard to the necessity, availability or value of information may be overlooked. Also at risk is regard for processes through which shared meaning may be negotiated within an

information exchange. Scholars such as Roszak (1986) and Webster (2002) challenge such preconceptions so that we might consider the quantitative growth of information more critically. For example, is the generation of 'more' information necessarily making us better informed citizens? What sort of information is being generated and stored, and what is the value/cost of this collection and processing of information to society? Quantitative approaches may uncritically accept reified, or even entified, information thus distorting perceptions of influence it may/may not have.

Boland (1987, p.370) asserts information is more than data.

> It is not an object that can be manipulated to design organisations. It is not an object that possesses intelligence. It neither brings or gives power, and is not perfectible. Information is found in the lived experience of the human condition….

As such, a key component of information is human interaction and the 'sense making processes' that people individually and collectively participate in. To portray information otherwise denies our search for meaning and knowledge; fostering a misleading image of the world as pre-defined and pre-packaged. Images of information which ignore our search for meaning and/or diminish our attention to the quality of dialogue around us may have a negative affect on possibilities for our social construction(s) of reality (Boland, 1987).

5.1.2   Communication

Finnegan (2002) observes that 'communication' encompasses a multidimensional spectrum rather than a bounded entity. Communication, she argues, is a process not a one off event. Describing a multiple, emergent process which may include experience, emotion, spoken and unspoken elements, Finnegan (2002) emphasises how communication goes beyond information. Consistent with Boland (1987) she highlights the active dimension of human interconnectedness. Communication is thus perceived by Finnegan to be an action rather than a product. Deetz (2003) takes a similar stance describing communication as a social act, which when in its 'democratic form' seeks to produce rather than re-produce. "It produces what self and other can experience, rather than reproducing what either has" (Deetz, 2003, p.42). From a social constructionist perspective, communication is a significant part of organisational processes, and hence may be central to perceptions of democracy

(Wellington, 2005). Lyytinen (1992) for example describes how the use of certain communication media may either encourage or inhibit spontaneous and/or intuitive forms of sense-making. Communication may thus be seen to be central to all structures and action. Interest in processes of communicative action and the language within these processes correlates with the emancipatory concerns of critical theory (Alvesson & Willmott, 2003), and this thesis.

5.1.3   Technology

Philosophers and critical theorists have considered both the manner in which technology may be applied and the effects of such applications. Each consideration provides alternative portrayals of how technology may be defined and hence perceived. Feenberg (1999, p.9) observes how theories regarding technology "differ with respect to the role of human action in the technical sphere, and the neutrality of technical means." Applications of deterministic theories may reduce our perceptions of our ability/power to control technical development, portraying technical means to be neutral insofar as they "merely fulfil natural needs" (Feenberg, 1999, p.9). Feenberg (1996) suggests such a neutrality thesis obscures the social dimensions of technology, a key basis on which critique of technology may be developed. Thus, critical theorists "affirm human agency while rejecting the neutrality of technology" (Feenberg, 1999, p.9). Heidegger (1977) and Ellul (1964) are identified by Feenberg as critical scholars who took a 'technophobic' approach to technology and its influence, advocating sweeping theories which have been described as "too indiscriminate in their condemnation of technology to guide efforts to reform it" (Feenberg, 1999, p.152). Marcuse and Foucault are powerful critics of technological determinism in the formation of modern hegemonies. "Both Marcuse and Foucault agree that technologies are not just means subservient to independently chosen ends but that they form a way of life, an environment" (Feenberg, 1999, p.7). Both scholars reject the idea that there is a single path of progress based on technical rationality (Feenberg, 1999).

If, as critical theorists posit, technology is not neutral then Feenberg (1996) suggests the particular choice to use specific technology may be seen to involve taking a valuative stance. For Marcuse (1968; 1978) technology is a social process in which the use of particular technical apparatus is but a partial factor. The influence and effect of such technologies on the individuals and groups who invent, attend to or direct its application must be considered; as must the perceptions and expectations of users, and the unintended consequences which emerge over time (Loader & Keeble, 2004).

Thus

> ....(technology) is at the same time a mode of organising and perpetuating (or changing) social relationships, a manifestation of prevalent thought and behaviour patterns, an instrument for control and domination (Marcuse, 1978, p.138-139).

Pinch and Bijker (1984) build on this approach, advocating a social constructionist approach to technology is necessary given that technology is itself socially produced through a variety of social circumstances. Adoption of a social constructionist lens challenges functional assumptions that technology is a 'black box' whose contents can be assumed common and whose influence might be understood through applications of linear models (Pinch & Bijker, 1984).

The concept of technology as a socially constructed process provides a foundation for Arisaka's (2001) consideration of technology and critical theory. Advocating that the way in which we 'frame' and use technology may affect the cultural, political and economic outcomes in society, Arisaka (2001) stresses technology can never be culturally neutral and that the political and cultural consequences of technology must not be overlooked. Incorporating political and cultural dimensions into her analysis allows Arisaka to question further the extent to which users of technology are participants in associated decision making processes. Thus, issues such as cultural self determination and empowerment might be considered. For example, the effect reduced face-to-face communication may have on ethnic groups that have a strong social, emotional and oral foundation must be taken into account (Middleton, 2000). Wahl (2000) agrees that the Internet is perceived by some to be 'white man technology', but argues that technology is not neutral; it is influenced by the culture of the users.

The neutrality of technology has also been challenged from gender based perspectives (Cockburn, 1992; Grint & Gill, 1995). Studies of 'everyday' technologies such as the telephone (Frissen, 1995; Green, 2001) illustrate the different perspectives females and males apply to the usage of technology. Females may perceive the telephone to be of relational importance, i.e. for sustaining relationships with family and friends, as well as contributing towards community activities. In contrast, males may perceive the telephone to be used primarily for functional purposes (Frissen, 1995). Similarly, the cellular/mobile phone has been seen by men to extend their 'public world', whereas use of the same technology may be perceived by women to extend the boundaries of their 'personal worlds' (Rakow & Navarro 1993, cited in Frissen, 1995). Boneva and Kraut's (2002) examination of how women and men use the Internet, particularly email, supports this earlier scholarship concerned with telephone use. Their study suggests women are more likely than men to use new technology to maintain and/or expand social networks and personal relationships. Both men and women were however, seen to use email extensively as a means of communicating with parents, siblings and children.

The impact of the choice to use technologies cannot be assessed outside their context of use (McConnell, 1995) and is socially constructed based on the understanding(s) of people, their motivations, knowledge structures and social interactions (Adam & Wood, 1999). Social interactions may include pressures to adopt specific technology exerted by competitors, government, clients or members. For example institutional pressure within organisations was identified by Flanagin (2000) to be a critical factor in the adoption of web site usage. Tantoush and Clegg (2001) argue that political motivations influence ICT implementation. Zorn (2001) extends this discussion, identifying the role of emotions in the adoption and implementation process. He argues that the emotions of those affected by the implementation of new ICT applications may be ambiguous. People may be susceptible to influence through interaction with others. To this end, the manner in which meanings of emotions are negotiated during the implementation of an ICT application (be they positive or negative) may in turn influence perceptions regarding the success (or failure) of the implementation.

5.1.4 Information and communication technologies (ICTs)

All encompassing 'black box' approaches are often applied when considering information and communications technologies, reflecting a functionalist approach to means/ends concerns. The contents of this 'box' are 'assumed' to be known and are hence often unquestioningly accepted within everyday discourse. Dutton (1999, p.347) provides one of the few definitions of this phrase to be found in literature:

> All the kinds of electronic systems used for broadcasting, telecommunications, and computer mediated communications.

While recognising that the entity of a 'black box' and its subsequent acceptance are themselves socially constructed (Pinch & Bijker, 1984; Scott, Semmens, & Willoughby, 2001), the approach and definitions such as that provided by Dutton (1999) overlook the social, political and cultural dimensions of technology noted above. Distinction between the message and the medium/machine by which it is transmitted may also be overlooked (Finnegan, 2002; McLuhan, 1964). As such, these approaches risk reifying or entifying ICTs and their applications through their minimal consideration of human choice and involvement.

Despite these considerations it is interpretations such as Dutton's (1999) which typically guide everyday perceptions of ICT, and as such these understandings must be considered. To some people Dutton's definition may be seen to exclude telephones, for although a cordless telephone uses electricity 'traditional' telephones within the home do not. Other commentators suggest that conceptions of ICT be restricted to digital technology, but given that many New Zealanders' home use of the Internet is accessed via analogue landlines (Department of Labour, 2001; Doczi, 2000), this definition would be misleading within the context of this investigation.

Documentation within the education sector influences the context within which BOTs operate. The Ministry of Education (2003) provides separate definitions for both information technology and communication technology:

Information technology (IT) is the term used to describe the items of equipment (hardware) and computer programmes (software) that allow us to access, retrieve, store, organise, manipulate and present information by electronic means. Personal computers, scanners, and digital cameras fit in to the hardware category. Database storage programmes and multimedia programmes fit into the software category.

Communication technology (CT) is the term used to describe telecommunications equipment through which information can be sought and accessed, for example, telephones, facsimiles, modems and computers (Ministry of Education, 2003, p.5).

One could assume that the Ministry's definition of ICTs is the combination of these two definitions. With specific consideration to the New Zealand educational context, Ham (2002) highlights the plurality of the term 'ICT'. "There is no 'Information and Communication Technology', but there are a broad range of 'Information and Communication Technologies" (Ham, 2002, p.132). With school BOTs essentially comprised of volunteers, the importance of 'everyday' ICTs (for example home telephone, personal computers) are identified as important contextual influences within this investigation.

For the empirical purpose of my investigation I have been guided by the definitions provided by both Dutton (1999) and Ministry of Education (2003). In doing so, the contents of the 'black box' of technology have begun to be identified. Taking guidance, not a policy of strict adherence is crucial for two reasons. As per my overall ontology and epistemology, all definitions of ICTs are recognised as being socially constructed, and hence will be context specific. Working within a general framework which is able to encompass the multiple interpretations participating BOTs may perceive, will hence be consistent with my methodology. It is recognised however, that some guidelines/boundaries may be needed – both to provide guidance to participating Boards if required as well as to ensure focus on 'communication technologies' such as postal mail are minimised.

At a theoretical level the foregoing points pertaining to the social, political and cultural dimensions of ICTs and their applications will guide my analysis. Thus, consideration must be given to the individuals involved, their beliefs and interactions as well as how ICTs have been designed, the processes through which

participation/use of ICTs has been facilitated, and associated outcomes and issues which emerge during these processes.

5.2   ICTs and Society

Choices and uses of information and communication technologies are reshaping many activities in human communities, and the ways in which these communities change. These changes include how we receive news from around the world; carry out shopping, business and banking transactions; express creativity; and engage in social interactions which reflect the diversity of community life (Smith, Kearns, & Fine, 2005). Quan-Haase and Wellman (2002) suggest the Internet increases social capital and civic engagement, with the Internet facilitating social contact that supplements face to face and telephone contact. In contrast, increased social and political control, deskilling and degradation of work, and a decline in face-to-face communication are among alternative outcomes attributed by Miles (1996) to the introduction of ICTs.

Many of the approaches taken in literature present a dichotomous view of ICTs, for example "Utopia: Dystopia" (Kenway, 1996; Lawson & Comber, 2000), "Transformative: Incrementalist"; "Technophobe: Technofreak" (Lawson & Comber, 2000); "Sustaining: Disruptive" (Lawson & Comber, 2000). The hype and expectation associated with developing technologies is well illustrated when scholars such as Castells (2002 p.3) claim "exclusion from these networks is one of the most damaging forms of exclusion in our economy and our culture". With many analysts similarly caught up in the euphoria of rapid development of technologies such as the Internet, Haythornthwaite and Wellman (2002, p.5) suggest perspective has been lost:

> Analyses have often been implicitly (and somewhat Utopianly) egalitarian, rarely taking into account how differences in power and status affect how people communicate with each other. Throughout, analysts committed the fundamental sin of particularism, thinking of the Internet as a lived experience distinct from the rest of life.

Lindroos and Pinkhasov (2003) reframe these concerns at a more pragmatic and market oriented level, observing that there is a need to balance issues such as openness, access and trade with network security and privacy if purported benefits from applications of ICTs are to be realised at national and individual levels. Following this lead, I now consider the manner in which choices about the use of

ICTs affects aspects of collective life. Although applications by business are not the focus of this investigation they are still considered briefly. Applications by government are also considered. Associated outcomes from applications and interactions within and between both these areas may in turn influence the environment within which not for profit organisations (and school BOTs specifically) operate.

5.2.1   Individuals

Gergen (1999b; 2001) considers the impact of increased use of technology at both individual and relationship levels. He observes how increased information and communication mediums developed via technology have increased the range of information to which we have access, as well as the range of people with whom we may have significant interchange, and the range of opinions communicated to us from within multimedia sites. These increased communications contribute towards increased recognition of multiple realities for an individual to consider and potentially address (Gergen, 2001). Habermas (1992) makes similar observations, suggesting that the use of technology has contributed to the redefinition of social boundaries, affecting the lifeworld, which in turn has an impact on social and self perception(s).

Increased use of ICTs also impacts upon the types of relationships individuals engage in. While face-to-face communication may decline, use of ICTs allows geographical and time boundaries to be overcome, increasing the potential for communication outside one's physical location. The valence of these new interactions may vary. Many people may draw strength from the development of, and involvement with, a community of like-minded individuals. There is a risk however, such communities may become isolated and insulated. Instances where participants communicate only among themselves, celebrating the reality they have created and derogating 'the other' have the potential to create division in society (Gergen, 1999b), illustrating how ICTs may be used as both a technology of empowerment for some and a means of subjugation for others (Boeder, 2002; Loader & Keeble, 2004).

5.2.2 Business

Business can be seen to be both a provider and consumer of ICTs. Decisions by business leaders with regard to where and how resources may be invested may in turn influence who has access to new technologies, (such as broadband), and who does not (Loader & Keeble, 2004). Changes to the processing and communication of information through increased use of ICTs may then influence the structure of business at both the organisational and market levels (Te'eni & Young, 2003).

E-commerce (such as business transactions which take place over the Internet) is no longer the only approach through which a business may implement ICTs (Castells, 2002). Although Locke and Cave (2002) suggest many small and medium sized businesses in New Zealand have taken a 'wait and see' approach to the adoption and implementation of ICTs, increased utilisation of ICTs by business is evident in the diversification of market activities. Through ICT applications such as the Internet business people are transforming their relations with suppliers and customers, management and production processes, co-operation with other firms and activity in the financial markets (Castells, 2002). Efficiency gains, increased productivity, and increased export opportunities are benefits promoted by the New Zealand government as it seeks to increase the use of ICTs by business (Locke, 2004; Locke & Cave, 2002; New Zealand Government, 2005). Government policy increasingly places a strong emphasis upon the importance of ICT development and their corresponding (assumed) contribution/links to the 'knowledge economy' (Locke, 2004). For example, the national Digital Strategy comprises a core element of New Zealand's growth and innovation framework (New Zealand Government, 2005). The OECD also promotes ICTs and their applications as a means of achieving increased economic growth, stressing the perceived need for business and government to adopt an integrated approach towards ICT adoption (Lindroos & Pinkhasov, 2003). The promotion of ICTs as a means to achieving preconceived notions of 'efficiency' and 'effectiveness' is consistent with neo-liberal tendencies assumed in much of Western society, including New Zealand.

5.2.3   Government

Government is identified as a major user and promoter of ICTs, particularly computers. Observing the ability of state officials to stall, unleash, or lead technological innovations, Castells (1996) purports that the influence of the state is a decisive factor in how members of society utilise information and communication technologies.

One of the main ways in which ICTs have been used to influence processes of government has been the decision to introduce and promote the concept of e-government. Prattipati (2003) describes e-government as comprising three domains: improving government processes, connecting citizens, and building external interaction. At a practical level these domains may include the means through which government seeks to provide outcomes such as electronic access to public services, improved efficiency of getting information from government, and paying taxes (Collins & Butler, 2002). The New Zealand e-Government Strategy (2001, p.11) claims that "generally governments are aiming to make e-technology the servant of society in order to improve the quality of neighbourhoods, to make economies stronger and to bring people closer together." Increased transparency of services provided and the machinery of government in general are purported by O'Hara (2000) to be key advantages of 'e-government'. Building on Doczi's (2000) observation that ICTs are becoming increasingly integrated into normal processes of daily and business life, the electronic provision of services is promoted by government as being more convenient, having a lower delivery transaction cost, and more reliable; which in turn will ensure easier access to services and information, leading to greater participation in our democracy (New Zealand Government, 2001).

Although much of the current e-government focus in New Zealand is on service provision, use of ICTs for monitoring accountability appears to also be on the government agenda. The Ministry of Education has signalled their objective of achieving 100% electronic communication with schools in the next few years (Kerslake, 2001). A stated ministerial preference for electronic submission of the charters, strategic and annual plans which BOTs are now required to submit annually to the Ministry of Education for approval is an example of this initiative.

e-Democracy is another dimension of government and citizen utilisation of ICTs, whereby citizens might choose to use the technologies to assist with their communications with politicians, government and agencies (Collins & Butler, 2002). Although not openly acknowledged as such, the Digital Strategy released by the New Zealand Government in May 2005 could be seen as an attempt by government to advance both e-government and e-democracy. The Digital Strategy seeks 'to create our digital future', portraying an epoch where "lots of things will change for the better" (New Zealand Government, 2005, p.8). Williamson (2005) describes the strategy and its subsequent iterations as 'world leading', suggesting the document not only underpins the increasing importance ICTs have in community settings, but also demonstrates the first time a government has adopted a 'whole of government' approach to ICTs. The Digital Strategy seeks to address issues associated with social and cultural good, however there is a significant emphasis on economic benefit (Williamson, 2005). Key enablers identified within the strategy are content, connection and confidence. Consistent with concepts associated with third way politics, partnership is identified by Williamson (2005) as a key component of the strategy. Funding may be provided to projects that can demonstrate working partnerships between communities, government agencies or the private sector.

O'Hara (2000) suggests that much of the optimism about the Internet stems from political rather than social developments. The foregoing review and assorted New Zealand government publications support this claim. For example Doczi (2000, p.1) purports that "to stay competitive and enhance social and economic participation, New Zealand needs a population that is willing and able to use ICT to best effect". Increased access to information is said to ensure citizens are better able to participate in society, encouraging an increased skill base enabling citizens to make better contributions to the economy (Doczi, 2000). "(The Internet) encourages democratic participation in decision making, in essence requiring less from central government because more people can contribute to their individual and collective well being at a local level" (Doczi, 2000, p.10). While such discourse seems to promote a utopian image of ICTs, the perceived impact of e-government at both individual and organisational level is seen by Miles (1996) to contribute towards a contrasting (e.g. Big Brother) view of technology. Consistent with the preceding 'promotion' scant regard appears to be given in government literature to those who choose not to use

ICTs (see for example Crump and McIlroy (2003)), and the means through which these people will be able to access government services in the future.

5.2.4 Digital Divide

The late 1990s and early 2000s saw governments and other proponents of ICTs begin to focus on the 'digital divide', the perceived gap between those who have what is deemed by 'experts' to be optimal access to ICTs (information *haves*) and those who have limited or no access (information *have-nots*). Access may be restricted for a number of reasons including socio-economic, geographical or physical reasons. The existence of the digital divide is seen by ICT proponents as an inhibitor to benefits associated with e-government and e-democracy being realised (Graham, 1999).

Generally attention on the digital divide has focused on inequality of access, arising from variances in socio-economic levels in society. However, recognition is growing that the concept may be multidimensional. For example, Boyd (2002) and Department of Labour (2001) identify attitude, content, education and training, financial and infrastructure as further dimensions which must be addressed. The New Zealand Government Digital Strategy discussed above in section 5.2.3 endeavours to take these additional factors into account. Loader and Keeble (2004) caution however, that the digital divide cannot be simply understood as an absolute measure of exclusion from ICTs. "What people use the Internet for and its perceived relevance to their everyday life experiences influences not only levels of access but also different types of access according to socio-economic origins" (Loader & Keeble, 2004, p.6). Such a stance within the scholarship reviewed highlights the potential for 'digital divide' related issues to influence the access and use of ICT by participating BOTs.

Although literature about ICTs and their use have been considered through a social constructionist lens, much of the scholarship reviewed for this investigation overlooks the socially constructed nature of the digital divide. After all, the concept of a divide is dependent on the assumption that access to ICTs is beneficial and that a pre-determined level of access (determined by the promoters of ICTs) is required to be 'optimal'. Further, the concept of the digital divide is often used in such a way as to "denote homogenous groups of people, simple binary divides between the information

rich and information poor" (Loader & Keeble, 2004, p.29). Social and cultural differences such as age, sexuality, gender, race and disability are overlooked as mediating factors which influence how people relate to or through ICTs (Loader & Keeble, 2004).

Kirschenbaum and Kunamneni (2001) suggest that many digital divide initiatives have too narrow a focus (e.g. the primary focus on access) and hence neglect to address related issues. They propose that by focusing on the 'social divide' the 'digital divide' *and* other social issues can be overcome. Applying an appreciative inquiry approach and associated 'vocabularies of hope' (Ludema, 2001), as described in chapter 2 of this thesis, the 'digital divide' can be reframed as 'digital opportunities' (Tindall Foundation, 2001). In doing so, a focus on what might be achieved through the use of ICTs is encouraged. For example, Loader and Keeble (2004, p.28) identify a common implication in the literature they reviewed that "the Internet can improve civic participation and create stronger links with communities". The premise that access to and use of ICTs is accepted as beneficial to all may be questioned however. Critical theory invites the exposure of processes and systems that exacerbate inequality and/or entrench dominant power relations. The emancipatory aspirations of this investigation concerned with how ICT applications may contribute towards the development of human well being and potential of participating BOTs require that democratic ideals such as freedom, equality and participation are also taken into account.

5.2.5 Community Informatics

Responses from around the world to challenging perceptions of the digital divide have partly focused on the role of the voluntary and community sector to develop projects that might provide public access and support the adoption of ICTs by those currently excluded (Loader & Keeble, 2004). For example, the New Zealand Digital Strategy in tandem with the Connecting Communities Strategy is one way in which the New Zealand Government seeks to promote community use of ICT. Similarly, government has established the Community Partnership Fund to encourage local partnerships which develop ICT capabilities or advance community projects through the use of ICT (www.digitalstrategy.govt.nz).

These approaches illustrate an emerging trend identified in scholarship as 'community informatics', an approach which links community development efforts (and theory) with the opportunities that ICTs are perceived to present (Gurstein, 2000; O'Neil, 2002). Examples of these initiatives may include community centres which provide free Internet access or the 'Computers in Homes' project whereby schools located within low socio-economic areas nominate families to receive an entry level home computer and associated technology (Das, 2003). Community informatics emphasise community and information over technology. Human agency is identified as an essential component for the adoption, alteration and diffusion of new technologies into community relations. Community members are centrally involved in the application of ICTs for community development (Loader & Keeble, 2004).

Despite optimistic claims promoting community informatics initiatives as a means to challenge the digital divide, O'Neill (2002) and Loader and Keeble (2004) observe a disappointing amount of evidence based research with which to support such assertions (Loader & Keeble, 2004). Hence, the authors stress that community informatics initiatives must be socially contextualised[1]. Interaction via applications of ICTs does not equate with empowerment. Showering a community with technology may provide evidence of access, but this may not automatically follow through to higher levels of engagement such as that sought by proponents of e-government and e-democracy. Indeed, Boeder (2002) suggests that when activities are seen to commodify the Internet, community informatic activities may in fact sustain and deepen the 'digital divide'.

Crump and McIlroy (2003) profile a New Zealand community based initiative where residents of an apartment block were able to visit a computer suite equipped with personal computers and Internet access. Despite attempts to improve access and awareness of the facility, the majority of residents stated they were not interested:

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[1] While noting the need to take contextual factors into account, O'Neil (2002) also calls for more "objective assessments" of the impacts of ICTs on society. My epistemology, as outlined in chapter 2, suggests these two activities to be mutually exclusive.

> The polarisation of the 'haves' and 'have nots' that is determined by physical access and the belief that all want to participate is flawed….not all 'have nots' necessarily wanted to be 'haves' and neither did they view engagement in ICTs as a positive force that would transform the quality of their life (Crump & McIlroy, 2003, p.10).

Too often literature echoes the assumptions of the information society as perceived by the information advantaged. Community informatic initiatives must be sensitive to the different and diverse life experiences of citizens, recognising how these experiences will in turn influence an individuals approach to and perception of ICTs (Loader & Keeble, 2004).

5.3　　Not for Profit Organisations and ICTs

The community informatics initiatives discussed above are an example of not for profit organisations with an external focus on ICTs and their applications. In this case, the community organisations are helping to make ICTs more accessible to society in general. The literature reviewed in this section takes an internal focus, i.e. considering how ICTs are used *within* not for profit/community organisations. Two points must be kept in mind as this section of the review develops. First, I observe how scholars often write of 'IT' (information technology) applications within the nonprofit area (see for example Podolsky, 2003; Saidel & Cour, 2003; Schneider, 2003). I have included these works in my consideration of ICTs – but remind both myself and the reader of the ease at which the communication/human dimension of ICTs may to be overlooked. Reflection on Boland's (1987) definition of information noted earlier helps to reinforce the importance of not falling into a similar confine as my own review progressed. Second, while most of the applications discussed in literature consider ICT use within the organisation as a whole, my own investigation considers the emancipatory potential that applications of ICTs may have to enhance *BOT* governance processes. One might expect that if ICTs are used generally within an organisation then there is a greater likelihood of them being used for a specific purpose such as governance. However, recognising the importance of context in influencing ICT applications (Adam & Wood, 1999; McConnell, 1995) noted in section 5.1.3, generalisations should not be prematurely interpreted.

USF Institute for Nonprofit Organisation Management (2004) identifies two levels of scholarship regarding the use of ICTs within not for profit/community organisations:

1) empirical reports of usage, typically self published work with an advocate focus, seeking to encourage what has been identified as 'best practice';

2) a small number of peer reviewed articles that seek to advance understanding of management practices and theory associated with the use of ICTs within not for profit organisations.

My own review supports these observations, noting the common focus on access and connectivity potentially overlooks consideration of applications and possible outcomes. I also identify a third level of scholarship:

3) books which seek to provide 'how to' guides for those members of organisations who are searching for material that may assist them with decision making as they consider how ICTs might be introduced within their organisation.

While the first and third levels are important contributions to the development of the not for profit sector, their strong practitioner focus provides background information which although still relevant to this investigation, lacks the theoretical foundations I am seeking to review and establish. Thus, for the purposes of this review my primary focus is on the second level, peer reviewed scholarship. Within this scholarship I consider influences on the adoption of ICTs within not for profit organisations, as well as how not for profit/community organisations are described in literature as using ICTs. Associated issues such as the influence of leadership, values and mission of the organisations are also highlighted.

Blyth (2002) hails ICTs as a set of powerful tools that can be used to contribute to not for profit organisations achieving networking and efficiency gains, enhance participation in democracy, enable cultural expression and support social change. While advocates suggest ICTs such as the Internet assist small not for profit organisations by 'levelling the playing field' and enabling small groups to establish a presence similar to that of wealthier/larger organisations; McNutt and Boland (1999) suggest the opposite is in fact the case – that the cost of technology and expertise required to implement ICTs may push some smaller not for profit organisations off the playing field completely. The review that follows illustrates how literature provides a varied account of usage and applications, within which I observe a

tendency for scholars to focus on successful applications. I found no discussion of perceived ineffectual, harmful or cost ineffective attempts at ICT implementation within a not for profit/community organisation.

5.3.1 Influences on the adoption of ICTs within the not for profit sector

As noted in chapter 3, economic theories advanced as an explanation for the existence of not for profit organisations and their contributions within society often incorporate the use of information. Thus, it might be expected that increased focus on ICTs and their applications within modern Western society might further influence the characterisation and assumed activities/contributions of not for profit organisations in the future (Te'eni & Young, 2003). For example, if a not for profit/community organisation is perceived by government or members of the public to be a trustworthy source of information, proponents of such economic models might anticipate increased demand for the services provided by this organisation. Similarly, the increased complexity of the environment within which not for profit organisations operate has seen many organisations adopt more 'business like' functions, of which the decision to implement ICTs is but one example (Saidel & Cour, 2003). Increased expectations of accountability from government and other funding providers are also identified as a driving force behind the decision to apply ICTs within many not for profit organisations (Saidel & Cour, 2003; Schneider, 2003), to the extent that Schneider (2003) suggests that some not for profit organisations may perceive their lack of ICTs to negatively impact on their ability to source funding.

Systems approaches advocating increased 'efficiency' and 'effectiveness' in administration through the implementation of ICTs (Berlinger & Te'eni, 1999) could be seen to complement the economic and neoliberal influences noted above. Berlinger and Te'eni (1999) identify attitude as an influencing factor within systems theory, although attitude is narrowly defined as the interaction between perceived cost (efficiency) and perceived benefits (effectiveness). Such an approach fails to fully recognise the complexity of relationships and beliefs that influence an individual's attitude. As such, systems approaches to the use of ICTs within not for profit organisations may be better suited to explaining ICT implementations to cover

administrative tasks, rather than values and/or mission based approaches such as ministry or governance (Berlinger & Te'eni, 1999).

Burt and Taylor (2001) suggest the uptake and application of ICTs is influenced by the philosophies and values attributed to the organisation, which in turn are influenced by the values of the contributing members. Leadership attitudes in particular are identified as key influences to the adoption and use of ICTs within an organisation. The introduction of ICTs may be seen as effecting cultural change. Blyth (2002) observes leadership may enable/impede this change. Leadership influence may be further complicated within not for profit organisations however, where there may be more than one leader. Berlinger and Te'eni (1999) consider the example of religious organisations which may have a clergy leader as well as an administrative leader. I envisage a similar situation may develop within a school BOT as the principal is the professional leader, but the chairperson is expected to take ultimate responsibility for governance decisions. Recognition of influences such as leadership and values held within the organisation is consistent with both the social constructionist perspective adopted within my own investigation, and the emancipatory ideals of critical theorists (Feenberg, 1996, 1999) noted earlier in section 5.1.3.

Combining the foregoing influences with institutional theories of isomorphism provides a further explanation as to why members of not for profit organisations may choose to implement ICTs (Di Maggio & Powell, 1983; McNutt & Boland, 1999; Powell & Di Maggio, 1991). Coercive and normative isomorphic processes may emerge, consistent with influences identified within economic and/or systems theory discussed earlier. For example, Flanagin (2000) observes social pressures, either external or within the organisation, may influence the rate of adoption of organisational websites. Further, Di Maggio and Powell (1983) propose uncertainty to be a powerful influence which encourages imitation or mimetic isomorphism. Members of not for profit organisations seeking to secure the future of their organisation may perceive pressure to implement ICTs because similar organisations are seen to be doing so.

Many of the influences identified above as encouraging the use of ICTs within a not for profit environment might also be considered as inhibitors. Leadership attitudes and values of members may discourage ICT implementation (Blyth, 2002; Burt & Taylor, 2001; Schneider, 2003). Burt and Taylor (2001 p.55) observe how "deeply cherished ways of thinking and ways of doing are being confronted by the challenges of the information age". Schneider (2003) identifies two types of barriers to ICT use: social and cultural capital issues of the community who comprise the organisation (such as the concept identified as the 'digital divide' discussed in section 5.2.4), and management issues such as time use, staffing issues and Board expectations. Resourcing, both financial and skill based, is acknowledged as a common barrier to many not for profit organisations increasing their use of ICTs. The Morino Institute (2001) acknowledges that some philanthropic trusts and funding providers will not finance the purchase (or lease) of ICTs. Berlinger and Te'eni's (1999) account of the adoption and maintenance difficulties encountered by religious congregations who were given second hand computers illustrates the need for organisations to be able to access up to date equipment and expertise. Blyth (2002) suggests fragmented application of public policy may be perceived by members of a not for profit organisation to be a further disincentive which will not outweigh the risks and expenses that might be incurred through ICT implementation.

Perceiving not for profit organisations to be 'a step behind' business and government organisations when it comes to adopting and benefiting from new technology, Spencer (2002) suggests a lack of funding, expertise and a failure to comprehend how technology such as the Internet might contribute towards organisational objectives are reasons for slow rates of ICT adoption within the not for profit/community sector. Kirschenbaum and Kunamneni (2001) suggest that the not for profit sector has been penalised in a number of ways for failing to adopt emerging technologies:

1) the inability to meet potential increases in service demand;
2) the loss of funding due to the inability to demonstrate programme outcomes;
3) the inability to compete with for-profit enterprises;
4) the inability to communicate effectively with their constituencies,
5) increased isolation or distancing of not for profit organisations from the 'new economy'.

Recognising the strong neoliberal assumptions within their argument (for example that a not for profit organisation may *want* to compete against for profit organisations, and/or that their constituencies *require* electronic communication) and setting them to one side, consistent with isomorphic influences noted earlier (Di Maggio & Powell, 1983) members of many not for profit organisations appear to be identifying a 'reality' that encourages the implementation of various information and communication technologies for those who wish to maintain or improve their organisation's chance of survival.

5.3.2   How are ICTs used within not for profit organisations?

Podolsky (2003) identifies two ways in which ICTs might be used within a not for profit/community organisation: to make existing organisational processes more efficient; and as a tool to change processes which may in turn alter the way their organisation operates and meets their mission(s). These applications are similarly conveyed in Berlinger and Te'eni's (1999) consideration of management vs. mission related ICT implementations. Functional, i.e. management oriented applications are well detailed in 'how to books' such as Podolsky (2003) and empirically based literature. For example, not for profit use of the world wide web for advertising (Boeder, 2002; Elliott, Katsioloudes, & Weldon, 1998), research, communication, fundraising (Boeder, 2002; Johnson & Johanson, 2005; Johnson, 1999; Oehler, 2000), philanthropy (Boeder, 2002; Clohesy & Reis, 2000), volunteerism (Clohesy & Reis, 2000; Spencer, 2002) knowledge sharing (Clohesy & Reis, 2000; Spencer, 2002) and e-advocacy (McNutt & Boland, 1999; Spencer, 2002) are activities profiled in literature.

Burt and Taylor (2000) suggest however, that the potential of ICTs within the not for profit sphere lies beyond administration and operational efficiency. Rather, the promise of electronic networking, transformational and learning capabilities might be developed so as to become strategic enablers. The authors promote electronic networks as having the potential to 'reshape organisations internally', 'reconfigure relationships across networks of organisations' and 'redefine relationships with individual citizens'. Blyth (2002), Boeder (2002) and Hart (2002) make similar suggestions. Blyth (2002) observes how ICTs are being added to the toolkits of

community activities as a way of promoting facilitation and collaboration with a view to achieving social change. Boeder (2002) and Hart (2002) encourage not for profit organisations to use Internet facilities as a means to building and strengthening relationships with stakeholders.

The contexts and applications suggested by scholars such as Blyth (2002), Boeder (2002), and Burt and Taylor (2000; 2001) appears consistent with my interest in the emancipatory potential that applications of ICTs may have for school BOTs. Whilst I agree with Burt and Taylor (2000; 2001) that consideration of potential opportunities can be beneficial to the organisations concerned, I take issue with the somewhat reified and deterministic stance taken in their assertions. For example they write that "ICTs have the potential to transform internal governance in organisations…" (Burt & Taylor, 2000, p.134). Reframed so as to acknowledge that it is the *individuals* who have the potential to transform governance processes through their choices and actions' regarding ICTs, this suggestion provides an important motivation to be considered within my own investigation.

Burt and Taylor's (2000) promotion of applications of ICTs as a strategic enabler might be aligned to Berlinger and Te'eni's (1999) discussion of mission related implementations. Brainard and Siplon's (2004) suggestion that not for profit organisations extend use of the Internet beyond unidirectional and administrative functions (such as advertising and fundraising), to establish multidimensional communications (such as list serves, bulletin boards and chat rooms) illustrates this approach. The authors advocate such applications move beyond the economic considerations of efficiency and encourage the membership of a not for profit organisation to re-orientate/revitalise itself towards the voluntary spirit of democracy and participation which underlies the mission(s) of many community/not for profit organisations. Valuing social relationships among constituents, both as a tool to be converted into resources and as a benefit to be derived from associational activity, provides alternative perceptions of efficiency and effectiveness than those driven by economic theory (Brainard & Siplon, 2004).

Whatever uses are sought from ICT applications within the not for profit environment, descriptions of the actual level of ICT implementation within the sector vary across literature. Scholarship based in North America refutes claims of 'technological impoverishment' within the sector (USF Institute for Nonprofit Organisation Management, 2004), while Burt and Taylor (2000) and Blyth (2002) challenge this stance. Although some groups are identified as using ICTs in very powerful ways within United Kingdom and New Zealand contexts respectively, many organisations are said to be struggling and/or are under exploiting the capabilities associated with these technologies (Blyth, 2002; Burt & Taylor, 2000).

The interplay of historically institutionalised values, strategic objectives and technological capabilities will all influence the manner in which decisions with regard to the implementation (or not) of ICTs are made. Burt and Taylor (2001) suggest not for profit organisations which rely on volunteer input (as is the case with school BOTs) may find the interaction between these influences particularly strong. Critical consideration of what might be considered as 'implementation' or 'application' highlights discrepancy in levels of use further. Individuals within many organisations may be 'connected' (e.g. have access to the Internet) but they may vary with regard to the frequency or complexity of applications (Burt & Taylor, 2001). Similarly, the extent to which use of ICTs is perceived as 'active' or 'passive' should be considered. Occasional use of email may not be seen by proponents of ICTs as active engagement and/or use of the Internet's full potential (McNutt & Boland, 1999; Spencer, 2002). In contrast, those actually engaging in the activity may believe this level of action is all they require.

Recognising such variation in use, I now narrow my focus further, to consider the information and communication technologies available to New Zealand School Boards of Trustees.

5.4 ICTs and New Zealand School Boards of Trustees

Information and communication technologies and outcomes associated with their implementation within schools (or any environment) should not be considered in isolation.

> To be effective, innovative and robust technological resources must be used to support systematic changes in educational environments that take into account simultaneous changes in administrative procedures, curricula, time and space constraints, school-community relationships and a range of other logistical and social factors (Culp, Hawkins, & Honey, 1999, p.11).

Despite this observation, scholarship considering the use of ICTs within schools focuses primarily on curriculum and pedagogical issues. For example, Lawson and Comber (2000) consider how the introduction of ICTs into schools may blur boundaries, including those between curriculum subjects, between pupils and teachers, and between traditional conceptions of time and space. Slowinski (1999) encourages policy makers and parents to look beyond discouraging reports of accountability, standardisation, and misuse (such as access to pornography) to consider the contribution Internet use in the classroom may make to student development and involvement in democracy.

Boyd (2002) reviews and evaluates digital divide initiatives in New Zealand, Australia, United States, United Kingdom, and Canada which target students (and in some cases families and communities) from low socio economic areas. In each instance the project aims to increase students' access to ICTs, rather than focus on pedagogical and/or management applications of ICTs within schools. With specific consideration to the New Zealand educational context, Ham (2002) investigates 23 clusters of schools from throughout New Zealand who delivered a programme aimed at increasing teachers' ICT skills and knowledge (which in turn might be reflected in increased frequency and quality of classroom usage of ICTs to support teaching and learning), increasing their usage of ICTs for professional and administrative tasks in schools, and supporting school policy and planning initiatives related to ICTs. Ham's (2002) findings suggest the collaborative cluster model is helpful in assisting participants' achieve increased competence, confidence and utilisation of a range of

ICTs. In his review of ICT within the New Zealand educational context Harris (2001) also focuses on the contributions of ICT at the classroom level with regard to children's learning and teacher's professional development. Although ICTs are identified by Harris as an essential tool for educational planning and policy within New Zealand, there is no recognition of the devolution of planning and decision making to Boards supposedly provided by Tomorrow's Schools as reviewed in chapter 3 of this thesis. Rather, ICTs for education planning and policy development are seen to be tools of the Ministry of Education or their associated consultants. "Such information [as might be provided through ICT applications] overcomes any physical remoteness from a school that an educational planner must overcome "(D. Harris, 2001, p.17).

With regard to the emancipatory potential that applications of ICTs may have on school governance, it thus appears more prudent to consider the strategic/mission oriented literature reviewed in section 5.3 than specialist education material. The recent and current environment of school BOTs must not be overlooked however, as it contributes towards our understanding of the context within which Boards participating in this investigation operate. Formal reports (rather than academic literature) provide some insight.

> In line with e-government strategy, the Ministry of Education is moving towards using the Internet more, thus becoming more responsive in the way it communicates with the education sector. It is predicted that this reduces the compliance burden placed on schools. It will, also, improve the Ministry's responsiveness to the changing rolls and profiles of schools to deliver funding more accurately and efficiently (Kerslake, 2001, p.1).

As such, the Ministry of Education conducted a survey in 2001 to ascertain how well prepared schools were for communication with the Ministry via the Internet, and to determine the specifications for the 'best' computer that schools might use for administrative purposes (Kerslake, 2001). While most schools were found to have administrative computers capable of accessing the Internet, only some schools were perceived by Kerslake to be in a "good position to communicate with the Ministry" (Kerslake, 2001, p.17). Bandwidth constraints and the manner in which schools accessed the Internet were identified as the main constraints to achieving better electronic communication between the Ministry of Education and schools.

The New Zealand information technology sector, with cooperation from the Ministry of Education, also conducts regular surveys of ICT use in New Zealand schools. The focus of these surveys is wider than the 2001 Census (Kerslake, 2001), encompassing ICT infrastructure, Internet access and usage, ICT planning and funding, professional development of teachers and principals and use of school ICT resources by the wider community. Fink-Jensen, Johnson and Lau (2003) report that all New Zealand primary schools have access to the Internet. The incidence of school web sites home pages appears to be increasing with 35% of responding primary schools having a home page and a further 33% looking to develop one (Fink-Jensen et al., 2003). Boyd (2002) recognises that establishing online resources and learning communities are important for the continued development of teachers, principals and students, although little research and development appears to have been done to apply this approach to supporting BOTs. Board of Trustee support for ICT use within schools is acknowledged by the Department of Labour (2001) as important, so it would seem prudent that consideration be given to providing Boards with the opportunity to 'walk the talk' and initiate their own use of ICTs.

Culp, Hawkins and Honey (1999) highlight how researchers have barely begun to explore how technology might help schools establish stronger connections with students' homes and with the local community. Such activities fit well within the boundary spanning activities of the governance function discussed earlier in chapter 4. Bernstein (1998) recounts an example where email communication was utilised by an American school to communicate with parents on a regular basis and keep them informed of school related news and information. Email was not initiated as a replacement to traditional methods of communication, but as a supplement to them. Whilst the application has been portrayed by Bernstein (1998) as successful, consistent with the concern over the simplistic 'black box' approach identified at the beginning of this chapter I caution against uncritically equating increased usage with success. "Outcome evaluations need to avoid the 'black box' approach by examining the 'how' and 'why' rather than the 'what' " (Boyd, 2001, p.15). Thus, as my own investigation progressed I undertook to be wary of placing undue emphasis on and/or reifying the technology itself, which may in turn hinder consideration of the overall context and additional social outcomes which may occur.

At an empirical level the New Zealand government has voiced its support for infrastructure which may facilitate schools access to, and use of, ICTs. This support is said to be achieved through the establishment of nationally agreed standards to encourage interoperability, negotiation with business and other stakeholders to provide appropriate bandwidth to schools at minimal cost, and guidelines for the appropriate use of ICT, for example guidelines for Internet safety (Ministry of Education, 2003). At a strategic level three areas identified in the New Zealand government's overall ICT strategy for schools 2002-2004 (Ministry of Education, 2003) are of relevance to this investigation:

- Supporting educators in integrating ICT into curriculum and management practices
- Increasing efficiency and effectiveness of educational management and administration
- Developing partnerships with communities, businesses and other stakeholders

                                                            (Ministry of Education, 2003)

Within the proposed framework for action, the goal of school leaders (including BOTs) to promote and use ICTs to model best practice has been identified (Ministry of Education, 2003). A culture of collaboration to facilitate the sharing of best practice through school clusters and online communities of interest is a strategy identified by the Ministry of Education (2003) as providing a medium through which the above goals may be met. Integration of ICT into curriculum and management practices within a school, supported by ICT professional development and a well integrated infrastructure are identified within the strategy document as areas schools should take responsibility for, to help achieve the goals outlined by government (Ministry of Education, 2003). Upon deeper consideration however, the focus appears to remain on principals, teachers and administrators. An overview of ICT programmes for schools considers access, capability and learning issues (Ministry of Education website, 2005). There is little evidence of support or initiatives targeting BOTs. Consideration of the electronic resources available as at July 2005 illustrates this focus.

ICT resources available to Boards of Trustees, as at July 2005

Professional development for teachers and principals is a key part of the New Zealand government's Digital Horizons strategy for schools. Government funded initiatives such as laptops for principals and more recently laptops for teachers of year 7 and 8 students support this strategy. 'Leadspace' is a government initiated website (www.leadspace.govt.nz), which endeavours to provide a 'one stop' site which brings together essential information and services for school leaders. Launched in April 2002, the site targets mainly principals, although BOTs and other school leaders are permitted to access the site. Principals are able to access an online forum through the Leadspace site. Through this forum principals can interact with colleagues and participate in discussions pertaining to education and leadership issues. Online facilitators maintain the network as a dynamic environment, facilitating and seeding discussions, linking members with other sources of information, and arranging on-line guests (Ministry of Education, 2003). Leadspace also provides links to related websites such as TKI, EdCentre, and the Ministry of Education website as described below.

Of the 230 primary school principals participating in the 2003 ICT in Schools survey (Fink-Jensen et al., 2003), 228 had heard of Leadspace, with 79% of respondents having used the site. The principals surveyed reported the leadership, e-admin, and knowledge areas were the links they visit most frequently. Rather than being seen as a tool to assist with the implementation of new approaches, most principals considered Leadspace to be a quick means through which to access information. Other benefits identified by principals participating in the 2003 survey were increased access to professional reading, help solving school based problems, and assistance in strategic planning (Fink-Jensen et al., 2003).

Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI) is another government developed website (www.tki.org.nz). A key feature of this site is that it is bi-lingual with content presented in English and Te Reo Maori. Information regarding governance and management issues is available through the site, although once again material supporting teachers in the seven essential learning areas appears to be the main focus. Connected to the TKI site is the ICT helpdesk (www.tki.org.nz/r/ict/helpdesk). Established in 2002, this service provides free assistance to school leaders, teachers and administration staff seeking

advice on software and hardware installations and/or the suitability of products and services.

A third education web site, EdCentre was launched by the New Zealand government in February 2005. Targeted towards parents and caregivers rather than teachers, EdCentre (www.edcentre.govt.nz) has been established as an online gateway to information about New Zealand education. Governance is one of six areas featured. EdCentre appears to provide a 'shop front' portal which in turn links to existing information held within Ministry of Education, Leadspace and Education Review Office websites.

The Ministry of Education website (www.minedu.govt.nz) provides formal information regarding school administration, management and governance. Included within the site is e-admin, a programme which was "established to look at ways of supporting and enhancing administration systems to enable schools and early childhood centres to spend more time on learning by ensuring IT projects deliver the required business benefits" (Ministry of Education web site 2005). The lexicon within the web site illustrates the business orientation of the 1989 school reforms continues. Areas within e-admin include electronic roll returns, student management systems and information to facilitate the storage and exchange of information within schools and between schools and the Ministry of Education. The focus in this section is on management and administration rather than governance issues. Links within and between Leadspace, TKI and EdCentre to the Ministry site help ensure consistency of information across the various sites.

The Education Review Office (ERO) reviews schools every three years. Reports of these reviews, details of the review process and national reports on current education practice in New Zealand are published on the ERO website (www.ero.govt.nz) . This site is available to anyone (e.g. Trustees, school community, prospective parents) seeking information about ERO reports on a schools performance.

The New Zealand School Trustees Association web site (www.nzsta.org.nz) features several interactive functions, including a chat facility for Trustees to share information and discuss common areas of interest/concern. Activity within the forum appears to be low however.

> Overall we find that the [online] chat type approach has limited appeal to Boards, they prefer to talk [directly] with people in the main and this is reflected in the fact that they will more likely use our [telephone] help desk for queries rather than the chat room approach. I think that is because it requires other people to contribute and there is not the discipline often for people to respond, other than our staff. Therefore it's usually a place of last resort (Davies, 2005).

A recent ICT initiative by NZSTA is an 'email tree', which provides regular (at least once a week) updates to Boards through the chairperson and/or principal. "This is highly regarded by those on the tree, but again it's a question of access as some Board chairs do not have their own email accounts and then the material has to go via the schools " (Davies, 2005).

5.5   Conclusion

Through consideration of information, communication and technology in turn the interconnected process of human interaction is reinforced in this chapter as an alternative to the reified, deterministic approach often portrayed by scholars who uncritically accept a 'black box' definition of technology. Critical theorists concern with both the portrayal of technology in literature, and the implications of unquestioned practical applications provide a valuable dimension to our understanding of ICTs. Information and communication technologies may be applied to facilitate empowerment for some, and as a means of subjugation for others (Boeder, 2002; Loader & Keeble, 2004).

Supplemented by a continuum of opinion from advocacy (Brainard & Siplon, 2004; McNutt & Boland, 1999; Oehler, 2000) to disdain (Conhaim, 1996; McNutt & Boland, 1999), increased applications of technology are evident across society; impacting on individuals, business, government, and not for profit/community organisations. Although not for profit organisations are perceived by some scholars such as Spencer (2002) to be slower in their implementation and adoption of ICTs,

the literature describes a range of functional applications within the community sector such as advertising (Boeder, 2002; Elliott et al., 1998), research, communication, fundraising (Boeder, 2002; Johnson & Johanson, 2005; Johnson, 1999; Oehler, 2000), philanthropy (Boeder, 2002; Clohesy & Reis, 2000), volunteerism (Clohesy & Reis, 2000; Spencer, 2002) knowledge sharing (Clohesy & Reis, 2000; Spencer, 2002) and e-advocacy (McNutt & Boland, 1999; Spencer, 2002).

Scholarship suggests however, that potential of ICT applications within the not for profit sector may rest within applications of ICTs as strategic and mission enablers, which may build and strengthen relationships with stakeholders (Berlinger & Te'eni, 1999; Blyth, 2002; Boeder, 2002; Burt & Taylor, 2000, 2001). Reframed so as to acknowledge that it is the individuals within organisations who have the potential to transform governance processes through their choices and actions' regarding ICTs, this suggestion provides an important motivation to be considered within the emancipatory aspirations of this investigation.

Economic, systems and organisational theories are all considered within literature as possible explanations as to why/why not members of a not for profit/community organisation might choose to introduce ICT within their organisation processes. But the social dimensions must also be considered. The uptake and application of ICTs is influenced by the philosophies and values of an organisation's members, especially those held by the organisation leadership (Berlinger & Te'eni, 1999; Burt & Taylor, 2001). Similarly, the importance of the context of use has also been highlighted. A range of social, political, and economic factors can, and frequently do, produce a mixture of intended and unintended outcomes. Without understanding the context in which individuals and communities use ICTs, their widespread adoption is constrained (Loader & Keeble, 2004).

Scholarship considering the use of ICTs within schools tends to focus on curriculum and pedagogical issues. Where ICT applications are discussed in terms of school administration, management, and/or strategic planning school principals and the Ministry of Education are typically seen to be the initiator and/or end user. Boards of Trustees may be acknowledged in passing, but apart from the NZSTA website, there is scant evidence of ICT applications targeted specifically at school Trustees. When

considering the emancipatory potential that applications of ICTs may have on school governance processes it appears more prudent to consider the strategic/mission oriented not for profit literature than specialist education material.

A social constructionist lens is evident in much of the literature reviewed within this chapter. Although critical theorists have also made substantial contribution to our understanding of the choice(s) to use technology and consequences of such choice(s), their efforts are often presented in literature at a somewhat abstract level. There appears to be little critical consideration of specific applications of technology within not for profit organisations generally and school BOTs specifically. For example, Haythornthwaite and Wellman (2002) suggest that the Internet has now become embedded in everyday activities for many people in the developed world, with use of the Internet providing a complement to ongoing activity, rather than being a separate entity. If this is the case, then use of ICTs by school Trustees as a means to enhance their governance processes could be seen by many as a manifestation of this trend. Through my investigation and interaction with Trustees from four different Boards, I was able to explore the extent to which this perception is shared. I caution however against uncritically equating increased usage of ICTs with success. "Outcome evaluations need to avoid the 'black box' approach by examining the 'how' and 'why' rather than the 'what'" (Boyd, 2001 p.15). Thus, within this investigation I undertook to be wary of placing undue emphasis on, and/or reifying, technology. Such emphasis may in turn hinder consideration of the overall context and additional social outcomes which may occur.

5.6   Reflection

In many ways my review of the literature presented in this and the preceding two chapters has mirrored my own theoretical development. My discomfort with the dominant functionalist orientation was acknowledged in chapter 3, as was my relief/enthusiasm at the increased evidence of social constructionist approaches in chapter 4. Social constructionist approaches are even more evident in the material reviewed for this chapter. The critical considerations of technology presented by some of the scholars reviewed in this chapter appeal to me, and are consistent with the theoretical lenses I seek to apply in my own work. In light of so many 'attractive' and

seemingly 'suitable' concepts, I am conscious however, of the need to develop and maintain consistency in my argument. I perceive a risk of developing a 'hotch potch' brew where no one flavour dominates, leaving me with a tasteless and questionable creation!

The scholarship reviewed above reinforces to me that my consideration of applications of technology within this investigation must go beyond 'how to' issues. Our use of language may embed or transform particular assumptions. The beliefs and intentions of the people interacting within decision making processes concerning information and communication technologies must also be honoured, as must any outcomes associated with these processes. Gergen (1999b) suggests that the manner in which we choose to apply technologies has the potential to transform lives, relationships and institutions. I must bear these potential opportunities (and threats) in mind as my journey moves forward.

The focus on successful applications at the empirical level evident within much of the literature reviewed fits well with the principles of appreciative inquiry. But as with my initial response to Ai, I can't help but wonder if this is all too good to be true? Are members of not for profit organisations slowly but surely identifying benefits to be gained from the applications of ICTs? If this is the case, are all these applications providing the happy endings which seem to be portrayed in literature? What about the stories that have not been told? And what about my interests in and concerns about power, relationships and democracy? Is the focus on functional contribution a deflection of deeper concerns? My intention to apply critical theory as a guide within this investigation should keep me alert to these concerns.

Chapter 6
A Junction in the Journey

6.0   Introduction

A vast amount of scholarship has been reviewed in the preceding three chapters. Reviewing such a broad range of literature was necessary to ensure important aspects relevant to this investigation were identified and their influence taken into account. The origins and development of the area of society increasingly described as the not for profit/community/third sector have been discussed with specific reference to the changing relationships between third sector organisations and government. Governance related issues pertaining to these changing relationships have been identified. Information and communication technologies have been defined, so that applications of such technologies within the not for profit sector may be better understood. Throughout these discussions specific consideration has been given to the situation of New Zealand school BOTs, as it is members from this section of the community who participate in my investigation.

The preceding review provided the starting point for the first path of my journey; my investigation into the emancipatory potential that applications of ICTs may have on the governance processes of primary school BOTs. The review reports empirical and theoretical observations of others who have travelled along similar paths before me. I sought to review the literature through the theoretical lenses identified in chapter 2 of this thesis, specifically social constructionism, critical theory, and appreciative inquiry. My efforts have highlighted the extent to which other scholars have/have not taken similar approaches within their own work, and my subsequent responses to these approaches have been shared in the reflective accounts included at the conclusion of each chapter of the literature review. My frustration at the constraints I felt attempting to work within a functionalist dominated sphere of scholarship, such as that reviewed in chapter 3, has been a turning point in my journey as an emerging scholar. Recognising which applications 'push my buttons' and why they do so has in

turn helped me to identify what areas of scholarship are shaping my own theoretical development, revealing glimpses of the emerging scholar I am becoming.

At this pointing in the research process, some readers may expect that hypotheses or *a priori* assumptions be identified so that emerging theory might be proposed and subsequently confirmed or disconfirmed through analysis (Charmaz, 2000). The foregoing literature review has identified some potential applications of ICTs which may be of interest to the BOTs participating in the investigation. For me to formally present these through development of a potential theory would be incongruent with the tenets of participatory action research. Indeed, to do so would increase the risk that "dialogue may be replaced with monologue" (McNamee & Gergen, 1999, p. xi). Instead, as per the constructionist epistemology of appreciative inquiry, I choose to honour the involvement of these participants and work with them as they 'discover' their own potential applications.

Thus, in this short chapter I re-view the literature reviewed in the previous three chapters. In doing so, I seek to achieve two objectives. First, I shape and summarise the focus of the review so as to frame research questions for my own investigation. I also begin to highlight the contribution my own research will make, through addressing gaps I have identified in the literature.

6.1   Re-view of the literature

Established as part of the government reforms which took place in New Zealand during the 1980s and 1990s, school BOTs contribute to the cluster of society now commonly referred to as the not for profit/community/third sector. Comprised mainly of elected representatives from the school community, this group is responsible for governance and management of 'their' school. Reflecting the neoliberal underpinnings of the reforms, calls for increased 'accountability' and 'efficiency' were part of the market driven lexicon introduced to school governance. While the literature suggests the original reforms purported to devolve power to school Boards, reported outcomes suggest a current status more aligned with the concepts of decentralisation (Boston et al., 1996). As such, the relationship between BOTs and government might be seen as an outcome of third party government processes

(Salamon, 1981, 1987, 1989), established through the application of contracts – in this case formalised through a school's charter.

Many of the tasks and challenges identified by scholars as present in the not for profit/community/third sector environment generally are reflected within the sphere of school governance. Issues of resource dependency (Saidel, 1991), power sharing (Stone, 1996), and levels of participation by the principal (CEO) (Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Stone, 1996) are highlighted in literature as influencing a not for profit Board's governance processes, particularly one which contracts to government in some way. Pressures of resource dependency (Saidel, 1991) may distort the contributions of government, so that additional contributions and/or obligations over and above funding may be overlooked by either party. Observations by Stone (1996) that as fiscal concerns begin to dominate, boundary spanning and other associated mission oriented activities may diminish are issues which may be of interest to school BOTs.

Although 'community' and 'partnership' are identified by all involved as key components of the relationship between school BOTs and government, neither term has been clearly defined in the literature reviewed. Relationships of some kind are always in operation however, even if they are not made explicit. Application of a social constructionist lens rather than the functional and neoliberal approaches typically evident in scholarship regarding the reforms suggests that the interactions between Board members, and between the Board and other stakeholders, will be shaped by the ideological overlays each member adopts. For example, evidence of a neoliberal influence to generate a more competitive approach among school leaders is illustrated through Fiske and Ladd's (2000b) observation of a decline in professional collegiality. Principals have become less willing to share ideas with counterparts from other schools with which their school competes for students. Attitudes and behaviours such as this may indicate that perceptions of 'community' do not necessarily extend beyond a school's immediate geographic and/or social boundaries and economic interests.

Published reports of research on school BOTs have typically comprised longitudinal studies, providing aggregated information (Wylie, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1997b, 1999, 2000; Wylie & King, 2004). The lack of focus at local level is surprising, since the impetus behind the Tomorrow's Schools reforms was to provide for local input. In spite of the paucity of localised understanding, NZCER investigations into the first decade of school BOTs suggest most schools have established healthy relationships between the Board and various members of the school community. Snook et al (1999) and Wylie (1997b; 1999) suggest there is still scope for improvement however, in the relationship between Boards and government. Most Boards are keen to 'get on' with the task of governance, and welcome any assistance to do so. However, research to date has tended to focus on understanding the major changes introduced to school management and governance with little evidence of building on this understanding as a means to further enhance governance processes. Applications of action research are frequently described in curriculum and pedagogical research, yet there are no reports of action research processes involving school BOTs.

Nobbie and Brudney (2003) claim that developing 'better' governance demands a level of thoughtfulness, although what is implied/assumed to be 'better' is left unclear. In the context of their discussion there appears to be a focus on the (often ambiguous) performance indicators of 'accountability', 'efficiency', and 'effectiveness'. Although Nobbie and Brudney (2003) consider the merits of a prescriptive 'policy' approach to developing 'better' governance, they acknowledge thoughtfulness and frameworks facilitated through alternative approaches may be equally promising. In this regard I perceive 'better' to be aligned with 'deeper understanding'. Governance is more than mere compliance with instrumental demands from government. Hence a contribution will be made to scholarship through the application of appreciative inquiry, my chosen method for this investigation which seeks to enhance governance processes. Outcomes achieved through this method will be explored in chapter 10 as I discuss and reflect on the research process.

Consideration of not for profit/community/third sector governance literature (including material specifically developed for school BOTs) reveals a largely prescriptive, functional approach, focusing on what Boards 'should' do. A developing area of scholarship (see for example Miller-Millesen (2003)) is beginning to look beyond the functionality of 'lists', encouraging instead rich, descriptive findings on what Boards actually do, and why and how they undertake these activities. The case studies developed through this research process contribute to this area of scholarship, deepening our understanding of current governance activities. Bradshaw (2002) reframes governance further, applying the metaphor of a storytelling entity, whereby governance becomes the process of questioning, challenging, testing and refining the organisational story. As well as complementing my own methodological preferences identified in chapter 2, I perceive this approach may provide more opportunity for Boards to ensure their governance processes reflect and complement the strategic/mission based objectives key to the identity of a not for profit organisation. Failure to give these important areas due consideration may see a Board encumbered with day to day activities to the detriment of the organisation's long term situation.

Scholars such as Burt and Taylor (2000; 2001), Blyth (2002), and Boeder (2002) suggest ICTs may be applied within not for profit organisations as strategic enablers. For example, models of e-democracy could be reframed to assist a school BOT to communicate with their many stakeholders. Brainard and Siplon (2004) suggest applications of ICT may also benefit organisation members by adding value to existing social relationships. This approach is consistent with Frissen's (1995) research which identified ICTs such as email and cellular phones as having relational importance, with their use extending both personal and professional spheres of activity.

Critical theorists such as Feenberg (1996; 1999) observe that decisions to use (or not use) technology invoke a valuative stance. Particular credence is given in this area of scholarship to the values and attitudes held by leaders of not for profit organisations, which may in turn influence those held by members (Burt & Taylor, 2001). In organisations with plurality in leadership the influence of, and potential conflict between, attitudes may be even more important (Berlinger & Te'eni, 1999). Consider for example the balance of power and relationship between the Board chairperson and

the school principal. While the chairperson heads the BOT, the principal as professional leader of the school may have a pivotal influence on Board decisions.

Although critical theorists have made substantial contribution to our understanding of choices to use technology, their efforts are often presented at a somewhat abstract level. There appears to be little critical consideration of specific applications of ICTs within not for profit organisations generally, and school BOTs specifically. The use of ICTs cannot be considered outside their context of use (Adam & Wood, 1999; McConnell, 1995), and care must be taken to ensure the level of personal interaction which may/may not occur is not overlooked through technologically deterministic or reified approaches. The dominant focus within literature on access and connectivity has seen related issues of applications and (intended and unintended) outcomes often overlooked. Reports of community informatics initiatives reinforce how access need not equate to use and interaction is by no means a guaranteed form of empowerment. Application of ICTs may assist with the empowerment of some, but may equally contribute towards the subjugation of others (Boeder, 2002; Loader & Keeble, 2004). Too often literature echoes the lexicon of the information advantaged. Consideration of ICT applications must go beyond issues of 'how'. By honouring the people involved and their unique situations, consideration of *why* applications take place (or do not), and what the associated outcomes may be, becomes more meaningful.

Reports of applications of ICTs within a school environment typically focus on pedagogical and management applications (Boyd, 2002; Ham, 2002; Kerslake, 2001). Despite observations that researchers have barely begun to explore how technology might help schools establish stronger connections with students' homes and with the local community (Culp et al., 1999), there is little evidence of research into how ICTs might be applied by school BOTs as strategic enablers. (Or indeed consideration of related issues such as if families may even want this additional contact!) Ham (2002) reports the collaborative cluster model provides an effective model of professional development for use of ICTs by teachers and principals. Perhaps a similar cluster arrangement may be of benefit to school BOTs, who may in turn open new channels of communication with their communities? Or has the competitive spirit identified by Fiske and Ladd (2000b) also stymied perceptions of extended community between BOTs?

Change within an organisation, even if it is supported through applications of ICTs, is inherently a social process. Burt and Taylor (2001) suggest values [should] take precedence over managerial concerns within this process. Blyth (2002) reinforces how the focus of any consideration regarding ICTs must be on people not technology. The scholarship reviewed thus far highlights how consideration of the decision to use ICTs within an organisation (regardless of which sector it is perceived to be aligned to) requires in depth understanding of the complexities which contribute to the unique context within which the organisation operates. This depth of understanding can only be achieved if one looks beyond structural considerations and honours the values held and interactions between the many stakeholders involved. Application of action research and appreciative inquiry practices will help achieve this understanding.

6.2 Research questions

The foregoing review suggests that application of ICTs may have emancipatory potential with regard to BOT governance processes. Reports of applications within the wider not for profit sector have shown promise, yet there are no reported applications within the area of school governance. Further, to deepen our understanding of specific issues a Board may face there is a need to consider carefully governance at the individual school level, rather than an aggregation of information collated from schools across the country. Thus initial research questions may be framed:

1.   How is governance perceived by each BOT?
2.   How are Boards of Trustees currently using ICTs to enhance their governance?
3.   Can potential applications of ICTs to enhance governance be identified by Boards of Trustees? For example, is there scope to develop a cluster based professional development forum for Boards, delivered through some form of ICT? Might Boards communicate with their communities via ICTs?

I noted above the need to honour the specific context of each Board, considering the values, attitudes and beliefs of each Board member, and how these may affect decisions and processes adopted by the Board as a whole. Complementary research questions must then be posed to ensure my understanding goes beyond the functionalist discussion often presented in literature:

4.   Why/why not are ICT applications applied by the Board?

5.   What are the outcomes associated with these influences?[1]

Consistent with the methodological and theoretical influences identified in chapter 2, the foregoing questions will be addressed through participatory action research practices, specifically appreciative inquiry (Ai). A participative action research approach such as Ai is appropriate for this investigation as it will encourage the participating Trustees to deepen their understanding of their approach to governance as the research progresses. In terms of reported research with school BOTs this approach is novel. Contributions will thus be made to our further understanding of BOT governance processes and activities. In doing so, the participant action research approach taken will also contribute to the emancipation of participating Trustees. As per Flood's (2001) discussion of emancipation adopted in chapter 1, the deeper understanding developed by Trustees will in turn further develop their potential. My chosen research methods, and associated issues of case study research, are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

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[1] Critical consideration of technology applications often takes place at the meta level of analysis. The empirical basis of this investigation thus provides an additional contribution of this research.

Chapter 7
Method

Action research starts with everyday experience and is concerned with the
development of living knowledge (Reason & Bradbury, 2001b, p.2).

7.0   Introduction

The theoretical perspectives of social constructionism, appreciative inquiry and
critical theory which I have used to guide this investigation, and their methodological
implications, were discussed in chapter 2. Guided by these lenses I reviewed literature
relevant to the first part of my PhD journey; the origins and development of the area
of society often identified as the not for profit/community/third sector have been
discussed with specific reference to the changing relationships between third sector
organisations and government. My purpose is to contribute to enhanced governance in
this sector. To this end, my review of literature included scholarship pertaining to
third sector governance and also the uptake and use of ICTs. Throughout these
discussions specific consideration has been given to the situation of New Zealand
school BOTs, as it is members from this section of the community who participate in
my investigation. The reviews of this literature were presented in chapters 3, 4, and 5,
and re-viewed and summarised in chapter 6, culminating in the initial research
questions from which this PhD thesis was generated. This chapter builds on that
discussion describing the research method used as I worked with four primary school
BOTs investigating the emancipatory potential that applications of information and
communication technologies may have on their governance processes.

Research methods involve both structure and process. In this investigation I profile
four BOTs who participated in the research. The primary process undertaken was
appreciative inquiry, a form of action research. I begin this chapter with a discussion
of case study literature and its application to my research. The second part of this
chapter focuses on research process, including the manner in which the 4D cycle of

appreciative inquiry developed by Cooperrider and Whitney (2000) was applied in this investigation. Related design issues such as the shaping of research questions, relationship building and the information gathering and sharing phases are also discussed. I conclude this chapter with initial reflections on the benefits and limitations of both the structure and processes I chose to work with.

7.1   Structure

7.1.1   Case studies

Stake (2000, p.435) argues that case studies "are not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied….A case study is both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of the inquiry". Building on this approach to research, the participation by the four primary school BOTs provided four separate case studies (or processes of inquiry) through which this investigation developed. The narrative descriptions of the participation of BOTs included in chapter 8 are one outcome of these processes.

Case studies may be used for research, teaching, or record keeping (Yin, 2003). The focus in this thesis is on the case study as a research strategy, seeking to understand the dynamics present within specific setting (Eisenhardt, 1989b). Yin (2003) suggests case studies to be the preferred research strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are posed, particularly when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a specific context. Darke, Shanks and Broadbent (1998, p.274) argue that case study approaches "are well suited to understanding the interactions between information technology related innovations and organisational contexts". Adam and Wood (1999) contend that the impact of technology cannot be assessed outside the context of use. My initial research focus stemmed from an interest in how school BOTs use (or might use) information and communication technologies to enhance their governance processes. Each BOT, working within their own context(s), generated unique approaches to their specific situation. Decisions as to where, when, how and why each Board chose to participate in the investigation were made by each group of Trustees. Thus, a case study approach is particularly pertinent. Recognition of the

creative/generative effects of intentionally focussed action research endorses the social constructionist approach I have taken.

Case study literature often has a strong positivist and/or functionalist focus. For example, the focus may be on *a priori* approaches to research (Stake, 2000). Issues such as sampling protocols (Eisenhardt, 1989b) and validity (Yin, 2003) are often emphasised. This emphasis may in turn influence the researcher in their choice of the number of case studies and methods of analysis. An underlying assumption I perceive in much of the case study scholarship suggests that a researcher will be 'spoilt for choice' when it comes to selection of case studies (Eisenhardt, 1989b; Yin, 2003). Yin (2003) describes how to select 'appropriate' cases when faced with multiple choices. Eisenhardt (1989b) discusses when to stop adding cases to the process. Such work contrasts Lofland and Lofland's (1995) discussion on access in field research. They observe that "in the literature of qualitative methodology, access is probably one of the most written about topics – understandably so, for it remains problematic throughout the entire period of research" (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p.22). Case studies are often reified as 'subjects' within literature. Yin (2003) proposes the researcher *selects* those 'cases' that best meet needs established by their own interests and/or *a priori* assumptions. This approach suggests a demarcation between the researcher and those involved with the research – which may in turn lead to a selective, researcher determined portrayal of the 'other'. In contrast action research practices, such as the approach taken within this thesis, emphasise participation is a 'two way process' whereby *potential participants* are *invited* to join the researcher to work on the investigation *together*.

Despite potential conflicts between the directions of case study scholarship noted above and the action research orientation of this investigation, aspects of my research method can be seen as consistent with some of the theoretical concepts discussed in the case study literature. From the outset I had planned to work with between four and six Boards of Trustees, hoping that multiple case design would allow opportunity for cross case analysis and comparisons as recommended by Eisenhardt (1989b). I endeavoured to understand the use of ICTs in diverse settings as is deemed useful by Darke et al (1998). Hence I sought the participation of a range of school BOTs, from across the socio-economic decile scale used by the Ministry of Education when

determining operational funding. Stake (2000) describes this approach as 'purposive sampling'. I wanted to build in variety, acknowledging the opportunity for intensive study. My intention in developing multiple cases was not an attempt at demonstrating uniformity through replication as suggested by Yin (2003). Rather it was an attempt to include participation from a variety of Trustees, who would each have different perspectives to contribute. I anticipated that this range of participation would provide opportunities for a number of BOTs to benefit from the hoped for outcomes of emancipation and enhanced governance which may develop from the research participation.

Consistent with the action research orientation of the investigation, my research design beyond initial planning was guided by the participants, rather than the prescriptive nature of case study literature. Practical limitations on my time and research budget saw me choose to only invite participation from Boards within the Hamilton area (my home city in New Zealand). The challenges of access identified by Lofland and Lofland (1995) soon became evident.

Access

Working within the constraints of PhD regulations and the associated limitations of time and resources, required that I modify the ideals of participant initiation of process and focus associated with participant action research. The origins of this investigation were researcher initiated, rather than community generated. In addition to my research interests, a key impetus to the investigation was my then current involvement on a school BOT, and the aspirations and frustrations I encountered with regard to various aspects of governance. I was keen to explore potential opportunities, and recognised the need for such an investigation to include a variety of the diverse environments school BOTs operate in, rather than be restricted to my own experience. Thus came the challenge of inviting a range of BOTs to join me in this investigation.

I sought to work with a range of Board members from schools across the decile range, to ensure socio-economic and cultural differences could be considered. My recruitment strategies involved a mix of letters, visits, and personal approaches to state or integrated schools within the greater Hamilton area. These approaches were targeted to specific schools, chosen because of their decile rating and/or specific

characteristics. In addition my research was profiled in several issues of the 2002 New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) monthly newsletter. These articles included my contact details should any Trustee/school wish to contact me regarding participation.

The chairperson, as head of the Board, is the appropriate person to whom the invitation to participate in this investigation should be addressed. However the power of the gatekeeper as discussed by Burgess (1991) soon became evident. Direct contact with Board chairpersons was difficult to achieve. Privacy considerations frequently prevented me being given direct access to contact details for the chairperson such as home telephone numbers or addresses for correspondence. As a result, letters/phone calls were typically channelled through the school office. Several Boards failed to respond to my invitations, and when followed up the school secretary seemed to have no knowledge of ever having received the initial information, and had no interest in receiving more.

From approaches to ten BOTs, four were willing to participate. Consistent with Lofland and Lofland's (1995) claims that 'connections expedite access' two of these schools responded after I made personal contact with a Board member, the third response came from a contact I had made during an earlier information collection phase, and the final one from a direct approach. Reasons given for non participation were not always provided. Of those Boards who declined to participate, several groups felt they did not having the time. For example one school was in the process of appointing a new principal so the Board did not believe they were able to take on the additional commitments associated with research participation. Another BOT expressed the belief that they did not use information and communication technologies enough to be of any interest to the research project. Of particular note is the difficulty I had getting a low decile school to participate, even in cases where I was given a personal introduction to Board members. Unfortunately I did not get the opportunity to explore in any detail the reasons Trustees from these schools had for not participating.

Although the invitation to participate was addressed to the chairperson in the first instance, the decision to participate in the investigation was typically made by the Board as a whole. In each instance, once a Board expressed interest in knowing more, I made a brief verbal presentation of both the proposed investigation's objectives as well as the appreciative inquiry approach I hoped to adopt. Those Boards who did agree to participate (in particular their principal's commitment) seemed particularly interested in the proposed appreciative inquiry method. This method seeks to identify existing strengths within an organisation and its systems, and to build on these strengths during times of change. All participating Boards were keen to develop what was good in their schools, and saw appreciative inquiry as a non threatening way of seeking change in their operations. With appreciative inquiry scholarship still developing, the question of whether adopting an appreciative inquiry approach to a research project increases the likelihood of access currently remains unaddressed and provides an additional factor to consider within my critical analysis of appreciative inquiry as a research process.

The importance of relationships and context

I began working with four BOTs in February 2003, planning to invite participation from additional schools once I got the current set of participants underway. Consistent with the action research focus in general (i.e. participant driven), and appreciative inquiry in particular, I met with Boards (and in some instances individually with principals as well) to explore how each school wanted to approach the research, and what in particular they hoped to gain from their participation. With most BOTs meeting regularly once a month (although one participating Board met less often) this stage proceeded much more slowly than I anticipated. It was April/May before I began the actual research cycle in several instances. Recognising the time taken to establish four relationships and the importance of building and maintaining these relationships, I made the decision to not recruit a further two Boards.

On reflection, the delays in commencing the formal stages of the research process were in no means time wasting. In fact, I believe they were crucial to the successful design of the research, and the project as a whole. Janesick (2000) notes how crucial initial interactions in the field are, especially in areas of establishing trust and rapport. McNicoll (1999, p.56) goes even further suggesting "the relationship between researcher and study participants will be a major determinant of the study outcome".

I identify my position within the research process as influencing the manner in which relationships with participants developed. In three of the four case studies undertaken in this investigation (Schools A, B and C) I was an outsider to the school Board; although by virtue of my own experience as a school Trustee I have an 'insiders understanding' of the legal requirements of governance and some of the issues a Board may face. Consistent with Bolak's (1996) proposed continuum identified in chapter 2, the degree to which I was an 'outsider' varied from school to school. The instance in which I felt most 'outside' was in the case of School A. Members of the BOT were generally aged 50 years or older. Gender seemed to be more of an issue within this context than with other Boards, with a patriarchal tone evident both in terms of interaction between Trustees, as well as their interactions with me. On reflection I recognise that gender and age were also possible contributors to one of the best rapports I established. As I worked closely with the principal of School C, a woman of a similar age to myself, our discussion flowed easily and informally, often expanding to include pertinent insights which may not have been made in a more formal atmosphere. All three of these Boards made an effort to include me to various extents. However, my position as outsider was invariably reinforced when the issue of continued participation in the research project was raised. My 'fate' would inevitably be determined in discussion once I had left the meeting.

In the fourth instance, School D, I was an insider. As the longest serving member on the then current BOT I had an acute awareness of not only the specific governance issues facing the Board, but also insight into how different personalities exhibited by individual Trustees influence the approach taken by the Board towards governance. Influenced by my position as an insider, the research investigation progressed in an entirely different direction. Soon after the research period began, a difficult issue raised within the school community began to dominate the Board's focus,

constraining their research participation. My position as an insider allowed me to focus instead on the 'tone' of discourse invoked by the Board during this time.

For action research to achieve one of its key purposes it must be useful to the participants. From the researcher's perspective, this required me to get to know each Board, their objectives, and methods of operation before I could begin to comprehend what was meaningful to them. During these early months I began piecing together my understanding of the organisation of each Board, identifying important issues unique to each school, as well as building the personal rapport that is so crucial in action research. A degree of familiarity is important, not just to encourage people to speak freely and openly, but is also of great assistance when it comes to transcribing a tape with up to a dozen different speakers on it! Understanding and awareness of the context(s) within which these relationships were established and developed was also an important part of the analysis and interpretation phases of the research which are discussed in chapters 9 and 10 (Patton, 1990; Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

7.2   Research Design

With participants ready and willing to begin the investigation, the next phase was to finalise the research design. Consistent with the action research orientation of the investigation, my research design beyond any initial planning was guided by the participants, rather than by the prescriptive nature of case study literature. Similarly, consideration of 'validity' remains consistent with action research approaches rather than the functional approach advocated by Yin (2003). Within the context of this thesis issues of validity, credibility and reliability may be appraised "by the willingness of local stakeholders to act on the ideas of the action research, thereby risking their welfare on the 'validity' of their ideas and the degree to which the outcomes meet their expectations" (Greenwood & Levin, 2000, p.96).

As acknowledged in section 2.2.3 the subjectivity I bring to this investigation cannot be separated from the research process. Alvesson and Deetz (2000) and Marshall (1981) address this issue as they encourage researchers to both recognise and value this contribution. Researchers are reminded by Alvesson and Deetz (2000, p.112) how as we collect information through interactions with participants our interpretations are

influenced by the perspectives we apply. Similarly, my research design and method are influenced by my methodological preferences identified in chapter 2. My commitment to action research practices and interest in appreciative inquiry are the most obvious influences in the research design which follows, but more subtle influences were uncovered upon review and reflection.

7.2.1   Questions

The functionalist orientation of my original research question has been acknowledged in chapter 2. Investigating the current and potential use of information and communication technologies for enhanced governance by the four participating school BOTs was the starting point for this thesis. This intention provides the basis from which the research was designed. Initial research questions as presented in chapter 6 were formed so that I might later consider the emancipatory potential that such applications may have. Although the research questions guided my investigation, they were not presented unilaterally to the participating Boards. Rather, they served as a guide to the areas I was hoping to address through the research process.

At the beginning of the research process I encouraged Boards to consider a key question: "What is governance?" Given the unique construction of each Board through the interactions of members and their blends of various skills, beliefs and approaches, I saw this question as pivotal to the whole investigation. This belief was later reinforced by responses from many of the participants. I needed to have an understanding of how governance was perceived within each context if I was to work together with participants to enhance that which they may deem to be useful and/or good. The question generated lively debate within each environment. Each BOT had their own perception(s) and understanding of what governance meant to them, which in turn influenced the direction(s) they took in relation to the rest of the research.

Chapter 2 provided an overview of the theoretical basis of appreciative inquiry, the primary research method used in this investigation, as well as introducing various typologies of implementation. Appreciative inquiry was chosen given my intention of identifying opportunities for emancipation rather than focusing on problems. The 4D cycle of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000) was the typology

selected to guide this investigation as it appeared to me to be one of the simplest and most common applications discussed within Ai literature. This approach comprises four basic stages, which each poses one or more questions:

Discovery: What gives life? What is the best of what there is?

Dream: What might be?

Design: What should be the ideal?

Destiny: How can we empower, learn, adjust, and improvise? What will be? (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000)

Guided by responses to my initial question on governance and the above framework, I established a basic outline for the investigation. Consistent with the storytelling emphasis within appreciative inquiry, participants were encouraged to respond to the following questions by sharing a story.

Discovery: Can you describe a time when this Board was governing well? Can you share a good experience you have had with technology? (This example may or may not be school related).

Dream: Imagine you were to return to this school in five years time. How would you hope to see the Board governing? What would be their ideal situation?

Design: Can you see any of the points you identified earlier (i.e. in discovery) contributing to this dream? What part do you see ICTs playing in these designs?

Destiny: What can we begin to put in place to achieve these dreams?

Action research starts with everyday experiences and is concerned with the development of living knowledge (Reason & Bradbury, 2001b, p.2). Thus, having established this initial framework, the actual process through which it would be delivered was determined by each participating BOT.

7.2.2   Process

Action research seeks to encourage participation to what ever level participants find useful. This research was researcher initiated rather than community generated. I selected the initial topic for investigation, which was in turn proposed to BOTs inviting their participation. Once a Board agreed to participate, I worked closely with them to determine the approach which best suited their specific requirements and sought to meet the aspirations they brought to the investigation. McNicoll (1999, p.57) observes "groups have their own dynamics, timings and priorities; research activities should ideally intersperse among the activities and events of their daily lives". Thus, the direction and form of the discussion was driven by the participants - including the decision as to when the discussions should end. Apart from analysis which occurred within the action research cycle, I completed the bulk of analysis as minimal feedback was received from participants.

Janesick (2000) utilises the metaphor of dance choreography to emphasise the emergent and creative process of qualitative research. She notes the need for qualitative research to have an elastic quality, able to be adapted, changed and redesigned as the study proceeds. The initial research design and questions noted above were developed to ensure consistency in stages of the appreciative inquiry cycle as it was applied across the four participating BOTs. I expected the questions to be changed slightly depending on the approach taken by each school, but sought to incorporate a mix of discussion and reflection into each research process. I took direction from each Board as to how they wanted to structure their approach.

School A decided to include their participation as an agenda item at several monthly Board meetings. Questions regarding the discovery and dream stages were addressed in one session. A written summary was forwarded to Trustees for their information and feedback. The following session held 2 months later opened with a review of the previous discussion, before considering the design and destiny stages. School D elected to hold several special meetings over the period of three weeks focused on the annual Board self review, and to incorporate their participation (and the research questions) into these processes. Scheduling these meetings in addition to the monthly Board meeting allowed Trustees to spend more time discussing the issues they

identified. This in turn provided me with the opportunity to develop more comprehensive field notes. As with School A, the cycle was split to allow discovery and dream phases to be considered in the first session, and design and destiny in the following session. A written summary of each session was also provided to Trustees for feedback. A review of the research process was conducted by School D at a subsequent monthly Board meeting.

One of the most significant changes to my perceptions of how Trustees might participate occurred during my first visit to School C. With a large Board membership, it became clear to me that it was going to be difficult to find a time when all members could attend a research meeting. Members were also hesitant to add another agenda item to their already full monthly meetings. One member suggested (half in seriousness, half wishful thinking) *"can't we do this by email or something?"* My initial (but thankfully private) reaction was *"No, that's not how I have thought it would happen!"* However, once I paused and reflected for a moment I was able to see a great opportunity. Electronic discussions within the Class Forum environment are part of my teaching responsibilities in my work on the Waikato Management School Post Graduate Diploma in Management of Not for Profit Organisations. Why could we not utilise the same environment for research? A secure electronic environment was established through which the Board addressed the research questions. At the Board's suggestion I also attended monthly Board meetings on a regular basis to encourage online participation, address any questions and concerns and discuss the process generally. Encouraged by the Board, I also met several times with the principal. These one on one meetings provided a wealth of background information about the Board, the school, and their plans for the future.

Building on the implementation of an electronic approach, School B also chose to use a blend of electronic and face to face discussions for the research process. Once again a secure electronic discussion forum was established, and I continued to attend regular Board meetings to encourage participation, as well as address any concerns and questions. I did not have additional meetings with the principal of School B (as I did with School C). Utilising this combined approach saw the research process with the Boards from Schools B and C stretched over the period of March to October 2003.

7.2.3   Information gathering and sharing

Information gathering took place (often concurrently) on a number of levels. Relevant literature was reviewed as presented in chapters 3, 4, and 5. Results of this work were shared with interested participants during our discussions. Publications targeting the education sector, such as New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) News, and Eduvac – The Education Weekly were read on a regular basis. These publications highlight areas of topical interest to Trustees, school management and teachers. Prior to entering the field, I spent time collecting and reviewing Ministry of Education material relating to BOTs, with a particular focus on areas where the Ministry was encouraging Boards to communicate with them electronically. During this phase of the investigation, the Ministry launched new planning and reporting requirements for BOTs. An electronic template had been developed by Ministry officials to assist Boards with this task. I attended one of the 'roadshow' information evenings for Trustees. I also met with a Ministry staff member involved with the development and launch of the template.

Once initial contact had been made with participating BOTs, information regarding ethical considerations was provided, as were ethics consent forms. This information provided participants with a formal record of what the project entailed, as well as addressed issues such as ensuring participant confidentiality and provision to cease participation should an individual and/or the Board collectively so desire[1]. Brief background questionnaires were administered to collect basic demographic information about the Trustees and the school environments[2]. Additional background information was gleaned as the research progressed, often during discussions and/or email communications with a chairperson and/or principal.

With participant agreement, the face to face sessions with the Boards of Schools A and D were taped and later transcribed. Copies of the transcripts were made available to the principals and chairpersons respectively for distribution to the Board members, but no feedback was received, nor were any changes requested. When I enquired if

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[1] See appendices 4 and 5.
[2] See appendices 6 and 7.

there were any comments or suggestions to be made regarding the transcripts the responses included *"haven't really looked at it...too busy...we trust you!"*

The electronic discussions at School B and School C progressed quite slowly. Sustaining participant involvement was particularly important in the online discussion. Although I was able to maintain face to face contact with these Boards by attending their meetings on a regular basis (typically every four to eight weeks), participants needed encouragement to enter the electronic forum regularly outside these meeting times. For those participants who did not use a computer regularly (e.g. as part of their work schedule) this proved to be a significant challenge.

I found there to be an extremely fine line between encouraging participants to maintain and build on the discussion and fearing that my encouragement might be perceived as pressure or harassment. It is during these times that the relationship building noted as an essential part of the research process earlier in this chapter really started to reap dividends. Edible incentives became an important component of my research budget! Having built a friendly rapport with both Boards, I offered chocolate fish as an incentive for a Trustee who had yet to make an entry in their on-line discussion. Peer support (or pressure) was evident from her colleagues who were keen to push for chocolate fish all round if they could get her established as a regular contributor! A similar situation, complete with edible incentives, emerged with the other Board using an electronic discussion forum.

The face to face discussions with Trustees from Schools B and C were typically impromptu. Conversation often occurred sporadically throughout the Board meeting and hence it was not always possible to tape record these. In these instances I made notes for myself in my field notebook and often points would be recorded formally in the Board's minutes. Discussion from the electronic forum was able to be printed off directly, eliminating the need for lengthy transcripts. As everyone concerned had access to these discussions, there was no need to obtain further verification of this material.

In all cases emails and telephone calls to individuals (usually to the chairperson and/or principal) helped to keep the momentum of the research process going in between my attendance at meetings or entries in the electronic forums. I maintained a separate field note book for each school. These note books were used for planning and review of sessions; notes and reflections from interim conversations and meetings; as well as to record additional context specific information such as who attended each meeting, its time and place, the general atmosphere of the meeting, even current weather conditions – all of which would be taken into account during the analysis phases. Immediately after each session I would sit in my car and note impressions 'off the top of my head'. At times I found myself stopping the car on the way home to record additional thoughts which sprang to mind! As well as providing additional insightful material, these notes provided a form of debrief for myself.

7.3   Analysis

While information gathering and sharing forms a key part of the research process, Alvesson and Deetz (2000, p.67) suggest that the contribution research can make lies beyond these endeavours: "More important than the data collection techniques are the questions asked and the intent of the analysis, how social reality is understood and the cognitive interest pursued".

I found that the researcher subjectivity influencing the research process as discussed by Alvesson and Deetz (2000) and Marshall (1981) which I identified during design preparations was similarly present during analysis phases. In this investigation I made a conscious decision not to use computer based analysis software. To do so would be contrary to the social constructionist paradigm within which this research is based. Use of computer software does not take into account the social processes involved in the investigation and hence, I believe, would overlook important components of the research process. Analysis by way of pre-selected word association(s) such as that achieved through the use of computer programmes would not give the level and type of engagement I seek consistent with my chosen methodology. For example, contextual indicators such as serendipitous observations, voice intonations, body language and informal comments would not be included if analysis was restricted to formal transcribed texts. I acknowledge my chosen form of analysis and interpretation

may constrain the quantity of text that might be considered in comparison to computer assisted analysis. However, the quality and depth of interpretation that may be achieved through consideration of additional stimuli and interactions such as those noted above provides, I believe, deeper and richer information which may better represent the perceptions and opinions presented by participants.

Analysis of information gathered and shared assists the researcher (and participants if they choose to be involved) in their sense-making of the phenomena under investigation. While each case study presented here is a unique unit of analysis, multiple approaches including discourse, thematic and critical analysis have been employed within each context. Campbell (2000) describes discourse as the basic beliefs which give meaning to the way experiences are interpreted. The main media through which discourse has been manifest within this investigation are the research discussions (be they transcribed or electronic printouts), supplemented by my observations as recorded in field note books. Participants within each case study have their own unique forms of discourse, reflecting their belief systems and interactions. Additional forms of discourse from secondary sources such as Ministry of Education interviews and documents, media reports and external research reports were also considered and interpreted into this research.

Thematic analysis was employed in the first instance, first within each unique case study, and then between cases – seeking to identify common beliefs, approaches, ideas and concerns. This level of analysis occurred concurrently throughout the formal period of information gathering and sharing. Beyond this work, narratives and texts were revisited with a critical perspective. Questions such as: What does this perception encourage us to consider? Whose position is supported/rejected by this? What does this over look? were asked to gain a better understanding of the dynamics within each situation as well as across BOTs in general. The potential for conflict between discourses was considered. For example, did a Board's description of their perception(s) of governance differ from their actions? Did these perceptions and actions equate to that prescribed by the Ministry of Education in the National Administration Guidelines (NAGs)?

Both the thematic and critical analyses were revisited periodically for review and reflection. Throughout this analysis it was important to recognise the differences between transcribed face to face conversations, the discussion generated within the electronic forums, and informal, serendipitous interactions. Davis and Brewer (1997) emphasise the need for specific features of the electronic context to be recognised. The asynchronous mode of communication, for example, prevented interruptions or overlaps in conversation. Davis and Brewer (1997) suggest this medium exhibits traits from both written and spoken modes of communication. Researchers are encouraged to consider the 'normal' characteristics and interactions of individuals in comparison to their online entries. For example, do the dominant vocal participants in a face to face encounter also dominate the online discussion?

The importance of the researcher's interpretation of context(s) to the overall analysis cannot be over emphasised (Graham, 1999). Perceptions of context, including social, economic, historical, cultural patterns and ideologies do not remain static throughout the research process and these changes must be acknowledged and taken into account. Changes took place in the external environment of BOTs during the research period, such as the introduction of new planning and reporting requirements introduced by the Ministry of Education in 2003. All of the Boards participating in this research had membership changes during the research period. Research and general Board processes were adapted to incorporate new Trustees, hence the influence of such changes must be considered. Further, as a recognised legal entity, a Board is to a certain extent an 'artificial person' with imputed rights and responsibilities created in law and manifest in practice. Thus, while not discounting the importance of contributions from individuals to a Board's discourse, documents produced collectively (such as school charters and strategic plans) and symbols (such as those used in school emblems) were also considered.

7.4   Benefits and Limitations

Academic protocol typically requires the researcher to acknowledge the limitations to their chosen research method. While recognising the need to do so, I also draw attention to the manner in which this protocol reinforces the deficit oriented research perspectives appreciative inquiry seeks to challenge. Hence, consistent with the appreciative inquiry approach adopted within this thesis, I have extended this section to also identify relevant benefits.

The main limitation to this investigation was the time available for both the participants and myself as researchers. This constraint influenced several dimensions of the study. From the onset I knew I had a finite research period available to me. Although contact had been made with several participating Boards late in 2002, agreement was reached that the start of the research process would coincide with the beginning of the new school year, February 2003. A BOT serves for a term of three years, and the next election was set for April 2004. Thus all information gathering had to be completed during 2003, as Boards would be busy preparing for the elections and subsequent hand over period after this time. Actualities associated with the busy school year within which Boards operate saw this time period constrained even further. By October 2003 all Boards were extremely busy with governance requirements (e.g. preparing the 2004 budget) and end of year school activities. Participation levels slowed and eventually stopped at this point.

As a beginning researcher I also found the finite time period available to be quite beneficial. The finite period in which I could work closely with participants, required that I reached a 'level of acceptance' of the material collected, regardless of whether the 'results' were as I had anticipated. Without the time restriction, I may have been tempted to continue the research process until my anticipated 'results' were achieved. Indeed, it was from this acceptance that I began to comprehend the need to deepen my thesis to include consideration of 'the process as data' (Marshall, 2004b) and first person action research practices.

The decision to restrict the number of Boards participating in the research to four rather than six as was originally planned was noted earlier. This decision was made in recognition of the time and effort required to establish a good rapport with and the trust of participants. I felt it would be more beneficial to commit my time to those Boards who had already agreed to participate, rather than risk spreading myself 'too thin' by continuing efforts to also gain an additional two participants. The issue of multiple versus single cases is a much debated issue (see for example   Dyer & Wilkins, 1991; Eisenhardt, 1991). Were the benefits I gained from diversity across the different participating Boards offset by the levels of participation across the research process? Would I have been able to achieve a greater depth to participation if I had worked with only one or two Boards? These reflections will be discussed in more depth in chapter 10.

Time also proved to be a limitation at a personal level for Trustees. BOTs comprise volunteers from the school community. These people also have families, employment and other community commitments. The requirements and expectations faced by a Trustee are extremely complex and demanding, so the additional efforts made by Trustees to maintain quality input into this research project are gratefully acknowledged. As would be expected, there were times when participating Trustees identified that they were simply too busy to be able to participate to the extent they (and I) would have liked.

The various approaches to the research adopted by participating BOTs also had their benefits and limitations. Locating the research within the Board's monthly agenda ensured the investigation was given due consideration and that the majority of Trustees were in attendance. Once again, time had a limiting influence. In the case of School A, Trustees had usually travelled for several hours to attend the meeting, so meetings were typically run to a tight schedule to accommodate return travel arrangements. Discussions were often constrained to a limited time period, for example 40 minutes. School D's decision to hold separate meetings had the advantage of allowing more time for discussion, although emerging issues within the school community still influenced the meetings and eventually distracted the group's focus on and approach to the research issues.

The use of electronic forums by the Boards of Schools B and C removed additional indicators such as voice intonation and body language. The electronic discussion also progressed at a much slower rate, and not all Trustees participated in the online environment, despite having access and having agreed to this process verbally. The blend of electronic and face to face meetings held with Schools B and C provided opportunities to collect rich information about the process as well as the actual research questions. Use of the electronic environments introduced several new dimensions to the research process. Appreciative inquiry uses storytelling as a primary source of information gathering (Ludema et al., 2001), but limited consideration is given to the style these stories may take. Participants within the online forum perceived their input to be more reflective than spontaneous.

Limitations must also be acknowledged within the analysis phases of the investigation. Phillips and Hardy (2002) discuss how interviews are researcher initiated, and as such are not necessarily part of the discourse that might normally contribute to interactions (and hence social construction) within the organisation. Similarly the risk that perceived social norms about research protocols may have influenced the research conversations is identified by Alvesson and Deetz (2000). For example, several of the Trustees of School A seemed keen to provide 'correct answers' to my questions, and would tag queries such as "*Did I get it right*?" onto the end of their discussion contributions. It is possible their assumptions regarding the expectations I may hold as a researcher influenced their contributions.

7.5   Conclusion

Within this chapter I have described the method of case study building, relationship building and processes of analysis used within the first path of my PhD journey - my investigation into the emancipatory potential that applications of ICTs may have on primary school BOT governance processes. The need to travel a second and third path of my journey emerged as I began to engage critical theory to assist with my analysis of appreciative inquiry as a research method with specific reference to this investigation, and my reflections on my personal development during the research process. These reflections will be discussed further in chapter 10. Research method comprises both structure and process. The structure contributed through the four case studies to be introduced in the next chapter has been identified, with reference to case study and action research literature. The second part of this chapter described aspects of the research process. My position as an outsider and insider within respective Board processes has been described, as has the influence this position may have had on the relationships established with participants. Preliminary planning of this researcher initiated investigation was consistent with the 4D cycle of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000). These initial plans were developed further in conjunction with participants as they sought to incorporate their participation into current Board processes. Research questions, modes of information gathering and sharing, and methods of analysis undertaken have been discussed. Consistent with the appreciative inquiry approach taken by this thesis, benefits *and* limitations of the research method have begun to be identified.

Chapter 8
Case Studies

8.0   Introduction

Four primary school BOTs joined me in this investigation into the emancipatory potential that applications of ICTs may have on their governance processes. The participation of each BOT is presented in this chapter as a unique case study. Common themes of governance, community, and technology emerged in all instances, but to varying degrees. These differences are reflected in the narratives presented. Each narrative begins by providing a background to the school and the individuals who serve on the BOT. The focus then turns to the research process, describing the participation of each group of Trustees and discussions that ensued regarding each particular Board's focus on the common themes of governance, community and technology. Quotes from the participants are included to ensure their voice is represented and their commitment to the process is honoured. Each narrative concludes with a brief summary of this segment of the research process. Areas for further consideration are briefly identified in each case as a precursor to the discussion in chapters 9 and 10.

8.1   School A

8.1.1   Background

School A is one of three state schools established by the Ministry of Education to provide education support for students with high health needs. The school opened in 2000 following the restructuring and consolidation of what had previously been a network of independent units attached to the larger rural and urban hospitals. To this extent the school does not have the discrete geographic location usually associated with primary schooling. Instead, it services a vast area comprising part of the North

Island of New Zealand. Recognition of the special context faced by the school and BOT was evident throughout the discussions which took place as part of this research.

The administrative base for the school, 'Regional House' is in the suburbs of a large city. Teaching staff are based at several hospital sites around the North Island. In two instances staff are aligned to local schools (although hospital and home visits are still a key activity), while staff at the remaining district sites provide a combination of hospital and home visits. During the course of my involvement with the school, the school site at one major hospital was closed due to changes in hospital administration.

Despite the strong links between hospitals and the school, 70% of the approximate 200 children attending School A in 2003 were not hospital based. The Ministry of Education (MOE) enrolment scheme requires that to be eligible to attend the school, a child must be absent from their regular school for 10 days or more due to illness, and requires a specialist's medical certificate. Children remain on the roll of their regular school while working with School A teachers, and in most cases a gradual transition back to their regular school occurs as their medical situation improves. The school has been categorised by the MOE as a decile 1, representing the lowest socio-economic rating. The principal believes this ranking was made in recognition of the hugely diverse populations served, as well as the fact that many of the children admitted to hospital have conditions linked to lower socio-economic situations. The additional funding achieved through this decile weighting allows the school to work more effectively with individual students who are away from hospital.

Information and communication technology is a recognised priority within the school infrastructure. Email is a key means of communication between staff and Board members, as well as colleagues in New Zealand and internationally. Interactions with a student's 'home school', as well as other agencies which may be involved with a child's care are also done by email. These applications, as well as the use of ICTs to support the curriculum, were acknowledged as areas of good performance in the 2002 Education Review Office (ERO) report. This same report also noted the potential ICT applications have to facilitate communication between students, parents/caregivers, teachers, the base school of origin, and health providers. Technology had begun to be introduced to assist with school management systems. A school wide network had

recently been introduced to assist with communication and document sharing between sites. Updates on the progress of this implementation were regular contributions at the monthly BOT meetings throughout 2003. The principal is part of the Ministry of Education 'Laptops for Principals' scheme, and visits the 'Leadspace' website (described in chapter 5) at least twice a week.

School A faces a number of unique challenges. Since the school's establishment in 2000, the BOT has had to establish much of the school infrastructure (for example: source physical resources, set up management and administration systems) as well as create an identity consistent with the Board's plans for the school. (Trustees were debating changes to the school logo and other associated symbols during several of the meetings I attended). The transient nature of the school population means that a core parent community is difficult to establish, hence parent representation on the school BOT is problematic, if not impractical to achieve. To overcome this challenge, Ministry of Education appointments and co-option are used to fill Trustee positions. In addition to being spread over a number of sites within a large geographical area, the school must juggle relationships with both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health. Staff and Trustees are spread across the geographic area served by the school, although Trustees make a concerted effort to rotate their monthly meetings around the various locations to ensure each site is 'kept in the loop'.

8.1.2   Research Participation

My first formal contact with the BOT of School A was in October 2002. Access to the Board had been facilitated by my meeting one of the Trustees at a regional School Trustees Association (STA) training evening earlier in the year. This initial contact was followed up by email and telephone communications with the chairperson. The Board expressed interest in being involved, providing the opportunity for me to attend the October 2002 Board meeting to introduce the research to all Trustees, as well as answer any questions members had regarding participation. Although several Trustees were keen to begin straight away, the collective decision to delay involvement until 2003 was made in recognition of the hectic schedule most Boards face as the school year comes to a close.

The demographics of the School A BOT does not reflect the stereotype of a decile 1 school, i.e. having a low socio-economic base and a high Maori and Pacific Island population. At the start of 2003 the BOT comprised six men (one of whom was the principal, who had been appointed in April 2002) and two women (one of whom was the staff representative). Four of the Trustees (three men, one woman) had been appointed by the Ministry of Education while a further two men had been co-opted by the Board. The majority of Trustees were aged 50+, and all at the beginning of the research were of New Zealand European/Pakeha decent. A Maori man and another New Zealand European/Pakeha woman were co-opted during the research process.

Board of Trustee meetings appeared to be slightly more formal at School A than at any of the other schools participating in this research. This formality could perhaps be attributed to several factors, such as the age of members, the fact that Board members did not have the parental/community links with the school and/or each other which the other participating BOTs have, as well as the geographic distances which separate individual Board members for much of the time between meetings.

The affinity Trustees felt for the school and its specialised environment was evident in their discussions and decision making. Observations made by Trustees such as "*…moving around our sites…is a really healthy thing….*" suggests the medical orientation of many of the issues faced by the school has become deeply ingrained in the Board's lexicon and subsequent approach to governance in general. All Trustees had professional backgrounds, relating to education and/or management, although some were now retired. As such, discussion during decision making often referred to previous experiences Trustees have had in the education sector, for example: "*Back in the days of chalk and talk...*". The chairperson was the most vocal member in acknowledging and verbalising his beliefs, be they in terms of approaches to technology, or perceptions about schools in general:

> *…And as everybody present knows I give high priority to the human, teacher, side of that learning environment…*

All Trustees reported having access to a personal computer, either at home, work or both; and seven of the eight Trustees reported using the computer on a regular basis. Seven of the eight Trustees said they had Internet access, but only four reported that they actually used this access. Despite these responses, all seven respondents reported they used email (although frequency of use was not determined). These responses suggest that use of email technology is not considered by these Trustees to be use of the Internet.

With regard to participation in the research, it was agreed that I would attend several meetings during the year (which meetings these would be was dependent on their time and location). I was to be allocated a slot on the monthly agenda, during which I would pose research questions to the Board for discussion. I anticipated this process would take two or three meetings.

School A BOT meetings were typically held from late morning to mid-afternoon, subject to travel requirements. A full working lunch was often provided. The first meeting I attended in 2003 was held in one of the school's classrooms, located in the grounds of a central city school. Background noise from children playing, moving between classes and playing sport restricted the clarity of the tape recording of the discussion.

During the research process I was very conscious of the tight time schedule for each meeting. In recognition of this, I would email the discussion questions to the minute secretary prior to the meeting, who would distribute them to Board members along with the other documentation/preparation required for the meeting. Despite everyone having collectively discussed the action research approach of the investigation in some detail, I had a feeling several of the older members of the Board did not comprehend the process fully, or were at best a little uncertain about some aspects. Several participants had anticipated that I would be primarily observing them, and were somewhat surprised when I began talking about the research questions. Comments such as *I did not do my homework but…*" and "*Did I get it right*?" were often tagged onto responses during discussion.

A miscommunication concerning dates and location meant that I was unable to attend the March meeting as had initially been planned. The purpose of this meeting had been to discuss the research questions and finalise the approach to be taken in coming months. To compensate for my non-attendance at this meeting, I emailed the research brief to the principal and chairperson, (via the Executive Officer), to be presented on my behalf for discussion.

No problems arose from this revised approach, although once presented at the meeting the questions led to an unscheduled discussion about "what is governance?". While it was encouraging that the Board was keen to explore the question even though it was not an agenda item, from a research perspective it was unfortunate that I was not privy to this discussion. The ensuing impromptu discussion demonstrates however, the fruitful contribution of this method of inquiry as a potentially transformative process.

The first BOT meeting to have research participation as a formal agenda item was June 2003. April had been missed due to annual meeting requirements, and the location of the May meeting prevented me from attending. The objective of this session was to establish what governance meant to the BOT of School A, as well as to begin the discovery and dream phases of the 4D appreciative inquiry cycle described in chapter 7. Discussion around governance was semi-formal, reflecting my observation of greater formality than was evident at some of the other Board meetings I attended. Definitions of governance focused on the legal requirements. One Trustee even referred to their copy of the New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) Handbook in search of a 'proper definition'. No direct mention was made of the existence and/or content of either the National Education Guidelines (NEGs) or National Administration Guidelines (NAGs) (see appendices 1, 2 and 3). Dialogue promoted a strong commitment to maintaining a split between governance and management, with both Board members and the principal mentioning this split several times throughout the discussion, as well as the meeting in general.

Abstract terms were used by Trustees to describe governance, such as *"accountability"*, *"transparency"*, *"responsibility"*, *"transparent and open and honest"*. Gradually these terms were defined further, although they often remained quite ambiguous:

- ❖ *Accountability to stakeholder*s;

- ❖ *Transparency around everything the organisation does*;

- ❖ *Accountability for student performance... by way of ... a learning environment*;

- ❖ *We are accountable and responsible for the action of the teachers.*

It was not until discussion progressed to examples of good governance (and in the subsequent section – dreams) that actual processes, actions and people, reflecting the human face of governance at School A came to the fore:

- ❖ *Having a vision...knowing where you want the school to go...making sure you get someone (*i.e. principal*) who has empathy with what the Board is trying to achieve*;

- ❖ *Policy, direction setting, focusing on the strategic issues rather than the ... more detailed issues*;

- ❖ *We work together to bring resources, to communicate...;*

- ❖ *...with the long term planning, the looking ahead, the trying to predict the environment and including the community, in its various forms, in what we do….*

As the discussion unfolded, several Trustees began to appreciate that governance is much wider than the formal procedures associated with the monthly meeting or the responsibilities outlined in the National Education Guidelines. The opportunity for impromptu face to face meetings while visiting various sites, be they with staff, fellow Trustees, or pupils and their family, was recognised as an important communication process:

- ❖ *It's actually the face to face stuff isn't it, that happens not officially as part of the meeting…;*

- ❖ *I was thinking of Board stuff, just in and out, but you are quite right in that direction.*

Discussion indicated a strong awareness on the Board's behalf of the uniqueness of their situation, and the impact this has on their approach to governance. For example an absence of parent representatives and the unique physical environments minimised the risk of the Board being 'bogged down' in issues such as school trips and playground activities. The downside to this was also evident:

> *One of the things that we at the school struggle with is finding out what our community thinks and involving the stakeholders because they are so widely dispersed, they are not parents who are going to turn up at a PTA meeting as you would in a regular school...*

Awareness was also evident of how the Board is made up of individuals, each with their own skills and networks, who each need professional development if the Board collectively is to achieve its best:

❖ *Round a Board table are different areas of expertise and experience*;

❖ *...that as we increase our governance of the organisation, we increase our..., skills knowledge and understanding by interacting with equivalent organisations or organisations that we may enter into partnerships with or whatever…*;

❖ *…we as a Board actually put quite significant funding aside for Board professional development….and that's extremely progressive I think.*

Dreams of how future approaches to governance may appear had a strong strategic influence:

❖ *For the Board to be seen as an exemplar of best practice, and the ability to interact with other schools, perhaps internationally, either to build our own skills and things like that*;

❖ *We are in new territory and we should look at being pioneers and going ahead in that, as trailblazers, rather than worrying about looking back at some other paradigms that are elsewhere.*

While concurring with statements such as those above, the chairperson made a point of highlighting the importance of interpersonal relationships:

> *A dream of mine would be to be able to relate personally, and work closely on a person-to-person basis, but practicalities say.…*

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The BOT recognised the challenges it faces, as well as the progress it has made to date. Discussion throughout the first research meeting referred to both the difficulties associated with establishing strong links with the parent community, as well as alluding to difficulties encountered between the Board and the previous principal. Indeed, the maturity, and increased ability of the Board and the systems it had implemented were frequently identified as key strengths during the 'discovery' stage of the appreciative inquiry cycle. Overall, the tone of the meeting's discussion was quite positive in focus. A summary of these early stages is presented in table 8.1.

Table 8.1   School A : Summary of Discovery and Dream Responses:

Discovery: *Examples of good governance include*:

- Board process, reflecting maturity in their role as Trustees
- Board's willingness to learn and develop their role further
- Allowing a full discussion to take place before decisions are made
- No 'head nodders'
- Moving monthly meetings around various sites
- Efforts contributing to the upcoming conference

Dreams: *What would be the ideal environment for this Board to be operating in in 5-10 years time?*

- Short meetings, starting at 1pm, finishing by 2pm!
- Remote communication, e.g. video conferencing
- Parents participating, sharing, establishing a community for the school
- Board moving into more strategic areas, long term planning, environment scanning, including working with the community
- To have built on our long term visions
- For the Board to be seen as an exemplar of best practice, pioneers, trailblazers
- Senior staff and Board of Trustees able to travel to increase their own skills, knowledge and understanding by interacting with others from similar schools (internationally)
- Technology can't recreate personal dynamics, but it can support it. E.G. web based discussion forum can assist with decision making, community involvement etc as well as contact with other Boards (nationally and internationally)
- Branding issues for the school will be resolved
- Maybe "The ……….. School of New Zealand"
- Technology will be very different
- To be able to relate personally, and work closely on a person to person basis
- Provide an outlet for parents to seek help, advice, feedback that is not 9-5 dependant
- Induction/orientation pack and process available to help new board members

The second research meeting was held in the school room at a large city hospital. This was a very small room, and the tables and chairs were low, designed for children rather than adults. Noise from construction work outside, as well as the general hustle and bustle of a hospital ward filtered through, inhibiting discussion at times. This section of the school was due to be closed shortly, with the teacher and students moving across the city to a larger hospital site. The teacher involved expressed mixed feelings about the move during casual discussion prior to the meeting commencing. Prior to this meeting, a summary of my notes from the previous session had been distributed to all Board members (see table 8.1). The purpose of the second meeting was to build on the earlier discussion, and begin to consider which 'dreams' the Board might like to develop further, (i.e. the design and destiny phases of the 4D appreciative inquiry cycle). However, as elaborated below, this objective was not fully achieved.

The Board had recently organised and attended a conference for the three specialised health schools in New Zealand. It was observed that this conference had been the first time the three Boards had "*seriously tried to work together*", that "*there was much more dialogue*" and "*we're starting to trust each other now*". A more proactive stance appeared to have been taken whereas "*previously the Boards met to be 'talked to' by Ministry officials.*"

Conversation between members continually acknowledged the unique situations faced by the school, taking both positive and negative stances. At one stage a Trustee observed "*we are a very small pimple on the horizon of education*", suggesting a somewhat negative take on their situation. Later on the same Trustee adamantly reiterated a dream he had identified earlier "*we are in new territory – so we should look at being pioneers*". The intonation, and subsequent elaboration, of this second statement revealed the opportunity and potential the Trustee saw waiting to be tapped into by the Board.[1]

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[1] From a research perspective, this second statement illustrates the appreciative inquiry process in action.

When encouraged to identify aspects from the dream phase that the Board might like to work towards achieving (i.e. the 'design' phase of the 4D cycle), the chairperson made a seemingly blunt but pertinent observation: "*Dreams are shackled by costs and practicalities*". He suggested there was little point spending time on such plans as limited resources would typically prohibit their enactment. Following this lead, the other Trustees identified only minor areas for possible development, such as implementing computer software to help with analysis of planning and achievement information, or use of word processing technologies to develop an orientation package for new Trustees. Despite my attempts to encourage the group to at least consider and perhaps identify small areas for potential development, this line of inquiry soon came to a 'dead end'. The immediate implication of this was that the Board decided at the conclusion of this meeting that there was little benefit in continuing their participation in the research beyond this session.

Building on themes identified during the previous session, the ensuing discussion instead continued to focus on the challenge of establishing a parent community. This discussion in turn led to recognition of the relationships and sense of community between the school, medical staff, and students. It was recognised that as well as categorising children according to standard education classifications such as age, gender, year of study, it is also important to consider students in groups according to their health needs. The special needs of a diverse range of conditions must to be taken into account within the school's governance process, especially when making decisions which impact on the children.

8.1.3   Research Themes

In addition to the strong focus on governance by the Trustees of School A detailed in the preceding section, community and technology were common themes within their research discussions.

Community
Interactions with 'the community' were acknowledged throughout the discussions, but not necessarily as a direct activity associated with governance. Trustees of the School A BOT alluded to a variety of stakeholders, including their own staff, other health

schools, the 'home schools' of their pupils, parents, and medical staff as well as the pupils themselves:

> *One of the things that we at the school struggle with is finding out what our community thinks and involving the stakeholders because they are so widely dispersed, they are not parents who are going to turn up to a PTA meeting as you would in a regular school....*

Challenges associated with the geographical spread of their own staff and pupils, as well as the difficulty of developing a sense of community among parents of pupils were openly discussed:

* ❖ *...moving around all our different sites...is a really healthy thing, and..., enables participation from teachers and people from other sites;*
* ❖ *I think it is just as important for Board, staff to interact;*
* ❖ *I've been thinking about the school community and like, parent involvement, and I don't think we are actually ever going to achieve a parent community, because our kids move in and out, so their parents I think will still relate to their school of enrolment rather than this school, so I think working on establishing a school community is actually going to be hard;*
* ❖ *I think we're pursuing..., a fallacy if we are looking for a parent group, I think it's very nebulous, and very difficult to define...*

The role of medical staff "*as surrogate parents*" was seen as one way in which a sense of community could be developed. Even the needs of pupils could not be assumed to be able to be considered collectively as:

* ❖ *Their [diverse] health needs dictate education environments;*
* ❖ *I think there is a place at working at a community group within the hospital itself...to look more closely at the medical people being part of our [community], sort of surrogate parents....*

It is interesting to note Trustees acknowledged that relationships with several of these stakeholder groups were currently not overly positive:

- ❖ *We tend to get a feedback of not very positive relationships at times don't we X, in reaction to funds and accommodations, which is really sad*
  (*in reference to relationships with medical staff);*

- ❖ *The conference is probably the first time the Boards have seriously tried to work together;*

- ❖ *Previously the... Boards, met to be 'talked to' by the Ministry officials. At this one (conference) there was much more... dialogue.*

Technology

Technology is perceived by the School A BOT as a tool, something to be used, for example, in terms of teleconferencing, video conferencing, and data manipulation. Remote communications may provide a means of reducing time lost through travel to meetings, but any efficiency which may be gained is seen as a trade off to the loss of personal interaction.

- ❖ *I think technology is part of it, but nothing is going to replace the effectiveness of us having a Board meeting in [City X – a small geographically isolated city with significant issues of poverty];*

- ❖ *…In terms of the personal dynamics at a meeting like this, I don't think we can recreate that within a technological framework. But I do think there are a lot of things that technology can do to support that type of set up...discussion board forums, web based sort of things like that could go a long way towards being a support for those sorts of decision making processes.*

Despite such reservations about loss of the personal factor, several Trustees, (including the chairperson who was openly opposed to increased use of ICTs), acknowledged the peace of mind gained through use of technology such as the Internet and/or mobile phones to contact their own [adult] children who were overseas:

> *…It's not this terrible feeling of them being on the other side of the world so much as, as they actually seem so close.*

Of all the Trustees, the chairperson was the most open about his concerns regarding technology. The discussions were interspersed with his comments such as:

- ❖ *I feel the more wires that you use to replace bloodstream or what have you, the less you become an institution;*
- ❖ *I see this technology as a bit of a barrier, which really dates me;*
- ❖ *Because a dream of mine would be to be able to relate personally, and work closely on a person to person basis, but practicalities say it needs to be very much,... towards technology, and everything from... teleconferences right through to video screens and what have you. That's certainly not a dream of mine...but ... I can see that it would be a pragmatic approach.*

The chairperson's stated aversion of technology did not prevent him from using it to good effect in his interactions with me. He often used email to pass messages and documents onto me during the duration of the Board's participation in the research investigation.

8.1.4   Summary

School A appears to already be using ICTs in a manner that facilitates communication with/between stakeholders. In addition to this, the discovery and dream stages of the 4D appreciative inquiry cycle identified some useful foundations for future growth and development of the Board of School A. However, the chairperson's telling observation regarding "*costs and practicalities*" introduced a barrier which prevented further elaboration of these strengths through to the design and destiny stages of the appreciative inquiry. The unintended and unexpected turns in conversations regarding governance, relationships with the community, and the awareness of the children's diverse health requirements suggests however that the action research process did enhance Trustees understanding of governance within their school.

Apart from my initial introduction to appreciative inquiry, time restraints while working with School A's BOT did not allow me to pursue any direct questioning of the Board's collective value base, and how this may influence their approach(s) to governance. Analysis of the discussion does highlight recognition of the helpful influence of positive factors. Discussion regarding the recent conference attended by all three health schools provides a case in point:

- ❖ *...after the conference the contact has become more meaningful...;*
- ❖ *We're starting to trust each other aren't we?;*
- ❖ *It's still going to be hard, we're going to have to, to maintain that level of ... co-operation once the novelty wears off;*
- ❖ *It's a bit of a halo effect.*

It was interesting to note that while seven of the eight Trustees reported regular use of email, and one Board member specifically noted its uses with regards relationship building and maintenance, they did not equate this activity with use of the Internet. Despite several ICT applications already being implemented at School A, the Board did not readily identify the potential of these initiatives or appear interested in pursuing further technology related dreams. Part of this non recognition may be attributed to their perception(s) of action research, although the chairperson's observation regarding costs and practicalities cannot be overlooked.

8.2   School B

8.2.1   Background

Opened in the mid 1900s, School B is well established in the central north west of a large city. Categorised as a decile five school by the MOE, the population contributing to School B is mainly Caucasian. Just less than 20% are Maori children. The remainder are children from immigrant groups from a wide selection of Asian, European, Middle Eastern, Indian, African, North American and Pacific Island countries (School web site 2003).

In 2003 the school had approximately 400 pupils, 17 teachers and a team of support staff. The principal is a driving force behind the acquisition and application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) within the school environment. Each classroom has a computer, the library has six computers, and there are a further eight computers in various offices around the school. All of these computers are networked and have email and Internet capability. Each member of staff has their own personal email address, as does each classroom. Teaching staff plan and assess their

programmes of work using their class room computer, while 'Classroom Manager' software has been installed to streamline assessment and reporting procedures. The school has an active web site. Information technology is presented as an important feature of the school infrastructure.

8.2.2   Research Participation

My initial contact with School B came after meeting the principal in September 2002. He had been seconded to the Ministry of Education to assist with the launch of new planning and reporting procedures which BOTs and principals were required to implement during 2003. After attending one of the 'roadshow' evenings which introduced both the requirements and an electronic template designed to assist school leaders meet these new requirements, I asked if I could meet with him to discuss the initiative further. We met in February 2003 to discuss the processes and influences involved in these developments, as well as initial feedback from schools to the Ministry. Although these discussions had been initiated with reference to his position at the Ministry of Education, principal B's pride in the infrastructure developed within 'his' school was evident. He perceived the contribution ICTs have made to the governance and management of the school as an example of 'best practice'. Building on this enthusiasm, I asked if the Board would be interested to share these examples with me, through participating in the research process.

At the principal's invitation, I attended the April 2003 BOT meeting to outline the research project. The Board welcomed me, and I was invited to stay for the duration of this and subsequent meetings. The meeting atmosphere was professional yet relaxed, for example several plates of sweets would be placed on the table at each meeting for members to nibble on during the meeting. It was evident from the discussion and material presented to me that the Board was proud of its streamlined processes and acknowledged the documentation strengths of the principal. In keeping with the strong ICT focus within the school, computer software such as Microsoft PowerPoint based presentations and graphical representations were often used by the principal to share information with the rest of the Board.

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The BOT comprised four men (including the principal) and three women (including the staff representative). All but one are of New Zealand European/Pakeha descent, with the remaining person a Pacific Islander. All of the men are employed in 'white collar' positions, which provide frequent access to a computer and the Internet at work. These men also report similar access at home. The two women parent representatives work part time. These two women report little use of computers and/or the Internet. In contrast to the 'hi-tech' orientation of the principal, the chairperson relies on school computers to access email and other Internet information.

Following a discussion about the proposed research all Trustees indicated they were keen to participate. After discussing some of the approaches taken by other participating Boards, the decision was made to combine face to face and electronic approaches. Thus, I would attend each BOT meeting to recap on progress, answer questions, and explore perceptions, but the actual research questions would be considered via a secure electronic discussion forum established for the Board's exclusive use. This online discussion would take place during the period between Board meetings. The combination of electronic and face to face interaction resulted in a contrast of communication styles. Electronic communication tended to be thoughtful and reflective, while face to face conversation was more informal, often quite jovial and punctuated with aside comments and discussions. These observations were confirmed in general conversation through comments such as "*I didn't want to put rubbish on there*" (i.e. on the online discussion site), and "*tape's rolling – so let's sound professional*".

Several school Trustees recounted that their initial involvement on the Board was hesitant, prompted by the school struggling to get sufficient nominations in the 2001 BOT elections. Putting themselves forward for the position helped the school avoid having a Ministry of Education appointed governance team. Despite these early reservations, Trustees appeared to have developed a strong level of commitment to their governance activities. Prior to my involvement, the Board had spent a lot of time streamlining their meeting and administrative procedures, including processes of self review. Unlike most schools Boards, School B BOT only met six times in 2003, typically at eight week intervals. During the research period the Board also began to trial the submission/distribution of reports and review documents by email.

My attendance at regular Board meetings tended to provide snippets of informal information concerning Board processes and interactions between Board members. For example details of the weekly meetings between the chairperson and principal were shared, as was how the chairperson also used this time to process emails, access computer documents and web sites, as she does not have access to a computer at home. The chairperson admits to not feeling confident when using this technology: "*Cause if I can drive a computer then anyone can*". She had also been on the school Board five years earlier, and professed to being amazed at the "*massive changes*" that had taken place in between times. "*So many changes that I was thinking old style, and I had to rethink the whole thing…it was very different, very different*".

Discussion during the time allocated to research at regular Board meetings tended to focus on the level of activity which had (or had not) been happening in the electronic forum, as well as a few concerns about the security of the site. *"They can't read what we have written?"* The principal had used the school digital camera to take photographs of all Trustees, which he had then loaded into the electronic forum. Light hearted banter regarding the photos reinforced my perceptions of the relaxed, friendly atmosphere at these BOT meetings. The two members who were the most quiet during these face to face meetings were also the quietest in the electronic forum. While neither posted a message, one did acknowledge that he regularly went into the site to read, but had never collected his thoughts to the extent that he felt confident enough to post a message. The principal was the main contributor to the electronic discussion, and encouraged the other members to increase their use of this medium: "*I think it is a great process actually*"; "*I'm not trying to put words in your mouth, but just giving you an idea…*". He particularly seemed to enjoy the electronic forum when members began to debate issues and/or their specific interpretations of concepts such as governance: "*I think it does cement our own opinion, and hopefully strengthen our position on the Board as well*". By his own admission, the principal made several entries where he thought "*I might get people arguing with me…*". He was also keen to remind/inform other Board members about various features of the software, for example spell check and search functions.

Dialogue within the electronic forum tended to be more reflective and responsive to specific questions than the debating format encouraged by the principal. Entries from the principal tended to be semi-formal in style, although over time the entries from the other participants became more informal and spontaneous. For example, by June the Board was discussing areas of good governance, and one member suggested "*28 hour days*" as a means of improvement! Despite a high quality level of discussion, the online forum never really progressed beyond discussing governance related/discovery issues. A few dreams were expressed in planning for a multi-stakeholder meeting in October, but no entries were made in the dream discussion site. Without these dreams, there was no basis from which to develop the design and destiny phases.

As noted above the Board seemed to be quite proud of the progress they perceived to have made with regard to Board activities "*in terms of Board reviews and what that means*". The principal was usually the first to articulate this progress, for example:

❖ *But don't you think we have moved in a different direction this year in terms of governance?*;

❖ *Without leading you in any way…well I think dramatically, we've made a different move haven't we…?*.

Electronic discussion frequently acknowledged the leadership provided by the principal and professional development for Board members provided by the senior management team:

❖ *B School's BOT is fortunate to have professional development at many of our Board meetings;*

❖ *Our school is fortunate that [principal] frequently provides professional development opportunities for the BOT to develop its understanding of many aspects of school life;*

❖ *I'm sure it would be a lot harder without the leadership provided by a highly competent principal and staff Trustee.*

Discussion in the face to face meetings suggests that as the workload and number of face to face meetings between members increased outside of the regular Board meetings, activity in the electronic forum decreased. Much of this additional workload and associated meetings (supplemented by email) was attributed to a multi-stakeholder school planning meeting held in October, and attended by staff, Board members and representatives from the Parent Teachers Association and After School Care Co-coordinators. At the principal's request I had established an additional discussion folder in the electronic forum so that Board members could post their documents and ideas as a build up to the meeting, but only two entries other than my introductory statement were made in this folder.

While all members expressed remorse at not having been into the research discussion site regularly, one Trustee acknowledged that these expressions of guilt were made regularly at each meeting and suggested that a scheduled commitment was what was needed from each person: "*I do feel guilty because that's what we say every meeting*". In response to this feedback in August I made efforts to motivate and reward participation by offering chocolate fish to those who made regular, quality entries. Despite the enthusiastic response to this suggestion (one subsequent entry in the electronic forum began *Jellybeans please!*), chocolate fish and jellybeans were only needed for a few people! In a similar vein several Trustees reported struggling to find adequate time to complete reading in preparation for the BOT meetings, despite reports having been emailed through in advance. An entry by one member within the electronic forum indicated Trustees were aware of this '*busyness*', yet suggested that the 'weakness' lay with individual motivations and planning rather than the systems which were in place:

> *The only improvement required, I think, to any organisation is our own. We have come up with a system of distributing reports in a fast and efficient manner but we still need to be organised enough ourselves to get them done in time!*

8.2.3 Research Themes

Discussions with School B BOT never completed the 4D appreciative inquiry cycle described in chapter 7. Nevertheless, the discussion in both the electronic forum and the face to face sessions still encompassed research themes common to all the participating BOTs: governance, community and technology.

Governance

Discussion around the Board's perception of governance took place primarily in the electronic forum. Members agreed that their perceived notion of the 'traditional rubber stamp/hierarchical' view of governance was too narrow. Supporting this stance, responses were typically action oriented. For example:

❖ *The Board is involved in consultation with the principal as well as the school community and other stakeholders, and is responsible for overseeing that the processes are in place and being followed correctly...*

❖ *I feel one of the most important roles/responsibilities that the Board has is to establish and present a direction forward for the school...*

The influence of specific members within the Board was acknowledged as both a part of governance and a contributing factor to the approaches taken:

> *We are accountable for student achievement and in order to gauge this we receive considerable professional development in most curriculum areas from members of the management team.*

Reference to the legislative requirements of governance was raised by the principal. The influence of these legislative requirements is also evident in the processes and structure which the Board projects as a key component of their governance approach. Portfolio allocations and processes of self review are established to ensure the requirements of the National Administrative Guidelines are met, which in turn has assisted with a reduction in the number of full Board meetings held each year.

> *I am sure however, that this new journey we have started, places the Board more in the drivers seat with regards to governance.*

Reflection on the Board's collective attempt to define governance raised more questions than it answered for one Trustee. No entry was made in the discussion forum by this individual, for as he related during a face to face session at a monthly meeting:

> *Well it took me by surprise how much dialogue was there about governance when I went in to have a look...like I thought I had a fair idea on what it was, in my own perception, and after I read all that I was like 'Man, I'm confused'....There was just so much to take in, my perception of it had changed...and I couldn't just sit there and type... so I thought I'm not sure about this now....*

Few specific examples were introduced when participants were asked for examples of good governance. Instead responses highlighted elements such as good relationships, feedback and feed-forward as contributors to good governance:

> *The Board must have a sound knowledge base, interpersonal and communicative skills, a strong sense of collective values, and a real sense of purpose.*

Community

The Board's role in reporting on student achievement to 'the community' was acknowledged, as were staff/parent interactions in response to student achievement. Similarly, the need for consultation with 'the community' was noted in discussion, but no details were provided as to how, when and/or if this occurs. Overall, little elaboration was forthcoming that might indicate who the BOT perceived 'the community' to include.

Formal interaction with other stakeholders is a scheduled part of Board process however. In addition to Parent Teachers Association (PTA) and After School Care Committee reports being tabled at the Board meetings, October saw the various groups in the school (e.g. Board, Management Team, PTA) come together for a combined meeting to establish a shared vision for the coming year.

Technology

The Board ranged in approaches to technology from the techno-savvy principal, "*I think IT [information technology] is fab*" to a chairperson who has no computer access at home and who utilises school ICT resources only when required. Two Trustees did not post messages in the electronic forum, although one reported that he went in to read entries made by his colleagues. Use of the electronic forum initiated as part of the research process was more as a developmental/planning tool than a discussion tool. This was evidenced by requests from the principal for me to establish additional folders: one for planning the function to mark the retirement of the school's assistant principal, one to provide a forum for feedback on the school's new charter document, and a final one where ideas regarding upcoming school development could be posted and debated. Discussion in the charter site developed, however use of the other additional folders was minimal with the principal the main contributor. As the year progressed workloads increased – which in turn diminished the frequency of entries in the electronic forum. This decrease had a negative snowball effect - as the frequency of entries began to taper off, even regular visitors began to reduce their input:

- ❖ *Well it was beginning to open up…and of course then we have sort of lost track a bit…* ;
- ❖ *There wasn't much new in there so I sort of logged out again;*
- ❖ *The web site has been valuable and I think it's a good place for people to air their views or … create… discussion, that kind of thing, … I think as you say we've just been a bit slack about it really…;*
- ❖ *…but if things are not happening it becomes not relevant to me…it would be relevant to me if we were all doing it.…*

Any tardiness by School B Trustees with regard to the use of the electronic forum does not extend to use of technology in other areas of governance however. Use of ICTs such as email is recognised by Trustees as a growing component of Board process:

We are actually using IT more than we've ever used IT ourselves...like all the
reviews, they all come in via IT...then they go out as one distribution list to all
of us, (chairperson) gets a hard copy being the only one not on IT....you only
have to look back through that there's heaps of, a heck of a number of emails
in fact...that's actually part of a paper trail that we need to keep because it
was from the Board...

Likewise, the principal identifies a number of websites which he visits regularly to keep up to date with relevant issues:

I log onto the principal's site, I log onto the NZP site, I log onto the NZEI site,
I log onto the Ministry site...

8.2.4   Summary

While the participant driven orientation of the research meant that we did not follow the 4D cycle of appreciative inquiry as had originally been planned, my involvement with School B BOT provided important insights. The issue and implications of non-participation by some Trustees within the electronic discussion environment must be carefully considered. Governance processes at School B, including their examples of how ICTs have already been implemented to assist with governance and management, have provided some valuable examples for further consideration. The sense of empowerment gained by the Board through their strong self belief in their processes and abilities was evident throughout the research period.

8.3 School C

8.3.1 Background

School C is a special character integrated school situated in a large city. The special character builds on the school's foundation as a Catholic school, established by the Church in the mid 1900s. The school has been staffed solely by lay teachers since 1979, and in 1981 was integrated into the state system.

In 2003, School C had a role of approximately 290 pupils, and 13 teachers. Rated as a decile 7 school by the Ministry of Education, just less than 80% of the school population are identified as New Zealand European/Pakeha. An Education Review Office Report in 2001 observed good integration of information and communication technology as a tool for learning within the school. All classrooms within the school have computers and are able to access the Internet and email. The school has an active website, and in recent years has participated in several information and communication technology research programmes through the School of Education at the University of Waikato.

Composition of the BOT reflects the special character of the school. In addition to the five parent representatives, staff representative and principal, there are four proprietor's representatives - one of whom is the parish priest. Appointed by the proprietor (Bishop), a key focus for these representatives is to ensure the special character of the school is taken into account during decision making.

8.3.2 Research Participation

I had specifically sought to include School C in the research because of its special character. I was interested to consider the extent to which the values and ideals associated with this special character were also evident within governance and associated activities. Access to School C was gained through writing directly to the chairperson. Although I was not known to any of the Board members, I know several families and one staff member at the school. With the Board having agreed in principle to participate, I was invited to attend the February 2003 BOT meeting to

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outline the proposed research project and answer any questions. The Board viewed their participation in this research as a component of their professional development.

A key feature of this meeting was that it was the first meeting attended by the new school principal. Although she had been appointed during 2002, she had not taken up the position until Term 1, 2003. Building on a suggestion from the Trustees it was agreed the two of us would meet separately after the meeting to discuss the investigation further and possible responses to it by the Board.

The BOT comprised six females (including the principal and staff representative) and five males (including the parish priest). Consistent with the school's Catholic background, BOT meetings are normally opened with a prayer or devotion. Responsibility for leading this section of the meeting is rotated among members. Reflecting the school population, nine of the eleven trustees are Pakeha/European. It became clear to me quite early on in this preliminary meeting that the large size of this Board would provide additional research challenges. The Board was hesitant to add another item to the already full monthly agenda, but to find a time that suited the majority of Trustees for additional meetings would be difficult. At one stage one person suggested *"can't we do this by email or something?"* – sowing the seed for what would develop into a unique electronic discussion forum.

The newly appointed principal described the Trustees as a *"highly professional bunch of people"*, covering a range of professions including a lawyer, teacher [i.e. a parent representative who was also a teacher at another school], counsellor, librarian, and personnel manager - as well as several people who run their own businesses. There is a strong recognition and appreciation for the individual and collective strengths of the Board among Trustees. Their capability in terms of skills and activity was openly acknowledged by both the principal and the chairperson:

- ❖ *This is a highly functioning Board compared with two of the three other Boards I have worked with… incredibly high functioning;*
- ❖ *Personnel, personalities and contributions to Board level - you are excellent….and an incredible source of people too;*

❖ *If you start looking at these things you are going to quite quickly find out in terms of the knowledge within our school it's fairly good, what's happening within our school is particularly good…. The management and the head in terms of governance are obviously pretty well on the mark.*

While all Trustees are very e-literate and make regular use of email and the Internet, the general perception of Trustees' at the onset of the research was that their current use of technology was not high. Email use with regard to Board work is actively encouraged by the principal who sends out regular email updates (approximately once a week) to help keep the lines of communication open between the Board and the School.

❖ *(New principal) is sort of driving the use of email;*
❖ *Until (new principal) came along I had never had an email related to (general murmurs of agreement)… school Board work;*
❖ *(New principal) uses email a thousand fold more than it's ever been used in this school before….*

As agreed at my initial meeting with School C's Board of Trustees, I met with the principal towards the end of February 2003 to discuss the research in more depth, as well as to explore how best their participation could be tailored to meet the requirements and expectations of the Board. A similar age to myself, the principal and I quickly developed a good rapport, to the extent that our discussions often covered a range of potentially related and unrelated topics. With the school having spent much of the previous year with an acting principal, the Board had become involved in a number of management issues. The new principal felt that a strong governance focus within the research would help the Board realign itself so that it could concentrate on its governance role.

Having identified possible scope and focus, the next stage was to consider a course of action. Building on the electronic suggestion raised at the Board meeting, a secure electronic discussion forum was set up for the Board's unique use. Research questions, developed in (Board delegated) consultation with the principal were posted within the forum. All involved agreed that I would continue to attend Board meetings on a regular basis to seek face to face clarification and general feedback.

Research participation began in earnest in April 2003. By this time a new chairperson had been elected, but the Board was still keen to participate. The computer literacy of the Board members involved was soon evident. Face to face discussions often included sharing tips on how to subscribe to the electronic forum by email, as well as acknowledgement of the positive response to the forum in general. At the Board's request additional discussion folders were established to allow the Board to continue discussing a potentially contentious issue to which no agreement had yet been reached. All Trustees later reported that use of the forum in this manner allowed them to apply a more reflective and less reactive approach, facilitating better informed decision making at a subsequent face to face meeting.

> *I would like to say that being kept informed by email and at our meetings has helped me feel a lot more confident in my role. This has helped me to contribute in a positive way, knowing my opinions are valued and having the time before a meeting to consider any upcoming issues.*

Building on such positive feedback, I suggested that we consider establishing another forum, open to several BOTs. The purpose of the forum would be to provide an electronic peer support network. Within this network ideas, policies and support could be shared between schools, thus assisting busy Trustees, and perhaps safeguarding schools from developing similar policies in isolation. I had anticipated the advantages of being able to share ideas and concerns through a medium which did not require physical attendance at 'yet another meeting' to be a valuable learning opportunity.

It was at this point in the research process that I faced a 'reality' of participant driven research! Despite my own perceptions of opportunity, the Trustees were at best indifferent, and at worst, hesitant about such an idea. The most pressing concern was a perception of relevance, or lack of, in discussions involving Trustees from different schools. *"You would be assuming we have areas of similar interests"*. The previous chairperson was full of confidence about the abilities and performance of the Board and hence saw little value in interacting with other Boards. Confidence in their ability to interact meaningfully with other Trustees external to their situation was a concern to the other Trustees. Even the most confident of participants, in both face to face and electronic environments, expressed uncertainty in 'his readiness' to expand

discussions to include 'outsiders'. Feedback received indicated that Board members were more interested in improving flows between Trustees than they were with external communications; suggesting the importance these members place on internal processes as a contributor to good governance. The strong focus on internal communication took me by surprise. At this point in the research all BOTs were only six months from the end of their three year term, so I had anticipated that internal communication channels may have been well established already and that insight to be gained from a wider community of similarly placed people would be useful.

The special character of the school was always present in the background of discussions and/or decision making, particularly so in relation to the more reflective discussion which took place within the electronic forum:

❖ *Our Catholic character is always upper most in our minds when making decisions*; *I see* [issue under discussion] *as unfortunate given the special character of the school and its primary purpose to educate Catholic children of parishioners*;

❖ *I am opposed to* [issue under discussion]*...That would lead us to a situation of exploitation that would be in contradiction to our Catholic character*.

Discussion within the electronic forum suggests that frequent use of technology as a medium of communication is seen by Board members to be a 'given' in today's environment. "*We cannot escape from technology – think of the role modelling we will be giving our children by using the resources that we have*", although comments by several members show they are keen to ensure a balance with face to face communication is maintained:

> *I have thought about this and realise that this appears to be the way we are heading with the technology available. I would just like to reiterate my reservations and why I feel this way* (continues, highlighting the friendly atmosphere encountered when you visit the school)*...Emailing people is OK for keeping people informed but we also need to have the 'face to face' contact, whether it be at the sports ground, or at school masses and sports days....*

One Trustee openly acknowledged having difficulty visiting the electronic discussion site regularly. She attributed this difficulty not to access or ability issues, but rather that her job did not require her to use a computer regularly. Building on the friendly rapport I had established with the group, I offered a chocolate fish as an incentive for her to make an entry in the on-line discussion. Peer support (or pressure) was evident from her colleagues who were keen to push for chocolate fish all round if they could get her established as a regular contributor! Despite good intentions from all parties, no entry was made in the forum by this Trustee.

8.3.3   Research Themes

The majority of the material in the following section is drawn from discussions which took place within the electronic forum. Hence the dialogue tends to be more reflective than less formal discussions at the face to face meetings.

Governance

The Board's perception of their approach to governance is consistent with many of the foregoing observations. In addition to identifying National Administration Guidelines/portfolio oriented activities (including the school's special character), discussion of the Board's approach to governance encompassed a range of areas from stewardship, to acknowledging the porous boundaries between governance and management, to comparisons with a Board in a business environment. "*It is the Board that offers the guidance and sets the boundaries, the beacon for the ship to follow and the compass points*". Being faced with the question "*what is governance*?" reinforced opinion among members as to how crucial a shared definition was when engaging in collaborative work. Several members, including the chairperson, suggested that the discussion be carried over to a face to face session so that consensus could be attained. From a research perspective it was great to see some of the multidimensional implications of a seemingly simple question are recognised. It is interesting to note how the chairperson felt the importance of the discussion required it to be carried over to a face to face discussion rather than remain in the electronic realm. Unfortunately, when this discussion was carried over, I was not in attendance to record the ensuing dialogue.

In addition to the 'tasks' associated with governance, there was also a recognition by Trustees of the processes, responsibilities and accountabilities – particularly to the school community and local parish. *"We all need to be mindful of who we represent as we come to the governance role, and the responsibility that lies with this."* Evidence of this was further acknowledged when the recent appointment of the principal was cited as an example of good governance *"We were thinking of the whole school community"*.

Purpose(s) behind the position of Trustee were acknowledged as one participant observed *"our role is in managing assets and resources in order to maximise the learning potential of each child in a special character environment"*. The Board's understanding of the balance between governance and management was articulated clearly through the statement: *"We need to initiate action – as we are not the action takers but can implement change through our principal and teachers"*. There was also a strong recognition that governance is ever changing – which itself highlights the value gained by the Trustees considering "what is governance?"

- ❖ *I think this is an excellent topic for us to discuss, and it is something we should consider every time we make a decision or vote about a particular topic/subject;*
- ❖ *As I spend [more] time as a Board member I find I am learning more about what is involved in the governance role.*

Community

Conversation among School C Trustees indicates community is a key part of their focus, with community recognised as encompassing staff, children, parents and the local parish. This is especially evident through their 'dreams'. For example:

- ❖ *…that information is freely available to the community of School C through the website;*
- ❖ *…positive interaction with parish, teachers, and the school community;*
- ❖ *…exploring how the school could be more of a community facility;*
- ❖ *I think developing use of the web is great…items of interest and consultation could be placed on the school's website…Links could also be provided for parish/diocesan issues and for developing awareness of faith and church matters where relevant.*

It is interesting to note that in spite of the observations noted above, when I inquired how the Board perceived links between community and governance, few ideas were forthcoming. Several Trustees seemed to see the two as being in close correlation but reasons for, or evidence of, this relationship were unable to be clearly articulated.

Technology

The readiness to adopt technology within School C's BOT has already been noted, as has the inclusion of technology within dreams for the future. Readiness should not be interpreted as unanimous acceptance however. While recognising the advantages email or web postings provide in terms of disseminating information to a large number of people relatively quickly and inexpensively, one Trustee took a definitive stand reiterating the need to maintain personal contact and that its value was not downplayed:

> *I know for a fact you are more likely to get people involved in school activities when spoken to or rung by phone. They also get to know a few more people while they are at it.*

Balance was acknowledged as a critical success factor in any decision to engage with the community through the implementation of ICTs:

> *It is really important that we…work hard to ensure that the faces of our school and parish remain 'real' and not just names on a screen. Having both (*web based communication and face to face contact*) will increase communication and awareness as well as retaining the community of our school.*

In terms of applications of technology as a means to enhancing governance, the BOT at School C identified a number of avenues, and were well on the way to implementing some of these by the close of 2003. Regular use of the electronic forum, as a means of discussing and reviewing issues and/or documents prior to the monthly meeting was seen by Trustees as an 'obvious' use, although it was recognised that decision making must remain in the realm of the public Board meeting to ensure issues of transparency are addressed. *"It doesn't cut out the conversation we might have there, but it helps inform that conversation"*. The use of email continued to grow

among Board members, with the principal estimating in February 2004, that almost 80% of their communication was electronic.

8.3.4   Summary

The strong Catholic foundation within School C and the influence these values and ideals accord governance and associated activities of the BOT was clearly evident throughout my involvement with the Board. This influence was reflected in issues of governance: *"I am opposed to* [issue under discussion] *...That would lead us to a situation of exploitation that would be in contradiction to our Catholic character";* and communication: *"...but we need to have face to face contact; whether it be at the sports ground or at school masses....";* through to dreams where *"assemblies with a liturgy performed by individual classes in the Church would give the school a real community feel."*

Participation by School C was the closest in following the 4D appreciative inquiry cycle, although even in this instance, the destiny phase was not completed. Meetings with the principal confirmed many of the dreams identified were already noted in the strategic and annual plans. Implementation of some ideas was already underway by the end of 2003, although it appeared to me that not all Trustees were aware of these efforts.

As was the case with School B, the issue of non-participation in the electronic forum must be considered further. A reality of participant driven research was reinforced strongly through the responses to my proposal of an electronic peer support network open to several BOTs. The blend of electronic forum and face to face discussions provided an opportunity to focus on the research process as well as the actual research questions. Building on the principles of appreciative inquiry and vocabularies of hope (Ludema, 2001), I asked Board members what implications they saw such approaches having on the governance process. The following responses provide not only an answer to my question, but I suspect sum up the attitude and approach taken by many Board members at School C:

❖ *Without sounding as if Board life is one happy, blindly led dream, I think that the ways in which problems are discussed and addressed indicate a willingness to listen, explore possibilities, evaluate options and support decisions – even though they may not be accepted by all individuals involved.*

❖ *I see this* [a positive approach] *as pivotal in me having motivation and purpose to being on the Board. If I considered that there was great negativity, criticism/ongoing attitudes and comments that knocked – then I would doubt my ability to be able to contribute much, or continue as a member. This approach is of course a team approach, and not only an individual one, so that I need to acknowledge the generosity and skills of all the Trustees, and the infectious positivism of our principal!*

8.4   School D

8.4.1   Background

School D is a small rural school just north of a city boundary. Established in the second decade of the 20th Century the school has a strong local culture. Despite its rural location, over 60% of the children come from the fast growing residential area in the north east of the city. The school has a decile 10 rating from the Ministry of Education, placing it at the top of the socio-economic scale. School D began 2003 with an air of uncertainty, due to a new school being opened a few kilometres away in the growing residential suburbs. These fears were allayed during the year as the school roll grew to a historical peak of 160 students. A new administration block was opened in 2001 to support the six classrooms and library facilities. Refurbishment of the library and establishment of an information technology suite are planned as the next stage of the school's site development. Despite several attempts by staff and Board members, the school has yet to establish a school web site. I was a member of this Board from 2000-2004.

8.4.2　　　Research Participation

In 2003 the school BOT comprised five parent representatives (two males, three females), a male staff representative, and the male principal. Despite my membership of this Board active research participation by my colleagues was not a foregone conclusion. As had been the case when meeting with any other prospective participating Board, a formal proposal was prepared, and a presentation made to the Trustees. I left the room to allow the group to openly discuss the proposal and any questions they may have. I returned to answer a few further questions, before the collective decision to participate was made.

In addition to myself, the other parent representatives came with a range of skills. Two were share-milkers (dairy farmers who under a contractual agreement provide labour and cows to a land owner), one is an engineer, and the other person worked part time as an office support person. Reflecting the close knit community of the school, two Board members are siblings and past pupils of the school. There are several close friendships among Board members that precede their Board appointments. All Trustees are of New Zealand European/Pakeha descent, and aged between 30 and 40. In response to a high turnover of Trustees since the 2001 election, all bar myself had been co-opted to the Board over the last two years. An attempt had been made to hold a by-election in 2002, but only one nomination had been received. Having the opportunity to contribute to their child's education and the development of the school was identified as a common motivation by all Trustees. While all had access to a computer at home, only one Trustee, (other than myself), reported that they used the computer regularly. Email was used by all Trustees as a means of communication, and two reported that they enjoyed "*looking up stuff*" on the Internet. The chairperson, a share-milker, used the computer and email "*only when I have to*", often with assistance from his wife. The principal was also an irregular user of information and communication technologies, relying instead on support from the school secretary.

In keeping with observations articulated by Bolak (1996), my role as an insider saw this stage of the research develop in quite a different manner to the previous cases described in this chapter. My role as an insider provided opportunities to consider additional contexts of relevance to this project, when the scheduled opportunities were 'derailed' owing to extraordinary circumstances. I was able to make observations and interpretations of events which happened across the whole of the Board's activity, not just during the formal, scheduled 'research sessions'.

School D elected to incorporate their participation in the research programme with their annual strategic planning and self review processes. To ensure that sufficient time could be allowed for the process specific meetings, separate to the monthly Board meeting, were scheduled. After an introduction to the concepts of appreciative inquiry (Ai), the Board gave agreement in principle to apply the Ai process to their strategic planning sessions. Specific questions targeting the use of information and communication technologies (current and potential) by the Board were included in the overall process to meet research requirements. Prior to the first session, I met separately with the principal and chairperson to discuss my planned approach. Consent was given that I could lead the entire session. The principal requested additional appreciative inquiry resource material that he could share with the staff. In addition to the handouts used during research sessions, I was able to give examples of school strategic plans developed using Ai, obtained from the Appreciative Inquiry Commons web site (http://appreciativeinquiry.cwru.edu).

Prior to the first session, I sensed concern from both male parent representatives on the Board regarding the intention within an Ai to not focus directly on problems. Agreement was reached with the Board that once the Ai cycle has been completed, we would hold a separate session to consider problems should they still believe that the process did not attend to any concerns (articulated as problems) they felt needed addressing. These additional sessions never eventuated, although the issue was discussed as part of a review session with one of the men commenting that he felt *"not enough problems came out"*.

The first session began with a brief introduction as to 'why' strategic planning and self review are important, before introducing 'how' we would embark on the process, i.e. the appreciative inquiry process. The discovery and dream stages were completed during the first session. Despite the uncertainty from the two men regarding the appreciative inquiry process noted above, initial analysis of the first session (see table 8.2 at the end of this section) highlighted to me that deficiencies in the current environment had been expressed e.g. dreams of *more* money and *more* community involvement.

The Board recognised and appreciated the good reputation of the school, as evidenced by a recent Education Review Office (ERO) report which included ERO staff observations and community perceptions obtained during an ERO/community consultation meeting. The history, tradition and strong community culture were recognised as assets and strengths of the school. Interestingly, the geographical location (rural school on outskirts of the city) was not directly acknowledged as a strength, yet while transcribing sessions I became aware of the birdsong which filtered through the windows during each meeting – suggesting to me that the location and it's tranquillity may at times be taken for granted by the school community. Reflecting the high socio-economic decile rating of the school, the principal was fairly confident that most pupils/families would have access to a computer at home. Despite this relative affluence the school was yet to establish an active website. A survey of the school community in 2003 saw less than 10% of families indicate that they would be interested in receiving the school newsletter via email rather than have a hard copy sent home each week with their child.

Staff and the Board were proud of the behaviour and achievements of students, both within the school and at external events such as interschool competitions. Community involvement, for example at family fun nights, the country fair, and attendance at school productions, was seen to be a key contributor to the school culture, yet concerns were expressed that it is "*always the same half dozen people*" who actually help make things happen. The Board and principal acknowledged that although tradition is important, they must come to terms with the changing nature of families and family life. Increasing commitments in a range of areas means that many people are unable to contribute to 'school life' as fully as they may wish to.

The position of principal of School D at the time of this investigation was described as a 'teaching principal', i.e. he must combine management duties with time in the classroom. While this teaching time helped maintain his relationship with the pupils and his 'hands on' awareness of curriculum and other professional issues, pressures of combining the two tasks into a limited time allocation were high. In a similar vein advantages (e.g. camaraderie) and disadvantages (e.g. a large number of responsibilities and tasks are divided among a small number of people) of having a small staff were acknowledged during discussions, as was the good relationship between staff and the BOT. Several Trustees remarked how their understanding of the teaching process had been enhanced through their Board activities and interaction with teachers.

A constant theme throughout the discussion was the tight financial situation and related pressures faced by the Board as a result of the decile based operational funding provided by the Ministry of Education. "*We know what our finances are and work within those constraints*". Frustration with the system was openly aired: "*This whole funding thing is wrong. How tight finances are!*" Although careful financial management on behalf of the principal was openly acknowledged and applauded, the Board appeared tired of the constant struggle and was beginning to explore options such as user pays programmes and foreign fee paying students which may provide funding for a wider range of programmes.

Feedback on the research process from the first planning and research session was very positive. Several Board members commented on the 'good' feeling they had afterwards, and the strong motivation they felt to get on with activities discussed.

> *To be honest, I really wasn't looking forward to the meeting. I am not really into all that research crap, but I came away buzzing, it was quite good eh?*

A second session was scheduled several weeks later to provide a recap of the ideas generated thus far, as well as begin to consider how the strengths identified may be built on to move forward (i.e. the design and destiny phases of the 4D appreciative inquiry cycle). Reminders about the meeting had been a timely prompt, as several people had forgotten it was scheduled. The staff representative was not able to attend,

and few people had read the notes distributed following the last session. The meeting was late starting. While waiting to begin, the discussion turned to a difficult issue the Board was facing. (This issue was driven by a disgruntled member of the school community and the Board would later find that this issue would dominate Board activity for the first half of the school year.) The discussion had a very negative focus, and the pressures of the difficult situation had a rather disheartening effect on all concerned. Despite my efforts to redirect the focus onto positive aspects, this disheartened tone continued to influence discussions once the planning/research session started properly.

Although the objectives for the session had been noted at the onset, discussion continued to lament the political, bureaucratic influences on Board activity, as well as the perceived lack of adequate funding and difficulties associated with tapping into alternative avenues of funding. Interpretations of recent changes to Ministry of Education reporting requirements contributed to a perception of disempowerment:

> It's pathetic. (We) dream up this big vision and say what we want, and you know, we can work it all out, prioritise it all, but (MOE) aren't going to give us the money to do it, we have to go somewhere else.

Even when alternative avenues of funding, such as foreign fee paying students, were discussed the tone of the discussion was such that the disadvantages were highlighted rather than the advantages:

> We've had discussions as a staff and we have quite strong reservations about the short term tenure situations.

I made efforts throughout the discussion to redirect the discussion, with a positive orientation, back to the task in hand – but to little avail. The principal seemed aware of the negative focus "*Sorry to get bogged down in this negativity but…*", as did one of the other members "*like it's no use, we could just sit here and moan about all the things we have to face, probably that's not going to be a productive activity*". Despite such observations, throughout the discussion the pauses and silences got longer. Although the session was held early in the evening, comments such as "*be quick – X's going to fall asleep*" sum up the 'flatness' and lack of enthusiasm I sensed for the session. When reflecting on the session I wondered if my role as an insider to the

process was a hindrance, was this was a case of 'process for process sake' (McLean & McLean, 2002) mixed with a sense of my colleagues perceiving a commitment to me by virtue of my position as an insider? Further reflection also indicates the need to consider how through critical and appreciative analyses legitimate anger and energy, produced within the research process, might be handled.

Following the second session, I noted in my field book "*some level of strategic planning may have been achieved but the appreciative inquiry cycle was not able to be sustained*" (Field notebook, 23 March 2003). This interpretation was reinforced during an informal discussion with the chairperson the following day, who observed the "*lack of fizz*" and how discussions kept going "*down and down*". We agreed that the differences in achievement between the two sessions were marked, with the chairperson commenting how the first session had been "*far more productive*". The chairperson noted his intention to continue to apply the "*up*" approach to Board activity, particularly in response to the disgruntled parent and related issue which had been the topic of discussion prior the second session beginning formally.

In an attempt to follow up on the observation of the differences between the two sessions, I sought feedback at the April Board meeting. Discussion at this meeting was not as full and frank as was typical, given the unexpected attendance of a parent from the school community. Comments that were fed back, confirmed my initial interpretations:

- ❖ *First one really good;*
- ❖ *Second one needed more structure;*
- ❖ *Not enough problems came out.*

It was generally agreed however that the discussion had identified enough points for the strategic plan to be drafted by myself and the principal. We had been delegated the task by the Board.

Three attempts were made over a period of two weeks in May for the principal and I to meet, to write up the strategic plan. In each instance the meeting was rescheduled due to 'more pressing issues', including the 'difficult issue' still lingering from the March discussions, as well as the behaviour of a special needs child. Such influences illustrated to me how governance may often be subsumed by more visible and hence

what may be perceived as more pressing issues. The open expressions of frustration by Trustees of their perceived mismatch of resources and aspirations opened a line of reflection for me. Are sufficient resources allocated to ensure effective governance of New Zealand primary schools? My reflections on this issue are developed in chapters 9, 10 and 11.

Table 8.2

Table 8.2

School D : Strategic Planning and Self Review

Discovery
What is School D doing well?
Examples shared:
- Country fair
- Sharing assemblies, run by senior students
- Team work between staff, between students
- Community involvement at events such as family fun night
- Productions
- Educational experiences our children have
- Good communication between staff
- Staff relationships with outside professionals e.g. RTLB
- Camp, e.g. opportunities to learn different things in a different environment
- Unity
- Respect
- Children encouraging peers at inter-school events
- Good things happen every day.
- Information evenings
- Open days

In terms of recurrent themes I see Education, Community, Staff and Values emerging… all consistent with the goals noted in the school charter. Together these contribute to the culture of School D

What are we as a Board doing well?
Examples shared:
- Moral and practical support, of each other and staff
- ERO visit
- Structures are in place to go beyond any one individual
- Team spirit
- Clean(er) toilets
- Well run finances, despite tight situation e.g. still able to employ cleaner, caretaker
- Seldom need to go into "In Committee" (in comparison to other schools)
- Historically there have been few serious breaches of conduct by Board members
- Facts are considered carefully, but there is little arguing, and usually reach a conclusion in unity
- Look at the bigger picture, don't get bogged down in all the small stuff
- Put school first, not ourselves or our children
- "Tomorrow" focused
- No loose lips to sink ships

- Professional approach
- Honesty/up front approach
- Handled the new school well - built on our history, culture and tradition
- People who attended the school as pupils are now on (or have been on) the BOT
- Improvements have been made in reporting of academic achievement to the Board
- The Board has a better understanding of the teaching process, and what is involved.

Our approach to the role of governance is the most consistent theme here, while the culture, history of the school is also acknowledged as valuable.

Dream

What would we like School D to look like/have in 5 years time?

- A new front fence
- Information technology suite and revamped library
- Year 7 and 8 in one class
- Bigger senior school
- Same quality (or better) teachers
- Same camaraderie – same school culture
- New room 6
- Bus shelter
- Maintenance plan followed
- Bike shed full of bikes
- Bypass completed, ensuring better safety and more parking
- Staff parking
- Safe environment
- Communication system linking classrooms (phones?)
- Maintained and enhanced academic achievement
- Good social mix for the children
- Growth, more classes, maybe 200-300 pupils?
- After school care established
- Master key system for the school
- More "career building" education (e.g. as required for year 7 and 8s)
- School web site
- Digital classroom
- More user pays services provided?
- More fee paying students?
- School as a specialist provider, e.g. night school? Resource centre for homeschoolers? Boutique school?

One of my first thoughts when trying to find themes in the above list is that we are focusing primarily on upgrading physical needs. **We need to remember to link back to our focus on student achievement as well**. The fact that the dream includes the same school culture that we have now is, I believe, significant.

How would you like to see the BOT in 5 years operating? What type of environment will they be operating in?
- More money $$$$
- Less problems
- Ability to be proactive, not bogged down in meeting accountability issues
- Stability
- Resourcing for employment of specialist staff, e.g. to provide a programme for special abilities children
- More professional development for staff
- More time/resources to support management team
- More responsive community
- More community involvement
- School has a good understanding of the social structure of New Zealand, even if we do not totally reflect it in our immediate population
- Economies of scale achieved for BOT and staff, slightly bigger BOT?
- More staff to share the workload

How might technology (mainly information and communication technologies) fit into these dreams?
- Technology is being forced on us anyway, e.g. Smart Charter
- Computers in IT suite
- Able to help us research the options, but concern that Internet is too time consuming to find information
- Sharing information with other Boards, e.g. sample policies
- Networking
- More communication channels to reach parents, e.g. Option of emailed newsletter
- Parents using computers – perhaps night classes in the new computer suite to build parents confidence with computers?
- School cell phone, e.g. for taking on camp, field trips, staff to use when off site during the day etc
- Telephones (or some other form of communication) linking classrooms
- ICT strategic plan needs revisiting
- Explore possibility of 'on-line' professional development for staff

8.4.3   Research Themes

Governance

The Board's approach to the role of governance shone through in discussion more than any 'formal' definition of what the process involved:

- ❖ *We take a careful approach, listen to all the facts, don't prejudge;*
- ❖ *Don't get stuck on personal issues.*

Generalised comments such as *"finance and buildings and things"* and *"a helicopter overall view of the school"* were consistent with information provided during Ministry of Education funded training which some Board members had completed the previous year. The importance of setting aside personal agendas and the need to be forward focused were well articulated by the chairperson as he observed:

> *All the members think the best for the school, not themselves, or their child or whatever, but it's the school, and it's not today, it's for tomorrow.*

Discussion around what governance involves tended to focus on the 'behind the scenes' dimension:

> *Running the school basically, but not in the day to day running of it, it's running the finances and things that need fixing up, the buildings that sort of thing.*

Decision making, strategic planning and the representation facet of the role were also acknowledged:

> *We're representing those other families and making some big decisions.*

There was a general perception among the Board that many in the community were unaware of what the Board actually did:

- ❖ *A lot of behind the scenes work;*
- ❖ *Until you are on the Board you don't really realise how much is involved;*
- ❖ *You don't realise until you come onto it what it is like;*

Perhaps the most telling comment was that *"it is a lot of work*!".

No mention was made of National Administration Guidelines (NAGs) until I introduced them to the conversation. Likewise, it was the principal who introduced discussion regarding the Board's role in student achievement, noting that reporting of this function was a particular area of improvement in recent years.

Challenges the Board had recently overcome were acknowledged as examples of good governance by all members, particularly the successful Education Review Office visit, despite a number of changes in Trustees; and the approach taken by the Board when a new school had opened relatively close to a significant part of the school population.

> *Things can be bigger than the individual, so if one individual drops off or whatever...the team is there, the team is there to carry on with the same quality.*

This team atmosphere, combined with a professional approach to the task at hand was openly appreciated by the chairperson.

Community

While community spirit was recognised by participants as one of the key strengths of the school, discussion also focused on the growing difficulty of maintaining parental involvement – particularly in light of changing family circumstances and the increasing number of families where both parents work full time. Community relationships in relation to governance did not really feature in the discussion, until I raised it. While the NAGs include requirements to report to the community on student achievement, as well as particular consultation requirements for Maori, I highlighted my own concern for the need for two way communication between Board and community.

8.4.4   Summary

As School D sought to include their participation as part of their annual strategic planning and self review processes, the discussions covered a wider focus than some of the other case studies presented earlier in this chapter. As with the other cases profiled in this chapter the 4D cycle of appreciative inquiry was not completed. However, the marked difference in tone between the two research sessions provided an excellent example of how language may be used influence a situation. The positive approach taken through the application of the appreciative inquiry cycle had a definite influence on the evening – as was noted by several participants. In contrast the negative tones which infiltrated the second meeting left many members feeling frustrated and unproductive – as was voiced by the chairperson the following day.

Changes in the school/community relationship, brought about by the changing dynamics of family life, have been recognised by the BOT of School D. Apart from when the research questions sought to specifically consider technology, use of ICTs were not a prominent focal point within the discussions. The main influence on discussion and decision making at School D is that which I term the 'Decile 10 mindset'. The school had struggled for many years with the pressures of what its Board and staff perceive to be an inequitable funding regime – and the influence of this constant struggle was never far from discussion, particularly in the discourse of the principal.

8.5   Conclusion

This chapter has described the participation of the four primary school BOTs who joined me in my investigation. Appreciative inquiry (specifically the 4D cycle introduced in chapter 7) was the main research method applied as we sought to identify applications of ICTs that may enhance BOT governance processes. None of the four participating Boards completed the 4D cycle. Participant driven action research practices saw additional areas of interest to Trustees emerge. Governance was considered more deeply, with possible ICT applications becoming a secondary focus for some.

Each BOT has been presented as a unique case study. Background information about each Board has been provided, as well as insights into their respective approaches to issues such as governance, community and use of technology. The summary of each case study has begun to identify areas which warrant further consideration. These observations are expanded in the following chapters; chapter 9 – Discussion of case studies and chapter 10 – Critical analysis of the appreciative inquiry.

Chapter 9
Case Study Discussion

9.0   Introduction

The first path of this PhD journey has included investigation of the emancipatory potential that applications of ICTs by primary school BOTs may have on their governance processes. With my analysis influenced by the lenses of critical theory and appreciative inquiry which I applied, I now recognise my early endeavours had a strong 'efficiency and effectiveness' focus. Emancipatory aspirations emerged as my understanding of the context faced by BOTs deepened. Current and potential ICT applications identified by participating Boards are discussed in this chapter. Key influences on the decision(s) to implement (or not) ICTs are also considered.

The reach of this investigation went beyond my original, somewhat functional, intent however. Having chosen to adopt an action research approach, participant influence on the research process facilitated the development of associated micro (i.e. individual school) level issues as the investigation progressed. As a consequence, a greater understanding of governance was gained by the participating Boards and myself. The dominance of fiscal matters, issues of resource dependency and power relations within the Board context emerged as areas for closer consideration within this chapter.

Emancipation, the aspiration of human well being, is a concept fundamental to Western democracies. Western governments, elected by vote, are not the only expression of democratic values of freedom and participation however. The institutional arms of the state are ideally further expressions of such values. In chapter 3 I discussed the government's stated intention of involving communities in decisions regarding the educational needs of their children. This involvement would take place through the election of representatives who would form a governing Board of each school. Devolution of power to BOTs (as representatives of their community) was a

stated intention of shifting school governance to a local level. Reported perceptions of the achieved outcome appear however, to be closer to concepts of decentralisation (Boston et al., 1996). Variations in perceptions of localised 'power' and 'community control' were evident across the Boards participating in this investigation, while at a pragmatic level observed outcomes within this investigation lead me to question the implications of volunteer governance on the individuals and organisations involved. The costs to Trustees and their schools in terms of time and financial resourcing suggest the ideals of democratic processes are far from idyllic for those involved! Examples and implications of experiences observed within this investigation inform my discussion of these macro (i.e. pertinent to all Boards and the wider community) concerns.

9.1 Observations from the research context

The tension Habermas (1984; 1987) identifies between the spheres of 'the lifeworld' and 'the system' was chosen as a lens through which to consider the interaction between BOTs and government. This chapter illustrates the prevalence of instrumental directives within the environments faced by the BOTs participating in this investigation. Generated from systemic requirements of the government, potential that these influences may have to 'colonise' the lifeworld of BOTs is explored. In keeping with the emancipatory aspirations of appreciative inquiry and critical theorists my intention was to make a contribution to both these fields of studies and the practice of BOTs. The micro and macro influences I have identified during my analysis paves the way for consideration of the extent to which instrumental approaches may enhance or diminish the values of democracy.

[Short term] financial security and the opportunity to perhaps serve a broader client base have been identified by Stone (1996) as advantages attainable by organisations who undertake to deliver services via government contract. However, it is disadvantages such as increased bureaucracy, loss of focus on the organisation's original mission, risk of resource dependency and loss of autonomy and control which are prominent in the literature reviewed (Salamon, 1981; Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Stone, 1996). Despite my attempts to invoke 'vocabularies of hope' within the research process, perceptions held by participating BOTs with regard to their

relationships with government generally appeared to mirror the negative perceptions identified in scholarship. Seemingly negative perceptions of relevance, bureaucracy and paper work associated with increased reporting requirements provided an interesting case in point within this investigation. Despite the Ministry of Education (MOE) prominently launching an electronic 'Thinking Template' in 2003 to assist Boards and principals meet new planning and reporting (charter) requirements, discussions I had with three of the four participating Boards revealed not one of them had used the resource. Not even the Board at School B, whose principal had been involved with the template launch as part of his MOE secondment used the resource. Feedback I sought suggests school leaders found the resource unhelpful and not suited to their needs. Instead, each Board chose to develop their own planning processes to meet the new reporting requirements. These actions appear consistent with those of other schools. Discussions with an MOE representative during the first phase of charter submissions in 2003 revealed many schools had chosen to submit their new charters in their own format. Further, most of these submissions were paper based, rather than electronic as had been hoped for by MOE staff.

It was suggested in chapter 4 that theories of stewardship (Axelrod, 1994; MacDonald, 1996) and trusteeship (Axelrod, 1994) may provide more insightful explanations into motivation(s) to serve on a not for profit Board such as a school BOT than the economically focused concepts such as agency theory (Eisenhardt, 1989a) often attributed to considerations of governance. Stewardship and trusteeship approaches consider the values individuals bring and apply to their interactions with others, which may in turn shape both governance processes and the activities of the organisation as a whole. Consistent with this suggestion, value driven motivations were expressed by Trustees from all four school BOTs participating in this investigation.

Evidence that community governance of their school is perceived as desirable is illustrated through the actions and motivations of several Trustees at School B. Despite their initial hesitancy, these members of the school community reported that they were motivated to become involved so as to avoid individuals appointed by the MOE taking control should an insufficient number of representatives be nominated/elected from the school community. The values associated with the special

character of School C were clearly evident as an influence on their decision making and governance processes. Trustees at School D reported the chance to put something back into the school as motivating factors influencing their involvement. The notions of amateurism and particularism identified in literature (Bates, 1990; Robinson et al., 1994; Salamon, 1987) were not evident within the range of Board interactions I was privy to. Well intentioned personal motivations also highlight how the risk of particularism remains a challenge to Boards however. There is always a risk of an individual seeking a place on the Board as a means of pursuing their own agenda. Acknowledgement by some Trustees at School D that their involvement is in part due to their desire to be involved with their child's education highlights how this threshold may be inadvertently crossed, by even the best intentioned individual.

Reflecting the functionalist orientation of training and resources made available to school BOTs through New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) and the MOE, as well as the prescriptive nature of much of the not for profit governance literature (Axelrod, 1994; Carver, 1997; Kilmister, 1989; Stolz, 1997; Taylor, 2000); all the participating Boards applied what literature describes as a prescriptive/policy approach to governance. Typically responsibility among Board members was allocated in accordance with categories predetermined within the National Administration Guidelines (see appendix 3). Differences were observed in the distinctions each BOT made between governance and management activities. School A seemed to have very tight, well defined boundaries, while Trustees at School C observed this demarcation to be somewhat 'porous'. While no Board observed their negotiated demarcation to be problematic, discussions suggested that some Boards had experienced difficulties in the area in the past but were now resolved. With all participating Boards appearing quite active in their overall approach to governance, Bush and Gamage's (2001) proposed continuum of governance activity might be better applied at the micro/individual school level. Such application better reflects how attention to various governance activities may vary within each Board setting. For example, finance was seen to dominate many discussions, often to the detriment of other governance activities such as policy and planning.

In contrast to suggestions in scholarship, culture did not appear to have a strong influence within governance activities generally or decisions regarding use of ICTs specifically. I observed little evidence of specific efforts to fulfil Treaty of Waitangi obligations, or specific National Administration Guidelines (NAG) requirements targeting the achievement of Maori students and reporting to Maori parents and caregivers. For example, when considering communications with community stakeholders (and possible ICT applications) specific needs and/or ideals of Maori parents and caregivers were not given separate consideration. It may be however, that since this area of reporting was not part of the research focus that specific NAG requirements could have been reviewed at subsequent meetings after the research concluded. Within the research discussions the parents and the school communities were typically presented and considered by participating Trustees to be a collective group rather than a collation of different cultures and ethnicities. Further, as described in chapter 8, School A which might be expected to have the greatest population of Maori students and families within its school community (given its decile 1 rating), identified specific issues regarding interactions with *all* families, not just Maori.

Applying the scholarship regarding community/government interactions discussed in section 3.2, and considering Coston's (1998) distinction in particular, I suggest the concept of 'third party government' better describes the situation faced by New Zealand primary schools and their BOTs than does 'contracting'. School Boards did not choose (or tender) to enter into a contract of service delivery with government. The structure under which they operate was imposed upon them as part of the series of social, economic, and political reforms instigated by successive New Zealand governments during the 1980s and 1990s. 'Contracting' implies a fair level of financial compensation for effort expended. As at May 2006, members of a school BOT receive an honorarium of approximately NZ$55 a month for their efforts. If the market perspective encouraged by the government reforms is applied, payment may be seen to reflect and/or acknowledge the time involved with governance activities, skills required and levels of responsibility allocated. This being the case, the current level of Trustee remuneration raises questions as to the 'market value' and 'perceived worth' government attributes to the efforts of Trustees.

Reports such as Wylie (1997a) incorporate the 'label' of decentralisation to describe the relationship between BOTs and government. Consistent with literature (Wylie, 1997a, 1999; Wylie & King, 2004), I observed principals' and Trustees' dissatisfaction with the increased workload, a workload some participants suggest is still growing. Codd's (1990) suggestion that dissatisfaction within the school community may be deflected from the MOE onto the BOT was illustrated through events which distracted the attention of School D's BOT during the research period. In spite of such examples, all the participating principals expressed their belief that few school leaders would be keen to revert to the administrative and governance structures which preceded the introduction of BOTs. These beliefs suggest that [some] benefits are perceived has having been attained from the changes to education governance and management which have taken place as part of the education reforms.

McCambridge's (2004) observation that not for profit Boards often fail to take full account of associated issues of power is evident in the apparent acceptance by BOTs of the decentralisation rather than devolution of control as envisaged in the initial documents outlining Tomorrow's Schools. Further in depth research is needed to consider more fully whether these limited perceptions of benefit and/or empowerment are restricted through an inability and/or unwillingness by government to devolve power effectively, as suggested by Argyris (1998) and Peters and Pierre (2000), or if (for reasons yet to be identified) Trustees have themselves been unable and/or unwilling to accept 'more power'. Issues of domestication by the state through media such as the use of standardised planning and reporting processes are akin to Habermas' concern for colonisation of the lifeworld and cannot be discounted. Actions demonstrated by participating BOTs may be seen as indicative of the imperatives of systems functioning identified by Kemmis (2001 p.96) where "people simply get on with the job" and in doing so may defer, diminish or distort aspirations such as mutual understanding and human flourishing. For example, deference with regard to use of ICT applications introduced by the Ministry of Education was illustrated through comments from Trustees such as:

❖ *We cannot escape from technology…*

❖ *…well it* (ICT) *is actually being forced on us, because the Ministry are increasingly doing everything electronically*

❖ *…practicalities say it* (interaction) *needs to be very much towards technology…*

9.2 Current applications of ICTs by participating Boards of Trustees

A variety of levels of application and potential for application of ICTs were identified within the investigation. Some groups, such as the School C BOT appear to be well on the way to using ICTs in a manner that supports governance activities, while others, such as the School D BOT were struggling and/or display little inclination to identify what/if enabling capabilities might be able to be achieved. Penalties associated with the non use of ICTs by community/not for profit organisations, as conveyed by Kirschenbaum and Kunamneni (2001), were not readily apparent to me. If any form of penalties had been experienced among the participating BOTs, they were not shared by participants.

Varying levels of familiarity with and use of ICTs by Trustees was evident to me. Participants did not always recognise their expertise. For example seven of the eight Trustees at School A reported using email (and indeed ERO had applauded the school for its efficient use of email in communicating with key stakeholders), yet only four equated this mode of communication as Internet usage or competency with ICTs. Differing perceptions as to what amounts to 'use of the Internet' raises some interesting questions. Has the use of email become so entrenched in our society already, that it is now seen as an 'everyday/common occurrence' rather than a 'specialised technological activity' or 'professional competency assumed (demanded) by government and employers'?

Applying a critical perspective, the apparent ease at which email applications may have been 'normalised' into the daily routines of many participants suggests an increased influence applications of technology now have on our patterns of communication. But are these applications emancipatory as per Flood's (2001) concerns? For example, do our choices (if we have a choice) to apply these technologies contribute towards our well being and/or further development of our potential? With geographical and time boundaries able to be overcome more easily through ICT applications, there is increased potential for communication outside ones physical location, potential even to redefine social boundaries (Habermas, 1992). Increased communications have in turn contributed towards increased recognition of multiple realities an individual may consider and need to address (Gergen, 1999b, 2001). The potential use of ICTs to empower some, while subjugate others signifies not only the variability of valence which may be attributed to ICT applications (Boeder, 2002; Loader & Keeble, 2004), but also the need to critically reflect on outcomes achieved.

Earlier in this thesis (during the literature review presented in chapters 3, 4, and 5), I expressed my frustration at, and concern for, deterministic tendencies which go unchallenged. Pre-determined categories may be applied unquestioningly, 'prescribing' expected reactions and responses. To this end, distinctions Trustees from School A perceived between email and the Internet may be a good thing, providing an appreciative platform from which to move forward! Stereotypical attitudes held regarding technology and/or the Internet, such as it is impersonal and difficult to use, may be more easily overcome if use of email is perceived to be a separate sphere of activity. New ways of knowing and thinking about email and technology may facilitate both new applications and increased awareness of implications arising from their outcomes, all of which might *begin* to have emancipatory potential *if* the decision to implement said applications is targeted towards improving the well being of users.

In addition to their frequent email communications between members, as the research period began Trustees at both Schools B and C were beginning to trial the electronic submission and review of Board documents. These electronic processes continued to develop throughout 2003, with the principal of School C estimating in February 2004 that nearly 80% of Board paperwork/communication had some electronic component. The willingness of Trustees at Schools B and C to experiment with new technologies was illustrated clearly by their decision to use secure electronic discussion forums within the research process. Trustees from both schools reported the forums to be beneficial, although each cohort utilised their facility in a different manner. The principal of School B encouraged Trustees to use the facility to complement planning processes already in place for upcoming school events, although this application had limited success. The remaining Trustees at School B used the forum primarily as a means of communication to address and discuss the research questions relating to this investigation. Given that they already shared a number of documents electronically, most of the Trustees reported feeling comfortable with the electronic communication channel.

In comparison, Trustees' at School C used the electronic forum to extend unresolved discussions from monthly meetings, as well as a forum to discuss and develop the research questions I posed. The benefits they perceived from the asynchronous process were verbalised during a face to face discussion during a monthly meeting:

> ❖ *It's got an audit trail….of the group thinking process*
> ❖ *It doesn't cut out the conversation we might have, but it helps inform the conversation…*
> ❖ *It allows time. I found it really useful…gave me time to sit and sort of analyse that a bit more…*
> ❖ *…without having to react!*

While both applications (planning and ongoing discussion) by these participating Boards have strategic implications, I suggest it is the ongoing discussion focus which best illustrates the strategic enabling applications envisaged by Burt and Taylor (2000); for this application illustrates ICTs applied as a medium rather than as a tool (as may be the case with school B's planning attempts). The extension of Board discussions in this manner could however also be seen as contributing further to a

Trustees workload, an area of concern highlighted in section 9.5. Strategic enablement may be perceived to be emancipatory within a BOT context to the extent that this activity not only contributes towards the long term planning for the school, but the reflective process may also help create a communicative space in which informed decisions are made purposefully and proactively rather than reactively and/or defensively.

Despite the apparent 'success' of the discussion forums used by Trustees at Schools B and C, not all Trustees of these Boards participated in the discussions. It is interesting to note differences in the patterns of non participation within the two Boards. In the case of School B, the two Trustees who I perceived to be the quietest at face to face Board meetings (one male, one female), were also the two who did not make an entry in the online discussion forum. Although one reported reading entries regularly, he said he never felt that he had reached the stage of having collected his thoughts together to the extent that he felt confident enough to respond to entries made by others. The remaining Trustee gave no reason for her non-participation. She had also been absent from several of the face to face sessions I attended during the research process.

In the case of School C, it was two of the more vocal participants in the face to face context who did not make an entry online. Both women had very busy jobs and attributed their 'absences' to not having regular/scheduled access to ICTs such as email and the Internet. While both had access (at home and at work), neither had a job that required them to spend long periods of time using a computer, and hence online interaction was described by both as something they 'never got around to'. These perceptions illustrate Loader and Keeble's (2004) warning that access should not be equated with use of ICTs. Providing a further contrast, several of the 'quieter' Trustees in the face to face meetings of the Board of School C were regular contributors to the online forum.

The observed differences between patterns of non participation in the online forums used by the BOTs of Schools B and C makes it difficult to generalise theory regarding any emancipatory potential such applications may have. It might be anticipated for example, that use of an online forum may facilitate 'ideal speech' as promoted by

Habermas. When language and interaction provide a balanced range of opportunities for participation an ideal speech situation is encouraged (Twiname et al., 2006). Hence, communication may be [assumed to be] better able to be achieved within the online forum as there may be [assumed to be] less dominant personalities to contend with than those which may occur within a face to face environment. Observations within this investigation illustrate however, no 'simple' explanations for patterns of interaction/participation are apparent. Rather, participation reflects a complex mix of personal preferences, perceptions and circumstances:

> *..you actually have to spend time doing it...you can have all these things on your computer...but if you are not giving what information you think...you have got to make sure that the people you want to do it are actually going to be participating...*

Participation, in turn, may influence the communicative space that is developed (or not). For example, the principal of School B was unsuccessful in his attempts to use the electronic forum as a communicative space that encouraged debate. In contrast, Trustees from School C were able to create a communicative space as their enhanced use of the forum facilitated and encouraged continued dialogue and debate of issues unresolved during the allocated meeting time.

The effects from individual circumstances and related perceptions of relevance as an influence on the uptake and application of ICTs are further illustrated by the limited current use of ICTs by Board members of School D. With neither the chairperson nor the principal particularly keen to use technologies such as the Internet and/or email, there was no influence from the Board leadership for Trustees to change traditional modes of communications such as paper based memos, and telephone calls. This level of (in)activity contrasts with the high level of electronic activity among Board members at Schools B and C, where the principals of both these schools were strong advocates of electronic communication.

The variation of levels of ICT applications exhibited across participating BOTs is indicative of the observations made by Burt and Taylor (2000) and Blyth (2002). Some groups, such as the BOT of School C appear to be using ICTs in a manner which supports governance activities, while others, such as the Board of School D, are struggling and/or show little inclination to identify what/if enabling capabilities might be able to be achieved. While market [system] driven, isomorphic forces and attitudes may be perceived to pressure schools to provide ICTs within classrooms (as identified by the Board of School D during their 'dream' session), there was no evidence that Boards felt similar market driven pressure to adopt ICTs within their governance processes. In contrast, efforts by the MOE to introduce electronic modes for communication and reporting might be seen as the government putting pressure on Boards to implement such applications.

9.3 The emancipatory potential of, and influences on, future applications of ICTs by participating school Boards of Trustees

Potential applications

Castells (1996) observes how the 'role' of the state may play a decisive factor in the decision to implement applications of ICTs. Thus, a school BOT who interacts with government at various levels might expect a range of influences to be directed at/on their actions. For example, potential for increased applications of ICTs by school BOTs appears to be encouraged by representatives from the Education Review Office (as expressed in their 2002 review of School A) as well as by MOE officials (for example through the development of resources such as the 'Thinking Template'). The computer census of schools undertaken by Kerslake (2001) has already been identified as a precursor to the MOE seeking to communicate electronically with schools, with stated intentions of "becoming more responsive" and "reducing the compliance burden on schools" (Kerslake, 2001, p.1). I interpret 'responsive' to be indicative of 'receptive, open, approachable behaviour which responds quickly to concerns', yet during the research period I observed no evidence of, nor did participating BOTs report, such activity with regard communications with the MOE – electronic or otherwise! Similarly comments from participating Trustees, such as

those reported in section 9.2, suggest issues of compliance are typically perceived as burdensome.

Although implications arising from the application of resources such as the 'Thinking Template' have not been discussed in the published literature, the implementation of this resource during the research period provides a timely example to consider. Impetus behind the new documents was an attempt by the MOE to extend BOT governance focus beyond finance and property issues to also encompass student achievement. Both MOE and NZSTA staff involved with the launch encouraged BOTs to consider the 'Template' and complementing 'Smart Charter' as a process for ongoing improvement, rather than a compliance task required by the MOE. An actuality was however, that all schools were now required to submit a revised charter to the MOE annually for approval. The potential standardising influence such resources may have, both in terms of format and content, should be considered more deeply. Rose (2000, p.1409) suggests "technological change makes our capacities more malleable". If ICT applications such as the Thinking Template are seen as an example of what Rose describes as 'instruments of political process', these applications may in turn be seen to contribute towards the development of 'responsible communities'. Domesticating influences such as these appear in direct contrast to the innovation and community empowerment anticipated by the proponents of market driven influences within the Tomorrow's Schools reforms (Smelt, 1998) and democratic enabling promoted by ICT proponents (Collins & Butler, 2002; Doczi, 2000).

The principals and Trustees at both Schools B and C were keen to continue using the electronic discussion forums after the formal research period had ended, but monitoring of these sites indicates extended use did not eventuate. The Boards at both schools underwent significant changes in membership following the 2004 elections, so it is possible that the new Trustees may have been too busy comprehending the many challenges before them to develop these networks. Alternatively, as per the discussion below, the new Trustees may have perceived little or no benefits from use of the forums. My involvement with participating Boards ceased early in 2004, as the Trustees began to prepare for the upcoming elections. I was not privy to information given to, or decisions made by, incoming Boards.

Building on the positive feedback I had received from Trustees at School C regarding the value of the online discussion forum, in the second half of the research period I raised the possibility of establishing a new online discussion site which could be opened up to Trustees from several schools in the area. My intention for this proposed site was to establish a form of network, providing a space for 'ideal speech' (Love, 1995) which in turn might reduce the occurrence of Trustees from one or more schools working on similar tasks in isolation. Synergy, capacity building, a better use of scarce resources, and peer support were among the outcomes I hoped for, similar in many ways to the collaborative ICT professional development cluster model for teachers presented by Ham (2002). The emancipatory potential of what might be achieved through this ICT application was quite clear to me at this point. I anticipated that attaining any (or some) of these outcomes would contribute to the well being and potential development of Trustees both individually and as a group.

As described in chapter 8, it was at this point in the research process that a 'reality' of participant driven research was amplified! Despite my own perceptions of emancipatory opportunities such as enhanced capacity, reduced isolation and networking, Trustee responses to the idea ranged from indifference to hesitancy and resistance. I chose not to express my surprise at the seemingly negative reactions to the proposed site to participants, for I was keen to honour their reactions and aspirations which emerged during the process rather than my own. Although silent, my surprise still influenced my early interpretations. I initially attributed this lack of confidence in interactions with Trustees from other schools to be one concerning 'quality' of discussion. Further reflection and informal discussion with others in the education sector provided another interpretation however.

Consistent with Fiske and Ladd's (2000b) observation of a decline in co-operation between schools, I began to wonder if what I perceived as a lack of 'confidence' might also be interpreted as a lack of 'trust'. Boards from neighbouring schools may find themselves 'competing' for students, which in turn influences funding levels. At various times, the Trustees of Schools A, B and C were all keen to be seen by others

as 'exemplars of best practice' (what ever that may be perceived to be)[1], yet they all seemed reluctant to share information with other Boards. The Board of School A appeared to be the most willing of participating Boards to work with other schools, and it is they who are least likely to need to 'compete' with other schools for students and/or funding. It is sad, indeed discouraging, to contemplate that principles of self governance within a 'market' environment may have reached the point that 'self' is taken too literally; that there is little room for networking and support amongst those who might under any other circumstance be considered to be like minded people.

Internal use of a discussion forum was seen by participants as helpful, while suggestions for expanded use to include Trustees from other schools were met with reservations and misgivings. The focus on internal communication took me by surprise when considered in terms of the organisational life cycle. All participating Boards were nearing the end of their three year term of office, and I had (incorrectly) assumed that modes of internal communication would have been well established by this time. In light of the forgoing, a potential application may be to implement internal discussion forums which complement monthly Board meetings; perhaps akin to the subcommittee structure used by many Boards. Potential for such an application was identified during discussions with School A Trustees, with the observation that while technology cannot recreate personal dynamics it may be able to support them:

> *…I do think there are a lot of things that technology can do to support that type of set up…discussion board forums, web based sorts of things like that could go a long way towards being a support for those sorts of decision making processes…*

As was the case with participation by School C, an online forum could provide a medium through which unresolved issues could continue to be debated in a more thoughtful and reflective manner. Such a format would provide a more formal record of the many informal discussions that often occur between Board members in between meetings. This format may also help open the discussion up to all Trustees rather than restrict it to those who may interact on an informal basis in between monthly

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[1] The desire to be perceived by others as an exemplar of 'best practice' was not as evident in my interactions with School D, but this may have been influenced by my role as an 'insider' within this phase of the investigation.

meetings. Online forums run as a complement to regular meetings might also help address potential difficulties concerning public access to Board meetings and decision making processes as identified by Ross (1998).

Trustees at Schools A and D identified a number of areas where implementation of ICTs might be useful to the Board, including use of the Internet as a research tool, compilation of an induction kit for new Trustees and use of software packages to inform strategic decision making. The knowledge base/information management properties of ICTs were recognised by these participants. Few of the Trustees at Schools A and D signalled any interest however, in refining how such resources could be of specific benefit to them, or how applications might be expanded to encompass a more relationship oriented focus which might facilitate communication with stakeholders.

Additional applications of ICTs with regard to enhancing governance activities for these BOTs may be able to be identified if the positive perceptions (e.g. 'closeness') attributed to ICTs when used to communicate with siblings and children (for example as identified by Trustees from School A during their discovery phase), are able to be carried over to Board activities. Patterns of email usage described by School A Trustees were consistent with that described in literature (Boneva & Kraut, 2002), yet these same individuals did not appear to perceive similar benefits from email communication amongst themselves. The early withdrawal of this group from the research process meant I was unable to discuss with Trustees why this may be the case, but general observations I made about Board process may provide initial starting points for further research. The increased formality I observed at School A BOT meetings, combined with the slightly older age of these Trustees and the reduced level of interaction with each other between monthly meetings could all contribute to a more formal perception of relationships between Trustees. Combined with the chairperson's openly acknowledged preference for face to face, interpersonal communication *"…a dream of mine would be to be able to relate personally, and work closely on a person to person basis, but the practicalities say it needs to be very much…towards technology…"* ICTs may be perceived by this group as a prescriptive mechanism of governance rather than as a potential/alternative medium for communication. Decreases in levels of formality may increase interaction through a

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variety of media. Hart (2002) encourages a focus on cultivating and enhancing relationships rather an emphasis on technology. Taking a traditional appreciative inquiry stance and focusing on the positive, in this case a refocus on cultivating relationships rather than the seemingly negative stance of avoiding or grudgingly applying technology may see the Internet and associated applications such as email become a 'communication and stewardship tool' (Hart, 2002).

The potential applications of ICTs identified in the preceding paragraphs are, I suggest, 'helpful' to BOT governance processes, but not necessarily consistent with the emancipatory intentions aspired to within this investigation.

> *I guess it (use of ICTs) becomes another tool, for those who are interested and who have the time to do so…*

Choices may be made to apply ICTs as described above with a view to 'streamlining' governance processes. Such action contributes to an outcome more akin to limited and limiting concerns for 'efficiency and effectiveness' than aspirations of improved well being and further development of one's potential. As we become increasingly focused on market driven indicators, we risk overlooking/overshadowing our concerns for the wellbeing of the people involved. The ability of individuals to make an active contribution towards achieving change may go unrecognised as equilibrium and change is seen to be established through normative influences such as capitalism and market processes. Emancipation requires more than the development of 'better' processes and mechanisms, and increased productivity. Thus, the mere intensification of the use of ICTs will not on its own ensure emancipation. It may be that the dynamic of compliance with state requirements is intensified, or that assumptions of assimilation are unintentionally extended across the school community. Consideration of community concerns and perceptions when deciding to implement ICTs (or not) will help ensure the focus supports people not just process.

Perceptions of relevance

Perceptions about relevance with regard to both content and activity appear to be a key influence in determining levels of activity and decisions made regarding current and potential applications of ICTs by participating school BOTs. Identification and acknowledgement of these influences honours the beliefs and interactions of participants during the research process; reinforcing the importance of human interaction and sense-making in information processing asserted by Boland (1987), and the valuative stance associated with the choice to use specific technology identified by critical theorists such as Feenberg (1996; 1999).

Concern expressed by Trustees at School C that any expanded online support forum including Trustees from other schools would need to be relevant to them personally as well as to what was happening in their school has already been noted. The participation and experience of Trustees at School B suggests however, that perceptions of relevance with regard to discussion content must be *maintained* if participation is to continue and to be rewarding for the individuals concerned.

> ❖ *There wasn't much new in there [in the online forum] so I sort of logged out again*
>
> ❖ *…but if things are not happening it becomes not relevant to me…it would be relevant to me if we were all doing it…*

These perceptions of relevance begin to illustrate Marcuse's (1978, p.138-139) portrayal of technology as not only a "mode of organising and perpetuating social relationships" but also a "manifestation of prevalent thought and behaviour patterns" and "an instrument for control and domination" as discussed in chapter 5. In this instance, without perceptions of continued relevance it would appear that participation in complementary activities such as the online discussion forums may be perceived as onerous and potential inhibitors to governance activities of volunteer trustees, rather than the strategic enablers suggested by Burt and Taylor (2000). As will be discussed further in section 9.5, I suggest there may be a fine line between perceived motivations of enablement and less altruistic intentions.

Resourcing

Resourcing was seen by several participating Boards to be an important influence on their non adoption of ICTs to enhance governance processes. The full impact of this issue was illustrated during the design/destiny phase of the appreciative inquiry cycle which contributed to the discussions with School A's BOT. When encouraged to identify aspects from the dream phase that the Board might like to work towards turning into a 'reality' (i.e. the design phase of the 4D cycle) the chairperson made a seemingly blunt but pertinent observation:

> *Dreams are shackled by costs and practicalities....*

He suggested there was little point spending time on such plans as limited resources would typically prohibit their enactment. Similar frustrations about a lack of funding from the MOE and its detrimental effects on strategic planning were expressed by a Trustee from School D:

> *(We) dream up this big vision and say what we want, and you know, we can work it all out, prioritise it all, but (MOE) aren't going to give us the money to do it, we have to go somewhere else....*

School A and School D are situated at the opposite ends of the decile range implemented by the MOE for the allocation of operational funding, labelled as decile 1 (i.e. lowest socio-economic demographics so perceived to have the most need for funding) and decile 10 (i.e. highest socio-economic demographics so perceived to have the least need for additional funding) schools respectively. That the Boards at both these schools should express frustration and difficulty with regards to funding raises serious questions about the level of financial support given to public schools (through their Boards) in New Zealand by the state, and reinforces funding concerns highlighted in Wylie and King (2004). Compliance and a form of 'acceptance' of this control is exhibited across New Zealand through the numerous fundraising activities BOTs and their communities undertake each week to compensate for these financial shortfalls. Suggesting a form of emancipatory constraint, in terms of Kemmis' (2001, p.97) discussion of Habermas and colonisation of the lifeworld, this lack of resourcing can be seen to illustrate system imperatives colonising the lifeworld of participating BOTs.

Principals have already been identified in this chapter as an influencing factor on a Board's (non) adoption of ICTs. This influence may also extend over resourcing decisions. The BOTs at Schools B and C were far more open to the idea of using ICTs within governance processes than were the Boards of Schools A and D. Boards at both Schools B and C were already trialling electronic communication between Board members in some format, and were keen to trial the online discussion forum. In both instances the principals of these schools were strong advocates of the advantages ICTs can provide and were identified by their Trustees as driving forces behind the Board's decision to adopt ICTs:

- ❖ (Principal) *is sort of driving the use of email*
- ❖ *Until* (Principal) *came along I had never had an email related to school Board work*
- ❖ (Principal) *uses email a thousand fold more than its ever been used in this school before…*

It may be that the positive approach towards the use of ICTs displayed by principals of Schools B and C has a legitimising effect. Applications of ICTs may appear 'more relevant' to their respective Trustees generally, with the potential result that resources (e.g. time, money) allocated toward ICT implementations assisting Board activities may be perceived by Trustees as justifiable. Continuing this line of thought, should the attitudes and approaches towards ICT applications at a governance level displayed by principals at Schools A and D have a similar influence on their fellow Trustees, these Trustees might be expected to be more (or less) reluctant to allocate scarce resources in this manner.

Leadership

The attitudes of leaders was identified in chapter 5 as a key determinant in the decision to adopt ICTs within not for profit organisations. The potential for difficulties to arise was noted in organisations where there may be more than one leader, and hence differences between attitudes towards ICT adoption (Berlinger & Te'eni, 1999). As the educational leader of the school the principal undoubtedly makes an important contribution to Board processes (Wylie, 1997a). However, the ability of the principal to influence or even direct the method(s) by which the Board

communicates raises some interesting questions about power relations within the Board.

A Trustee at School B perceived value in the new methods of electronic communication introduced by their principal:

> *I think it (email communication by principal) has been invaluable. I know of people whose lives are really busy and can't get in, and it's a way of (principal) canvassing people. I think one of the most invaluable things (principal) has done has been the daily, weekly, communications with Board members who often from one meeting to the next would not know (other than via their role as parent) what was going on in the school. I think it has been invaluable, and it can't happen any other way, I don't think, that sort of communication...*

Choices made regarding information systems contribute towards the creation of a 'new' organisation reality (Lyytinen, 1992). Use of electronic communication by the principal may allow them to 'schedule' communication to times convenient to them. It also provides a means by which to reduce (and even eliminate) aspects of uncertainty and/or the unknown which may emerge in face to face communication. Similarly, subsequent responses and any actions which may be generated from the communication may be more easily 'managed'. The potential domesticating influences of such scheduled communication is evident as a Trustee remarks:

> *(Principal) uses email a thousand times more than it has ever been used in this school before. Everything, our staff agendas and whatever, is sent through the email, so it is becoming something that I do much more routinely...*

By providing a new channel for interaction, an online discussion forum such as that used by Trustees at Schools B and C provides a fixed and consistent means through which Trustees may "make sense of the organisation's mission, environment and operation, thereby shaping management attention"(Lyytinen, 1992, p.163). Trustees at School C reported the online forum useful for these very reasons:

> *...it doesn't cut out the conversation we might have, but it helps inform the conversation....*

Yet critical theorists such as Lyytinen suggest such a static medium may be detrimental, as it may "marginalise more hazardous, spontaneous and intuitive forms of organisational sense making, leading to a more unified management 'world view'" (Lyytinen, 1992, p.163). From a social constructionist perspective, communication is a significant part of organisational processes, and hence may be central to perceptions of democracy (Wellington, 2005). Maintaining a critical perspective, it then seems pertinent to consider whether the enthusiasm for the online forums promoted by principals B and C, was in part related to this marginalisation of sense making? In addition to applying ICTs as a means to restrict and/or influence communication response times, a dominating principal may influence the BOT's perception of the school community, or possibly even apply ICTs as a means of communicating directly with the community – potentially removing the BOT from the communication cycle. Framed in terms of Habermas' lifeworld and system spheres, dominance obtained by virtue of the principal's 'formal power' could be seen as an imperative from the system, inhibiting the patterns of undistorted communication and sense making sought within the lifeworld (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p.90).

The potential a principal may have to influence communication channels, as illustrated through the actions of the principals of Schools B and C within this investigation, indicates an area which may potentially be 'glossed over' in the training provided to community Trustees. It is also an area worthy of closer scrutiny by scholars of not for profit governance. Gane and Johnson (1993) build on Foucault's concept of power as a relational influence. As such power is not something which may be 'possessed', but rather a tension – the balance of which will alter according to how activities are undertaken. Hence, does power exercised by the principal in this manner in turn influence other areas of decision making and other Board processes? If so, is the ability/power to make localised decisions really in the hands of the elected community representatives? Or does the Board structure merely provide a convenient façade which promotes ideals of community accountability, but instead may provide cover for the strong will of one individual- in this case the principal? Building on this concern, it is appropriate that an additional outcome of this participant driven action research investigation was the achievement of a deeper understanding of the processes of governance by all involved.

9.4   Deeper understanding of governance

While the anticipated focus of this investigation was to investigate the emancipatory potential that applications of ICTs may have on school BOT governance processes, the emergent processes of the research also allowed participants to explore other areas of interest more deeply. As such, a deeper understanding of governance was developed by all involved. This tangential outcome was perceived by some participating Trustees to be the most beneficial outcome of the investigation.

A key contributor to this outcome was the direct focus on what each participating Board perceived governance to be. *"What is governance? What does it mean to this Board?"* I had initiated these questions in recognition of my social constructionist epistemology informing the investigation. Consistent with this framework, I anticipated each Trustee to bring a unique mix of influences and beliefs to their approach to Board activities. As such, I expected each Board to have its own 'flavour' of governance which it sought to apply, and any efforts to enhance this approach would be unfounded without first identifying and understanding perceptions of the task at hand specific to each Board. The significance of this initial question to the overall investigation became apparent when Trustees at Schools A and C both took (unscheduled) time within their Board meetings to consider their understanding of governance.

> *This is an excellent topic for us to discuss and it is something we should consider every time we make a decision or vote about a particular topic/subject.*

The interest Trustees at Schools A and C displayed with regard to this topic is consistent with the professional development motives both Boards identified when deciding to participate in the research process. Prompted by my having notified them of the proposed research questions in advance, Trustees at School A initiated an impromptu discussion prior to my attendance at the monthly meeting. Similarly, a range of definitions were posted within the electronic discussion forum by Trustees at School C. In this instance, the recently appointed chairperson was keen to develop a shared definition and suggested the discussion be carried over to a face to face session. From a research perspective it is encouraging to see that some of the multidimensional implications of a seemingly simple question are recognised.

Although it was left unexplained, it was also interesting to note the perceived need by the Board of School C for the discussion to be carried over to a face to face environment rather than continue within the electronic space. Unfortunately for me, I was not present when the ensuing discussion occurred at either school.

Saidel (1991) emphasises that resource flows between the state and contracting not for profits may take many forms, including information, legitimacy, access, support and revenue. In spite of this potential variety, the dominance of fiscal matters over other activities, as identified by Stone (1996), was evident across all participating schools - particularly Schools A and D. Limited finances and the subsequent restrictions to resourcing undoubtedly influenced perceptions of limited empowerment as resource constraints were seen to limit the ability the Board had to implement plans.

> ❖ *We know what our finances are and (we) work within those constraints*
> ❖ *This whole funding thing is wrong. How tight finances are!*
> ❖ *Dreams are shackled by costs and practicalities*

With Schools A and D being at opposite ends of the decile and hence operational funding scale, these perceptions seem to contradict Saidel's (1991) suggestion that the power of state agencies over non profit organisations equals the dependence of non profit organisations on the state for resources (Saidel, 1991, p544). Instead, the following observation by Alexander and Weiner (1998, p.227) is supported:

> Competitive and resource pressures on a nonprofit organisation increase the inertia in governance because they impose immediate short term demands on the organisation and the Board and divert attention from innovative change.

As I observed in chapter 8, School D had struggled for many years with the pressures of what its Board and staff recognise to be an inequitable funding regime. The influence of this struggle was ever present in discussion and decision making. Empowerment was not readily perceived by Board members, with this perceived limitation reflected in their conversations. When encouraged to adopt 'vocabularies of hope' i.e. positive discourse, during the appreciative inquiry process, the Board of School D struggled to have anything 'positive' to say about the MOE and/or its decile based funding allocations. Not having anything 'good' to say about this power source,

led Trustees to recognise the need to change their approach - from one of semi-paralysing dissatisfaction, to a more proactive stance publicising the challenges imposed upon them. This change of mindset proved to be a turning point for the Board and principal and was carried over to the new Board following the 2004 elections. The knowledge gained through this new perspective has emancipatory potential as Trustees may begin to challenge some of the domestication influences identified in this discussion.

Participating BOTs appeared to have 'accepted' a decentralisation of power, rather than the devolution of power to the community promoted as part of the Tomorrow's Schools reforms. Statements by Trustees throughout the investigation suggest at times that that they do not perceive themselves to be overly powerful. These perceptions support McCambridge's (2004) premise that not for profit Boards often underestimate the power available to them. I observed earlier how the patterns of governance exhibited by BOTs participating in this investigation reflected the prescriptive, portfolio based approached to governance often described in literature (Axelrod, 1994; Carver, 1997; Kilmister, 1989; Stolz, 1997; Taylor, 2000). Growing realisation of the influence of the state was identified by the principal of School D when he remarked (but did not elaborate further):

> *I believe there are a whole lot of underlying political issues associated with how a school performs…*

These observations raise concerns regarding the extent to which Boards may be domesticated by the state rather than empowered. Again, Kemmis' (2001) application of Habermas' colonisation of the lifeworld provides a useful background to this issue. Here we see Trustees increasingly defining themselves, their activities, and potentially their aspirations (this will be considered further in chapter 10) in terms of the language of the system. When "saturated with a discourse of roles, functions and functionality" Kemmis (2001 , p.97) proposes relationships and interactions may be reshaped in a manner that represses the well being and developmental aspirations of the lifeworld.

As the research progressed, Trustees at several meetings I attended began to vocalise their realisation that governance extended beyond the confines of the formal monthly agenda:

❖ *As I spend (more) time as a Board member I find I am learning more about what is involved in the governance role*

❖ *A lot of behind the scenes work*

❖ *Until you are on the Board you don't really realise how much is involved*

❖ *It is a lot of work!*

In particular, a Trustee at School A recounted his reflection of his experience when he arrived early for a meeting which had been held within one of the schools classrooms. He articulated his growing understanding that governance *is* interaction, and that interaction requires open communication:

While we were sitting there a boy whispered to his teacher 'Who is that? What are they here for?' The teacher said we were the Board of Trustees and (explained) who we are and what we do. So there was communication taking place. Then the Mother came in again and I heard her say how well her boy was doing…because if he hadn't been here he would never had had the opportunities, he was (no longer) isolated. I said to the teacher that it is good for a BOT to hear that (our) school is achieving those sorts of things, and that's (the importance of) communication, even if it wasn't really official communication, you pick it up.

Building on this broader understanding, Trustees also began to articulate this awareness through a lexicon that was not as tightly aligned to the discourse of roles and functions:

❖ *We all need to be mindful of who we represent…and the responsibility that lies with it;*

❖ *We need to initiate action – as we are not the action takers but can implement change through our principal and teachers;*

Recognition that governance reaches beyond the formal monthly meetings to *all* interactions between themselves and their environment (including government, parents, and students) is an important contributor to Trustees developing knowledge and their subsequent actions, as well as an important contribution to the maintainence of a democratic society as expressed through its constituent organisations. Such recognition is consistent with Nobbie and Brudney's (2003) suggestion that a thoughtful, deliberate process which encourages Board members to closely examine processes of governance may be helpful to the group. In this instance however, the approach taken was reflective rather than Nobbie and Brudney's (2003) prescriptive, policy oriented application; suggesting reflective action research approaches such as appreciative inquiry as applied within this investigation may be beneficial to developing Board process.

While the preceding comments by participating Trustees begin to identify the comprehensiveness and enormity of governance, they still do not identify specific related activities associated in not for profit governance literature such as boundary spanning (Earley & Creese, 1999; Middleton, 1987) and strategic planning (Middleton, 1987). Just as earlier discussion highlighted how access to technology should not be assumed to be equated with engagement, identification of activities associated with governance does not ensure participation in the same. The limitations of this investigation being restricted to what Argyris and Schon (1996 (1978)) and Reason and Bradbury (2001c) describe as a single loop of inquiry start to become evident at this point. I believe it would have been valuable to all concerned had I been able to revisit some of the additional ideas and frameworks presented in literature with the participating Trustees. With Trustees currently guided by the strong functionalist orientation of NZSTA and Ministry of Education training materials, I believe the introduction of some of the social constructionist approaches to governance profiled in chapter 4 may help Trustees both deepen their understanding of, and enhance their approaches to, governance.

Applications of different theoretical lenses to existing frameworks, may assist us identify that which is limiting rather than enabling (Reason & Bradbury, 2001c). Habermas' (1984; 1987) concepts of the lifeworld and system have been applied frequently in this discussion as a means of conceptualising the interactions between BOTs and their environments. At a practical level, I suspect frameworks such as those suggested by Inglis, Alexander and Weaver (1999), Miller-Millersen (2003) and Plumtre and Laskin (2003) may be welcomed by many not for profit Boards (including school Trustees) who struggle to fill functional roles. Meaningful clusters of activities may help Boards focus on mission oriented approaches to governance and facilitate relationship dynamics such as the democratic value of participation, rather than constrain and restrict activities within portfolios. Although the more open, fluid approach to governance promoted by Bradshaw (2002) may take some school Trustees out of their functionally influenced 'comfort zones' the additional insight and flexibility facilitated by this approach may be both beneficial and meaningful to Trustees. When I introduced Bradshaw's (2002) approach to governance to a Leadspace[1] discussion on governance, several participants expressed interest in and appeal for the approach (Grant, 2005a). Governance reframed within the metaphor of a 'story telling entity' becomes the process of questioning, challenging, testing and refining the organisation story (Bradshaw, 2002). This paradigm would encourage Trustees to engage in critical reflection and proactive behaviour, attributes often overshadowed within the functionalist, accountability driven formats promoted within the New Zealand education sector.

The influence of the principal on the adoption and application of ICTs within Board processes was identified in section 9.3. Such influence could be seen as indicative of the increased power attributed to a CEO of a not for profit organisation contracting with government observed by Smith and Lipsky (1993) and Stone (1996). From a micro perspective, I saw little evidence of total principal domination in any of the Board meetings I attended as part of this investigation. Rather, respect Trustees held for their respective principal and the experience and knowledge each principal contributed to Board activities was illustrated through comments such as:

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[1] Principal's electronic forum discussed in chapter 5.

I am sure it would be a lot harder without the leadership provided by a highly competent principal and staff Trustee.

The focus on leadership within this statement reinforces my concern regarding the influence of principals at the macro level however. As noted in chapters 3 and 4, consistent with purported efforts to empower local school communities, the position of chairperson of a school BOT must not be held by the principal or staff representative, but rather one of the elected representatives from the school community. One might assume the role of chairperson is synonymous with that of leader, yet the foregoing suggests a duality in leadership often occurs.

Application of agency theory may suggest relative power distribution between the BOT and CEO (in this case the principal) may be influenced by both the ratio of inside:outside trustees, and the separation of CEO and Board chair roles (Miller-Millesen, 2003). The extent to which Board members may be 'passive' or 'active' is also influenced by their perceptions of how the Board 'should function' and what 'role' they 'should' play in strategic decision making within the organisation. Demographic and processional features of the Board are suggested as possible influences on the perceptions (Golden & Zajac, 2001). "At the heart of these concerns is whether the Board of Directors [Trustees] is an effective control mechanism or simply a rubber stamp for management initiatives" (Miller-Millesen, 2003, p.531).

Framed within the foregoing structural/functional perspectives, the concept of power as a relational influence (Foucault, 1980) may be overlooked. With school BOT structure prescribed by statute, consideration of power relations between the Board and the principal may seem irrelevant to some. Yet it is *because* of this legislative requirement that the issue is an important area for consideration. Although the Board may draw on the principal's expertise and knowledge, Trustees must be wary of allowing their legal, moral and social responsibilities to be diluted or co-opted by overdependence (Gibelman et al., 1997). While dominance by the principal may not equate to domestication by the state, such domination may still lead to unquestioned acceptance of power influences contrary to the community based ideals promoted by the Tomorrow's Schools education administration reforms. High profile media coverage throughout 2004 highlighted several instances of alleged principal

domination within New Zealand secondary schools, which in turn seriously affected the focus and perceptions of credibility within the schools, pupils and wider communities involved (Larson, 2004; Welch, 2004).

The job of a school principal is a busy one. Wylie (1997a) reports 'educational leadership' to be the most important part of the principal's position. In recent years, principals have reported having less direct teaching involvement and/or work with teachers than they may have done previously; and more involvement with planning, facilitation, motivation and resource provision. Despite the formal status of the BOT as the employer of <u>all</u> staff (including the principal), Wylie (1997a) observes principals as perceiving their leadership activities as providing guidance, advice and motivation for teachers *and* community BOT representatives. Illustrating the processional influences identified by Golden and Zajac (2001), the de facto focus of the principal, combined with the heavy workload experienced by both principals and community Trustees may have unintentionally skewed the power relationships envisaged by Lange (1988; 1999). Dominance of opinion by a principal must be guarded against if the community empowering ideals of Tomorrow's Schools are to be realised. The possibility that an ad-hoc delegation of power from chairperson to principal is gradually occurring across school BOTs in response to the principal's 'paid' and 'on-site' presence must not be discounted. In depth ethnographic research may assist in deepening our understanding of this phenomenon.

Reflection

Although my reflections on my involvement in the research process are described more fully in chapter 10, this discussion on the deeper understanding of governance developed within this investigation would be incomplete without also identifying my own progress in this area. At a personal level, my attendance at a number of Board meetings for schools across the decile range proved to be an insightful experience. With my own three plus years experience on the BOT at School D, combined with my scholarly interests, I felt reasonably confident that I had a fairly good understanding of the challenges faced by Trustees. I soon became aware of the limits of my experience and how, consistent with Gadamer's (1975) concept of pre-understanding identified in chapter 2, this awareness in turn had been influenced by circumstances specific to School D. While many issues raised on monthly agendas were similar in

intent (e.g. finance) they were manifest across the Boards in a multitude of ways, with each requiring a unique response. My involvement with these Boards reinforced the multi-dimensional manner in which a Board's approach to governance is socially constructed, influenced in turn by values and actions of individual Trustees. The depth of understanding I gained from these observations far outreached any formal school Trustee training session I have attended. As such, I would recommend that any Trustee who has the opportunity to attend another school's Board meeting do so...however the issues of trust and competition identified earlier in section 9.3, in combination with the already heavy workload of Trustees discussed below, may make this suggestion difficult to implement.

9.5   Where to from here?

Indirect, but telling comments throughout the research discussions highlight a growing awareness by participating Trustees of changes in the relationship between the community and school as well as the activities of governance in general. The changing nature of local school governance since its inception in 1989 was alluded to by the chairperson of School B who had returned to the Board after a five year absence:

> *massive changes...so many changes that I was thinking old style, and I had to rethink the whole thing...it was very different, very different.*

Observations such as it is "*always the same half dozen people*" who make things happen illustrate the principal and Board of School D coming to terms with the changing nature of families and family life. Increased numbers of working and single parent families appear to have contributed to a drop in the level of community participation within school hours in recent years, and participating Trustees report these trends are making it increasingly harder to attract volunteers for school activities outside of school hours as well. The impact of this decline on traditional events such as fundraising gala days and working bees may in turn lead to decreased activity and interaction in the wider school community. This decline in the ability and/or willingness to 'donate' ones skills and time to the school has serious implications for the ongoing development of school Trustees, as implied through the cartoon featured

in figure 9.1 (Scott, 1992). These circumstances suggest the concept of a 'responsible community' identified by Rose (2000) as an outcome sought/promoted by proponents of third way policies may not be easily achieved.

Figure 9.1

The 'responsible community'?
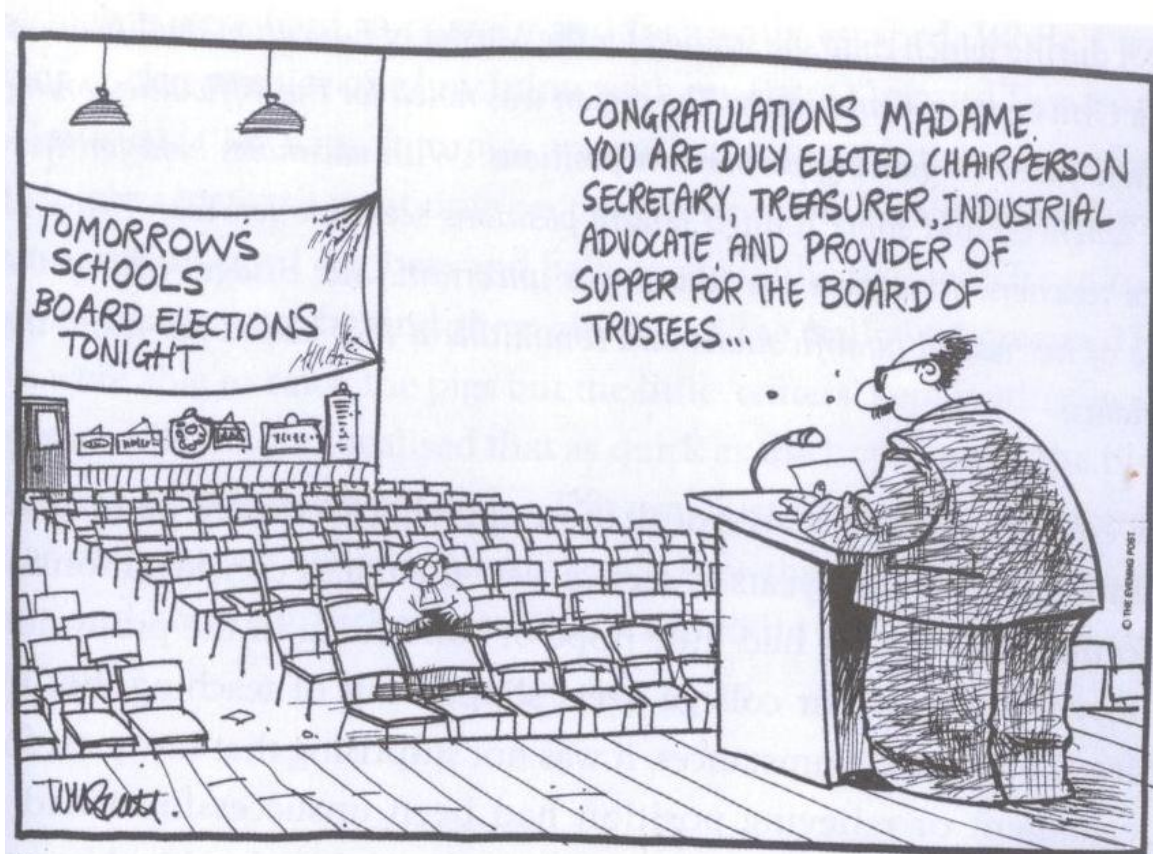
Source: Alexander Turnbull Library. Reproduced with permission.

The heavy workload experienced by Trustees participating in this investigation was frequently acknowledged, echoed with perceptions of a lack of time to prepare adequately for meetings. Consequences of this limited time exhibited during the research process included 'forgotten' meetings, little or no preparation before meetings and 'fire - fighting' activities where more high profile and seemingly more 'urgent' management tasks saw planned strategic planning activities shelved for (yet) another day. Outcomes such as these appeared to almost be accepted by Trustees as 'normal':

...we have come up with a system of distributing reports in a fast and efficient manner but we still need to be organised ourselves to get them done in time!

The implied 'acceptance' of resourcing constraints by some BOTs raises concerns about the extent to which Board processes may reflect domestication by the state rather than any form of empowerment. Indeed the above statement also raises concerns regarding potential for 'self domestication.' Evidence of normalisation/domestication can be seen in how the dreams of some participants were expressed within the 4D process. Many of the dreams identified by the BOT of School D (see table 8.2) focused on the physical environment of the school, rather than interaction with stakeholders. These dreams when combined with the pertinent observation by the chairperson of School A's BOT that "*dreams are shackled by costs and practicalities*" illustrate Kemmis' (2001) claim that aspirations may be defined within the context of the system. Democratic ideals such as equality, participation and freedom may subsequently be constrained if these forms of domination continue.

The dominance of financial concerns within some Board meetings raises questions about the ability of not for profit Boards (particularly those comprised of volunteer Trustees such as school Boards) to give the required attention to other dimensions of governance. An already overextended capacity may see activities such as strategic planning and boundary spanning be 'shelved' as more immediate tasks at hand demand attention. Reduced levels of engagement with stakeholders such as the community due to the dominance of financial issues are a particular concern. Reduction in internal processes of democracy may occur, potentially weakening processes such as participation and accountability.

If the concept of partnership (however fuzzy definitions of the concept are) alluded to both within the documents supporting the establishment of school BOTs (Lange, 1988; Picot, 1988) and the current environment of 'third way' initiatives is to prevail, then the expectation that partnerships accord rights and responsibilities to *both* parties does not seem unrealistic. Community accountability is a two way process. Just as elected community representatives such as a BOT must be seen to be accountable to their many stakeholders (such as parents, children and staff of the school), so too

should the government be accountable to the community. Both levels of accountability may be achieved through processes of democracy. Adequate resources are needed to ensure the processes purportedly placed in the care of the community are able to develop. This observation generated from this research is not novel. Fiske and Ladd (2000a) suggest those associated with the education reforms underestimated the extent to which self governing schools required continued support from the state.

The vast time commitment Trustees make to school governance has been illustrated repeatedly throughout this investigation, and is consistent with observations made by Wylie (1997a; 1999). Wilson (2003) suggests volunteers in general and Trustees specifically across the community/not for profit sector are facing an increased workload, particularly with regard to 'paperwork'. Billis and Harris (1992, p. 218) report "those whom voluntary agencies most wish to attract tend to be deterred by the amount of work, the extent of the responsibilities, and the major commitment entailed in being a Board member…". In combination with other forms of resource constraints (such as the funding issues raised earlier), the cost to the community of the ideals of democratic process become a pertinent question. Indeed, a Trustee at School D expressed concern that many in the school community were unaware of the contribution governance activities make to the 'everyday running' (or as Habermas would describe 'lifeworld') of the school:

> *…if you just dropped your kids off at the gate and picked them up again at 3 you would never know how a school is run, and how much people have to go through to get what we have got….*

Community leadership and involvement in decision making is purported by government to be a form of community empowerment. But this purported empowerment comes at a cost, both to individuals and the school. The dream of one participant *"to be able to be proactive in our approach to governance, not bogged down in accountability issues"* suggests time and funding constraints may be preventing school Boards from reaching their true potential. Perceptions of the heavy workload may also negatively impact on prospective Trustees, reducing the number of nominations in subsequent Board elections. Time spent on Board activities takes a Trustee away from other family and work commitments. If increasing workloads on Trustees continue to be accepted unquestioningly by the wider school community, the

outcomes stretch beyond overworked individuals who may feel unable to make what they perceive to be a 'worthwhile/quality' contribution to one or all of their extended networks. At the micro level repercussions will impact upon families, workplaces *and* schools. At the macro level, such constraints potentially hinder the ideals of democracy.

The empirical observations from this investigation appear to support the claims of Burt and Taylor (2000) and Blyth (2002) regarding the under-utilisation of ICTs with potential for increased applications of strategic enablers; but issues concerning the decision(s) to adopt (or not) ICTs are not so clear cut. I suggest then, that while this investigation has highlighted that there are potential applications of ICTs that a BOT may choose to adopt, consideration of any emancipatory potential that might be achieved through such applications is premature. In chapter 5 I observed the need for this investigation to go beyond simplistic 'what' questions, to include a focus on how ICT applications may transform lives. Emancipatory aspirations of developing well being and human potential are inter-relational. The flourishing of humanity is more important than impositions of technology for systemic efficiency. O'Neil (2002) highlights the need to consider contextual and social factors when evaluating ICT applications which aim to have a positive impact on communities. Hence, there is a need to consider more deeply the current situation and apparent risks of domestication faced by New Zealand primary school BOTs. Haythornthwaite and Wellman (2002, p.5) note analysts commit "the fundamental sin of particularism, thinking of the Internet as a lived experience distinct from the rest of life". We risk being seduced by what Haythornthwaite and Wellman describe as the 'dazzle of the Internet' and associated technologies. To do so would risk overlooking the complex network of relationships and interactions which contribute to and sustain society.

Pressure to build 'a better mousetrap' may be a disciplinary effect of efforts to achieve systemic efficiency gains. However, participants in this investigation have illustrated (albeit indirectly) that the issues run deeper than what a functionalist 'fix it/improve it' approach may highlight. Habermas (1992) argues real potential lies beyond technical and formal approaches. The foregoing discussion and consideration of the changing context within which school BOTs now govern suggest more (or some) ICT applications may not be the means through which Trustees may be

emancipated. Indeed, applications such as MOE initiatives for reporting and accountability may contribute towards perceptions of disempowerment rather than well being. ICT applications, be they intended as tools or as strategic enablers, may help redistribute the load of governance, but until the contents of this load is more critically considered and/or made lighter it will still be a load! At what point might the intentions of enablement/emancipation become exploitation? Just as Gergen (2001) identifies how technology applications may assist with the creation of multiple new identities for an individual, proliferation of technology applications may also increase tasks which must be attended to.

Poole (1999) applies the metaphor of the Trojan Horse to technology applications, suggesting that amid promises to facilitate change, old (or alternative) values may 'sneak in' that may ultimately undermine the intended transformation. Within the changing context of school BOTs, increased planning and reporting requirements and the lack of support provided by the MOE could be seen as covert attempts to undermine or change intentions of community governance.

In chapter 10 I introduce an enhanced application of the concept of appreciation: to know, to be conscious of, to take full and sufficient account of. Within this context, the insights discussed here indicate a deeper appreciation of governance is needed. Attempts to emancipate school BOTs must move beyond consideration of 'tools' and 'enablers' which may facilitate the more efficient conduct of tasks and begin to address the issues pertaining to resources in a broader sense; such as the availability of time, personnel and financial requirements. By doing so, a greater appreciation of/for the strategic processes of democracy which Boards are mandated to enact - and how this mandate contributes to democracy at a societal level - may begin to be developed.

9.6   Conclusion

Observations I have made reflecting on my interactions with the four participating BOTs have been presented in this chapter. Consistent with literature all four Boards appear to have adopted a policy oriented approach to governance. Governance activities and interactions with government did not reflect the variety of activities discussed in not for profit governance literature. Rather, concerns over finance appeared to dominate the perceptions of several of the Boards involved. The language invoked by many Trustees suggests Boards may be at risk of domestication by the state, infused through the disciplines associated with the 'efficient and effective' implementation of government requirements. Framed within Habermas' (1984; 1987) theory of communicative action, we begin to consider potential colonisation of the BOT lifeworld by the system.

Perceptions of relevance (with regard to task and content) and the attitude of the principal have been identified as key influences on the likelihood of a BOT adopting ICT applications within their governance activities. The influence of the principal in determining channels of Board communication (e.g. use of email) has raised some pertinent questions with regard to the extent this influence is also manifest across other Board activities. Dominance of the principal may put the ideals of community governance promulgated through Tomorrow's Schools at risk. In depth ethnographic inquiry may assist with understanding this development further.

Use of email, electronic distribution of reports, use of the Internet as a research tool, and use of software packages to inform decision making have all been identified by participating Boards as current and potential applications of ICTs as a means to enhance governance. In terms of ICT applications as a strategic enabler (Blyth, 2002; Burt & Taylor, 2000) School C's use of the online forum to complement and continue discussion of issues unresolved at the monthly meeting best fits this suggested application. The applications identified may contribute towards functional perspectives of efficiency and effectiveness of Board governance processes, but I suggest these applications fall short of the emancipatory aspirations identified at the beginning of this thesis. Rather than focus on tools and strategic enablers, this

investigation has highlighted the need to first consider more deeply the context within which BOTs govern.

As the action research process allowed additional areas of interest to emerge, a deeper understanding of school governance, beyond the prescriptive bounds of the National Administrative Guidelines, was developed by all involved with investigation – including myself! School Trustees may find merit in looking beyond functionalist, prescriptive approaches to governance. Application of more flexible frameworks and alternative paradigms such as a social constructionist story telling metaphor, may assist Trustees in applying a more critical, reflective and proactive approach to the challenges before them. Further, consideration of social and contextual factors has highlighted the need for more critical reflection on the true cost(s) of local governance so that issues such as resource inadequacy may be addressed. Such action may in turn help address the risk of domestication/colonisation identified earlier.

The changing context within which school/community relationships develop has been articulated throughout this research. The 'responsible community' identified by Rose (2000) as an aspired outcome from third way policies appears to be struggling to understand and reconcile such responsibilities within their perceptions of democracy. The commitment families may be able to make to school based activities appears to be shifting as increasing numbers of working parents and single parent families find it difficult to support out of school hours activities. At a community level, the increased pressure on working and single parents may reflect a decrease in school/community interactions. At the micro level, increased pressures on Trustees raises questions about the real cost of community governance to schools, families and individuals.

This discussion and analysis of my interaction with the four participating Boards of Trustees contributes an important dimension to my PhD journey, the first path where I set out to consider the emancipatory potential that applications of ICTs may have on the governance processes of school BOTs. This path cannot be considered in isolation however. As noted in chapter 2 there are two more paths to consider. Thus I now turn my attention to the appreciative inquiry process which shaped this inquiry. In chapter 10 I present my critical analysis of the appreciative inquiry process, with specific consideration of my involvement within and influence on the research process.

The Second and Third Paths…

The research relationships between the four BOTs and myself as the researcher generated outcomes more far reaching than I had originally anticipated. That none of the four participating Boards completed the 4D cycle is very interesting to me. This is certainly not an outcome I had found in my extensive reviews of the methodological literature. Interest in this absence led me to reflect on method; my own, and that which is reported in our professional arena. Similarly, the under supported and potentially domesticating environment within which BOTs govern has set some alarm bells ringing for me. Can the research processes I have applied help me to not only understand the interactions that have emerged, but also to contribute towards transforming this environment? What affect has this research had on me? How might I continue my own transformation as a researcher interested in the liberatory/emancipatory potential of action research? How might I be able to contribute towards such emancipatory transformation in the future? These questions are considered in the remaining two chapters.

Chapter 10
Critical Analysis of the Appreciative Inquiry

".....know your work and yourself...."
(Fetterman, 1993, p. 10)

10.0   Introduction

The need for an analysis of appreciative inquiry in terms of its influence on the research process, as identified by scholars including myself, was outlined in chapter 2. The unexpected outcomes within this investigation led me to reflect more closely, not only on the process but also on my responses. Critique not only expands the possibilities of construction, it also forms a significant origin for transformation (Gergen, 1994). My contribution to scholarship through this thesis is to base my analysis on my experiences of the research process, rather than restrict my consideration to other scholars' published works. Information, observations, experiences and reflections on the Ai process gained during my investigation into the emancipatory potential that applications of ICTs may have on the governance processes of school BOTs inform this analysis.

The ambiguity concerning what might be seen to comprise analysis was observed in chapter 2. The concept is not univocal. "There is no one method or set of methods that can be claimed as definitive of it" (Honderich, 1995, p.28). There is however, a defining manner in which analysis may be expected to be undertaken, so that any careful, detailed and rigorous approach which highlights implications of concepts under consideration might be considered to be 'analysis' (Honderich, 1995). Although analysis may be seen as an essential and distinct activity separate from evaluation and action (Pages, 1999), I propose analysis makes an important contribution *informing* both these activities.

Within this chapter I discuss key sections of the second and third paths of my PhD journey as identified in chapter 2: an analysis of appreciative inquiry as a research method and reflection on my personal development through my involvement with participants and the research process. I begin by reflecting on the research process. An initial focus of 'did it work?' is reframed, as I question whose definition of success I should be influenced by (if at all). Applications of critical theory encourage me to focus on the communicative practices which occurred rather than what I expected to happen. Reflection on how research participation and relationships influenced the outcomes which emerged inform my analysis, with a view to better understanding issues of emergence and enduring consequence, plurality of knowing and the overall significance of the inquiry process (Reason & Bradbury, 2001c). My analysis supports my call for an enhanced definition and hence wider applications of the concept of appreciation.

The combination of appreciative inquiry and critical theory processes throughout this investigation and subsequent analysis has begun to shape application of what I describe as critical appreciative processes (CAPs) (Grant & Humphries, 2006). Whereas critical theory often seeks transformation at an abstract level, application of appreciative inquiry may begin to address pragmatic issues of transformation. Applications of CAPs specific to this investigation are shared in section 10.2, as I consider issues such as the motivations and influences behind appreciative inquiry statements and associated influences of power and language within the research process. Each application presented has an emancipatory intent seeking to encourage human well being and the development of potential as expressed in the work of Flood (2001). These CAPs encourage the enhanced definition of appreciation, 'to know, to be conscious of, to take full and sufficient account of'. In doing so, their application encourages researchers to apply a new dimension in our understanding and application of appreciative inquiry.

Although my reflections on my personal development as achieved through my engagement with participants and the research process have been made explicit throughout this thesis, the third path of my journey is described in depth in section 10.3. My struggles as I seek a transition from working within a positivistic, functional framework to my identified preference of social constructionism have already been articulated during the phases of my literature review. Here I build on the personal journey identified in chapter 2. Re-viewing my reflections thus far I begin to consider what affects the process has had on my personal development, the re-formation of my 'self' as researcher, and teacher.

10.1   Reflection on the research process

Reflection comprises a key element of the action research process, at both first and second person levels of practice (Reason & Bradbury, 2001b). "Reflective learning is directed towards increasing self awareness, developing skills, making connections with formal knowledge and exploring the wider context in which the learning is taking place" (Boud et al, 1985 cited in Cooper & Briggs, 2000, p.237). Reflection on the research method, process, and associated outcomes can deepen our understanding of both the research process itself *and* our position as researchers.

The research investigation contributing to this thesis involved me developing relationships with four primary school BOTs. My original plan had been to work with six schools across the decile range. However, finding participants for this researcher initiated topic proved more difficult than I had anticipated. From approaches to ten schools, only four were willing to participate. These schools were rated 1, 5, 7 and 10 respectively on the decile range, so my intention to work with a cross-section of schools from across the socio-economic scale remained feasible. Challenges associated with forming relationships with prospective participants, and the processes engaged to invite participation were outlined in chapter 7. Concerns I identified in section 7.1.1 regarding the reification of cases as 'subjects' within case study literature were able to be addressed as I chose to adopt the values and intentions of action research during all conversations, rather than assume the 'expert/other' dyadic evident in some descriptions of case studies. Reflection on my initial actions however,

has highlighted how (albeit inadvertently) I still brought sub-conscious *a priori* assumptions of research outcomes to the process.

Case studies

In light of some of the challenges faced in finding participants, as well as issues of participation discussed below, I now question my decision to work with four to six BOTs. Influenced through my study of and earlier training in functionalist approaches to research, generalisation was identified as an attribute of 'good' research. Thus, I anticipated that working with four BOTs would provide the opportunity for comparisons between schools and across the decile range, helping to inform my theorising at a meta level. Indeed, as a result of this assumption, my original research design was influenced by institutional and traditional perceptions of validity such as Eisenhardt's (1989b) suggestion that between "four and ten cases usually works well". Although I observed how aspects of governance varied in significance and urgency across the decile scale, I am now more confident to assert that a single case study might have facilitated a different level of engagement, insight and even transformational potential. Deeper participation and stronger relationships may have been achieved if I had spent my time working with just one Board. Working with just one Board may have provided the opportunity to better participate in more interactions beyond the monthly Board meeting, which in turn may have further deepened my understanding of the issues at hand (Dyer & Wilkins, 1991). Similar to the participating Trustees juggling governance and research activities described in chapter 9, I often found myself juggling responsibilities to several Boards at the same time. While a thoughtful and well planned approach is essential preparation when approaching possible research participants I now also recognise the dynamics of action research are such that a 'cook book' approach may prove to be methodologically inappropriate. Regardless of the number of participants engaged in research, no amount of time will guarantee clarity or certainty of focus. Action research that remains true to its participant driven intentions may travel a varied path, along which the researcher may be privileged to share the journey.

The influence of the decision to use an appreciative inquiry approach on recruitment/participation rates is not addressed in literature. The feedback I got from participating BOTs suggested that the focus and approach of appreciative inquiry was a deciding factor when they agreed to participate. Some participants appeared to harbour fears of 'witch hunt' research approaches. Encouragement to consider what was already working well in their organisations was perceived by some Trustees as an agreeable alternative to the deficit oriented analysis commonly applied in strategic planning. Inviting potential participants to identify and build on what was already good in the organisation was reassuring to Trustees. The introduction of the appreciative style of inquiry provided some participants with a new way of knowing from the onset of the investigation. It is important to note however, that any initial 'attraction' participants perceived for Ai as a research method in principle did not guarantee their willingness (or resources) to fully engage in the full potential of this approach. None of the participating Boards completed the 4D cycle of appreciative inquiry as presented by Cooperrider and Whitney (2000).

This research was necessarily framed within the institutional constraints of PhD regulations. I was also conscious from the start that we had a finite period for the investigation. The next elections for school Trustees were scheduled for April 2004, at which time the composition of each Board might potentially change considerably. Indeed, substantial changes did occur, with each participating Board having over 75% turnover of Trustees. Although changes to Board membership could (and did) occur at any time throughout the research period, I was aware of the major changes which would occur through the election process. In addition, I recognised that existing Trustees would face additional responsibilities promoting the election and encouraging prospective Trustees. Thus, a conscious decision was made and communicated to all participating Boards that the formal research would end (if it had not already done so) as Boards began to focus on the 2004 elections. It was anticipated that this would (at the latest) be sometime early 2004. Trustees perceived an element of reassurance with the establishment of an end date as concerns they had regarding the ongoing (time) commitments associated with research participation were allayed.

I found the finite time period to be simultaneously restrictive yet challenging. Faced with a limited time period for fieldwork I came to recognise the need to acquiescence to outcomes as they emerged. I suspect an unlimited time frame may have tempted me to continue working in the field for an unspecified period of time, waiting until (or working towards) the outcomes I had anticipated eventuated! Although a more open-ended process may have generated greater transformative potential, I now recognise these anticipated outcomes may never have occurred!

Time restrictions, combined with the slow progress through the appreciative inquiry cycle meant the investigation essentially became a single loop inquiry (Argyris & Schon, 1996 (1978)), preventing the research from moving through several iterations. A key implication of this single loop of inquiry was that the long term, emergent form of second person action research inquiry promoted by Reason and Bradbury (2001c) was not fully achieved. The single loop of inquiry in some ways restricted opportunities for new ways of knowing developed within the investigation to be shared and discussed among participants, thereby limiting its transformational potential at the level of engagement within each Board's specific activities. For example, alternative approaches in literature to the functional lens of governance, such as Bradshaw's (2002) reframing of governance within a social constructionist lens, were not reviewed until the formal research period of participant engagement was over. The single loop of inquiry also limited the potential we had within this investigation to inquire more deeply into the wider issues of democracy within society which began to be identified during analysis.

Post doctoral work could extend the emancipatory ideals expressed in this thesis in a number of ways, although the issue of continuity however, must be considered. Turnover of Trustees is common. The likelihood of finding a group of participants to work with over an extended period of time may be difficult. However, any efforts taken to draw paradox and contradiction into the light, any research process that strengthens the will of people to manifest emancipatory processes, to resist exploitation and to seek enhanced governance processes that are consistent with the ideals expressed by democratic societies are a form of capacity building, providing transportable skills and values! Any government sincere about its promotion of

democratic ideals might consider how such capacity may be nurtured or stymied through the institutions designed to express these very ideals in practice.

Research questions

Reflection and a degree of hindsight has made me aware that while the original research question was oriented towards achieving change and transformation within Board process, it still had quite a functional focus. Conflict between my action research, participant oriented intentions and functional training is reflected by what I now recognise as an incongruence between some of the questions posed and the intentions and lexicon I introduced to the research process. For example, despite the explicit interest in ICT applications identified as a starting point for this investigation, approaches to governance were explored from the beginning – in some cases setting the scene for the development of totally different conversations to what I had initially envisaged. Similarly, although my emancipatory aspirations for participating Trustees were identified in the opening chapters of this thesis, my lexicon continued to focus on the emancipatory applications of ICTs. Repeatedly within this thesis I have described my investigation into "the emancipatory potential that *applications of ICTs* may have on the governance processes of school BOTs". Despite my noted concern and actions oriented towards the emancipation of Trustees, the functional intent within the language I invoked within the research process may suggest otherwise! I could have remedied this inconsistency to some extent through re-editing this document so that the reader may be left unaware of this 'glitch'. But to do so would inhibit the transparency I seek to share of my experiences in and of the research process. Instead, I have chosen to identify and reflect on the inconsistency. By doing so, I have deepened my understanding of power and the influence gained/lost through the choice or unconscious/unreflective use of language within any research process.

Participant influences

Although each Board chose a slightly different approach to the investigation, the 4D cycle of inquiry (discovery, dream, design, destiny) presented in Cooperrider and Whitney (2000) provided the initial structure for the investigation during the formal research process. Working within the constraints of institutional PhD requirements I adapted the ideal of participant driven action research. I initiated the research topic and chosen method of appreciative inquiry. I made a deliberate decision however, to

encourage the research to be as participant driven as possible within the circumstances of my life and the lives of participants. In doing so, (to some extent) I chose to abandon the role of 'expert' within the research process (Hartman, 1992).

To various degrees, participant influence on the process did occur. As encouraged by Kemmis (2001) the pace at which the research progressed, and direction(s) in which discussion developed was set by each group of participants. With three of the four Boards choosing to include some or all of their research participation within their monthly meetings, I was always conscious of the time constraints associated with this approach. Progress of the research was a lot slower than I had envisaged, and none of the four participating BOTs completed the 4D cycle of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000). To various extents each case study slowly began to move in the direction(s) identified as most relevant by the participants. My original research questions regarding the emancipatory potential that applications of ICTs may have on the governance processes of BOTs became a secondary focus to some participants, as participating Boards took the opportunity to deepen their understanding of governance. This additional dimension became increasingly intriguing and complex.

Despite concerns expressed by several male Trustees at School D that the process I presented would not bring problems to the Board's attention, as noted in chapter 8, deficiencies in the current environment were still identified during the discovery and dream phases. These concerns were however, expressed in a positive manner. For example, dreams of *more* money and *more* community involvement were vocalised. This example is consistent with Patton's (2003) observation that 'dreams and wishes' often identify existing weaknesses from the perspective of the participating dreamers. Framed in this manner, these expressions may have a generative rather than a debilitating effect.

Barge and Oliver (2003) suggest that 'appreciative conversations' acquire and generate a particular emotional flavour, potentially able to emphasise love, happiness, joy, passion care and affection. Within a BOT environment, the friendly banter observed within the regular Board meetings for Schools B and C implies this environment would have less difficulty establishing and maintaining appreciative

discourse than was the case in a more formal environment such as the Board of School A. Participation across the research period does support this concept to a certain extent, although I wonder if the stop/start nature of the investigation may have impeded the flow of emotion and hence influenced discourse. Perhaps if the research discussions had taken place over a much shorter time period,(e.g. an in-house session run over an extended weekend rather than spread over a period of several months), momentum in discussion and emotion may have been easier to build and maintain, leading to different influences and outcomes emerging. For example, the two in depth sessions the Board of School D dedicated to strategic planning, self review and research participation provided a clear contrast of the intensity of emotion that can develop. Several Trustees observed the motivational and productive influence of the 'positive' environment created during the first meeting, contrasting vividly with the more negative, "*depressing*" dialogue we all perceived dominated the second session. In spite of the observed tone of the second session, one Trustee commented at the end of the research that he still felt "*not enough problems"* had come out. Had I been aware enough at the time to have adopted the more encompassing definition of appreciation I now advocate, i.e. to know, to be conscious of, to take full or sufficient account of, participants and I may have been better placed to gain deeper understanding from the strong, albeit seemingly negative, emotions displayed at the second meeting as well – so as to be better placed to attain transformational or emancipatory outcomes.

Perceptions

Each participating Board had indicated a different motivation behind their participation in this research (e.g. professional development, strategic planning). It was encouraging therefore, that three of the four schools reported that that their participation had been useful to them. Despite this feedback, my initial reaction during and following the research sessions was that the appreciative inquiry process 'didn't quite work' - as none of the participating Boards had completed the 4D cycle as it was presented in the literature (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000). Reflection on and review of this response highlighted how my perception of not achieving a 'successful' appreciative inquiry was consistent with observations by Rogers and Fraser (2003). My perceptions had been influenced by the incompletion of the 4D cycle I had sought to follow, as well as the limited 'success' I had had encouraging vocabularies of hope

within some of the discussions. In those instances where an Ai format was followed storytelling was not as a predominant format as I had hoped, providing less opportunity to use narrative as a means of evoking new worlds of meaning (Bushe & Khamisa, 2004). Further, any change achieved within the participating BOTs through the research process was not 'transformational' as per Bushe and Khamisa's (2004) meta-analysis of appreciative inquiry. In terms of their analysis my investigation more close resembled what the authors describe as 'conventional action research guided by inquiry in to the positive' (Bushe & Khamisa, 2004).

I was somewhat surprised with these outcomes as almost all published cases of organisational change are success stories. I was ill prepared for outcomes different to those I had anticipated. My functionalist training had prepared me to anticipate certain outcomes – in this instance identification of current and potential ICT applications that Boards would be keen to implement. The emergence of alternative, complementary outcomes such as participatory discussions about enhanced notions of governance; the deeper understanding of resource constraints and technological reticence of participants; and the influence of the macro context on motivation and constraints challenged the preconceived ideas I had inadvertently brought to the research process. I began to grasp the connection I now made between an uncritical concern with efficiency gains and a growing incongruence between functional efficiency and democratic effectiveness. Discomfort with these challenges contributed to my initial concerns of failure.

Discussion with other researchers reinforced to me the overly simplified, premature nature of such initial inferences. It has become increasingly clear to me that the process itself is as much a part of my information collected for analysis and reflection as are tangible outcomes such as research transcripts. Social constructionists reject notions of 'objectivity', recognising instead multiple representations/realities of an activity may be perceived by various stakeholders. Thus, *my* analysis of *this* research must reflect the framework of values *I* bought to the investigation, as well as my own experiences and reflections. Analysis must be relevant to myself, my fellow participants and 'our' investigation. Consistent with the critical theory motives identified in chapter 2, I must look beyond functional, positivistic approaches to research to understand how and why the research developed *as* it did. Laying out the

driving interests and means of knowledge production and defence is central to understanding knowledge and the overall research process (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000).

Habermas' theory of communicative action is proposed as a useful approach for the critical analysis of fieldwork in general (Forester, 2003) and action research specifically (Kemmis, 2001). A Habermasian approach to fieldwork does not assume that ideal conditions and/or discourse will eventuate in the field (Forester, 2003) - a premise well suited to the challenges of participant driven action research practices such as this investigation. Freedom from constraints or assumptions allows the researcher to investigate the actual communicative practices which shape relationships (Forester, 2003) rather than be constrained by preoccupations of expected outcomes.

My intention was for the research process to be participant driven, for I believe it is important that participants find the process both meaningful and useful to their situation(s). During analysis I identified various influences on this participation. Research interactions with Trustees at School A were the least participant driven of the investigation, with Trustees often looking to me for guidance and/or affirmation during discussion. In contrast, the Boards of Schools B and C took much of their lead with regard to research participation from their principals. The Board of School D often appeared 'trapped' within a 'decile 10' mindset where limited resource allocations (in terms of funding and support services) were the main factors taken into account during research and decision making processes. As such, consideration of power dynamics became an important area of analysis within my case studies. My discussion of the influence of the principal in chapter 9 illustrates this area of interest, while I will further consider the influence of my own actions in the process in section 10.3.

Quality and relationships

A vast amount of my time was spent establishing and maintaining relationships with the participating Boards. Perceptions of quality and research participation can strongly impact upon pragmatic outcomes (Reason & Bradbury, 2001c). Thus, throughout the investigation I held a background concern that the researcher initiated nature of the investigation topic may have a detrimental effect on perceptions regarding the research and levels of participation by members of the participating Boards. Although

I recognised the importance of establishing rapport and working along side participants within an action research process, I was still surprised by the time taken during this phase, for my reading of the literature seemed to have once again left me ill-prepared. Re-reading accounts of processes such as the large scale appreciative inquiry summits (with a duration of 2-5 days) described by Ludema, Mohr, Whitney and Griffin (2003), I now recognise how authors risk either glossing over, or even paying little regard to any relationship building (and resourcing thereof) which takes place between the consultant/researcher and participants. An outcome of such (mis)representations may be that other stakeholders in research, such as funders, may also find themselves underestimating the importance of this phase of the process; which in turn may be reflected through less tangible support (such as funding) for these aspects of research.

Gender

Literature, such as that reviewed in chapter 5, identifies clear differences between how men and women perceive and utilise ICTs such as the Internet (Boneva & Kraut, 2002; Cockburn, 1992; Frissen, 1995; Grint & Gill, 1995). Further, my own observations revealed that the two participants who were openly sceptical about the appreciative inquiry process undertaken as part of this investigation were males. Thus, the 'relational' and 'functional' distinctions made in gender scholarship may also influence perceptions of the research process. Relational influences must be taken into account, for both of these initial disparagers were Trustees at School D – the school where I was already a Board member. Strong friendships of several years preceded any research involvement, so neither would have felt uncomfortable vocalising their concerns to me (as may a Trustee from one of the other participating schools). One of these men was sufficiently intrigued about the process however, to go home and discuss it with his wife…who subsequently approached me for assistance in initiating an appreciative inquiry at an early childhood centre she was involved with. At this stage I have insufficient evidence to support a premise that the greater openness for relational processes expressed by some women facilitates their comfort with a process such as Ai, but I am keen to consider such issues in my post doctoral work.

Trust

Influences of trust and time on research relationships were identified in the previous chapter. My observations of the heavy workload faced by BOTs informed my reluctant 'acceptance' of levels of participation which were lower than I had hoped for. At times I struggled to balance the fine line between research encouragement and harassment of participants. Similarly, little or no feedback was received whenever transcripts or associated documentation were given to participants' for review and comment. "*We trust you*" was one response to my queries regarding the lack of feedback. I remain wary though of the processes through which these expressions of trust were earned.

Trust is a complex social construction influenced (among other things) by time and interaction. Trust cannot be bought, imputed, imposed or required. Within the research process trust may be a means through which the dividing line of outsider/insider is traversed (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000). Although difficult to define, trust has been said to include expectations that people have for others or themselves, expectations of competent performance, and expectations that people will [attempt to?] place others interests before their own (Weber & Carter, 1998). Lewis and Weigert (1985) identify trust as a conduit through which complexity might be reduced. It is this application which I believe may provide insight into how trust may have been apportioned within the research process. Were expressions of trust made by participants regarding my efforts similar to the ad hoc delegation of power to the principal suggested in chapter 9, whereby a lack of time saw Trustees 'trust' that the 'expert' would be 'right'? Weber and Carter (1998) observe that trust occurs at an interpersonal level, rather than an institutional level. Hence, I suggest 'trust' might be seen as a relational influence, as is Foucault's conception of power. A process which requires resourcing and support, the enhancement and influence of trust within the research process should not be taken for granted.

Participation and engagement

"Organisations are socially co-constructed realities, and so appreciative inquiry should attempt to engage as many members of the system as possible…" (Bushe & Khamisa, 2004 p.5). I had difficulty engaging all Trustees in either the face to face or electronic discussions, let alone being able to extend the process to other stakeholders of the Boards such as the parent community! That the topic was researcher not community initiated might be seen to have a negative influence on participation, as must the time constraints faced by Trustees identified in chapter 9. Action research seeks to encourage participation at whatever level participants find 'do-able'. While all PhD students may perceive times when they live and breathe their research involvement to the extent that it seems to permeate every waking moment, typically this perspective is not shared by participants! I was ever conscious of the additional responsibilities research participation placed on participating Trustees. For example, although participation by the BOTs of Schools B and C was facilitated by the flexibility provided through the use of the electronic forum, this format also provided an additional intrusion into their lives beyond the monthly Board meeting and associated governance responsibilities.

Differences between how the research progressed within a face to face environment compared with the electronic discussion forums were marked, reinforcing to me the influence of the research context on ways of knowing. The difference in styles of storytelling facilitated within each environment is important, and an area which requires further in-depth investigation so that we may begin to better understand the significance of each. The face to face environment appeared better suited to the co-generative appreciative inquiry process. The use of story telling was more easily facilitated in this setting, which also provided more opportunity for spontaneity in the discussion. In contrast, and consistent with literature (Arbaugh, 2000), discussion in the electronic forum was more reflective, and often provided more insight into the deeper understanding or concerns shared by participants. When stories were told/posted online they were more 'detailed', and I suspect 'edited'. The asynchronous nature of the online environment saw this phase of the discussion move at an even slower pace than the face to face sessions. In the case of Trustees at School B slow progress was then compounded as several participants reported perceptions of reduced relevance regarding the limited dialogue.

Boards of Trustees from Schools B and C, who both used a combination of face to face and electronic discussion forums, appeared to have the best opportunity to reflect on the research process as well as the research content. Typically reflection and feedback on the process would be shared during face to face meetings, while discussion specific to the research questions would remain in the electronic forum. From a research perspective I found this dual environment very insightful, as participants openly shared their experiences of using the online discussion forum. Participants also gained a degree of peer support, as they were able to share information, reassure and encourage one another.

The establishment of a second research context, i.e. the online forums, was not part of my original research design but stemmed from a suggestion by a Trustee at School C. Given the original research focus on ICTs, and my commitment to a participant driven process, this second environment became a key dimension of the overall investigation. Although absence, or reduced presence, of indicators and influences such as emotions, body language and spontaneity had a definite impact on this phase of the appreciative inquiry process, the medium provided an alternative mode of communication and, I believe, facilitated reflection as the discussion developed. I would consider the use of a similar environment in future investigations if it were appropriate. Preferences and perceptions of (potential) participants would need to be considered. As was the case in this investigation, this form of feedback would be a key factor when considering how/if an electronic component might contribute to the research process.

The appreciative inquiry process

Reflection on how both the face to face and electronic discussions developed leads me to suggest that strict adherence to a research framework based around the 4D cycle may have restricted communication flows to a certain extent. 'Formal research questions' were posed and 'vocabularies of hope' encouraged in lexicon as I hoped to provide structure and purpose to the investigation. But just as a system of one way streets influences traffic flows, so too may this approach have constrained responses from participants. Participants, particularly those less confident in themselves or their participation, may have been hesitant to share experiences they perceived to be outside the 'direction' of the research framework. Bushe and Khamisa (2004) suggest improvisation within an appreciative inquiry may provide more opportunity to

achieve and spread change than does a more formal implementation. Barge and Oliver (2003) express concern that a focus on the technicalities of implementation may detract from, or be incorrectly equated with, the development of an appreciative spirit. When spirit becomes isomorphic with technique, practice is incorrectly reduced to a predefined set of techniques and methods – unable to adapt to unfolding and emergent organisational realities (Barge & Oliver, 2003). There is a risk of 'process for process sake' rather than research which seeks to further emancipatory ideals (McLean & McLean, 2002). I felt the potential for such a risk to be strongest during my research interactions with Trustees at School D. As an insider, I found myself pondering during the second session whether continued participation was in some way linked to a sense of obligation my fellow Trustees may have felt towards me.

My experience and reflections described within this thesis and elsewhere (Grant, 2004a, 2005b) endorse the concerns expressed by Barge and Oliver (2003) and Bushe and Khamisa (2004). While I wish I had been aware of such concerns at the beginning of my investigation, I also suspect that in my eagerness to 'get on with the task', I may still have overlooked their significance. Some of my more insightful moments have their origins in serendipitous interactions such as my emergent conversations with the principal of School C, or my 'on the spot' insights gained as an insider within the Board of School D. My observations and analysis suggests some of the value of appreciative inquiry can be found in the ontology of the approach, rather than the technicalities of a specific form of implementation. Bushe and Khamisa (2004) conclude appreciative inquiry focuses on changing how people think, rather than what they do. Within this viewpoint, the somewhat functionalist orientation of my original research question may not have been the most appropriate approach, and may have stymied my appreciative inquiry application.

The functionalist orientation and possible constraints this paradigm may pose within the appreciative inquiry process are illustrated within the case study of the BOT of School A. As described in chapter 8, the Board moved through the discovery and dream phases with little sign of concern, identifying what was good within the school and Board processes, as well as dreams for how the Board may govern in the future and what/how ICTs may be included in these dreams. Yet when encouraged at the next meeting to identify aspects from the dream phase that the Board might like to

work towards turning into a reality (i.e. the design phase of the 4D cycle), a seemingly blunt but pertinent observation by the chairperson *"Dreams are shackled by costs and practicalities"* brought this line of inquiry to a halt. The chairperson expanded his concerns, suggesting there was little point spending time on such plans, as limited resourcing would typically inhibit their enactment. Although discussion continued it was not in the direction of the original inquiry. Participation by the Board in the research investigation subsequently ended after this session, as the chairperson explained they saw little benefit to be gained in light of his earlier observation. As the inquiry stood, I had no opportunity to attempt to reframe this part of the investigation[1]. Had the inquiry had a less functionalist orientation, and focused instead for example on what/how participants thought about governance processes, this barrier may either have not eventuated or, if it had, may have been able to be reframed with a view to working around it. I observed in chapter 3 that many theories of interaction emerge as a response to perceptions of failure (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2002). Theories of interaction described in literature fail to consider the emancipatory issues which may also be associated with perceptions of failure. Reconception of these exchanges within a more positive, yet critically oriented paradigm – such as the enhanced view of appreciation I encourage in this thesis, may illuminate additional modes of interaction.

Am I doing good work?

Reason (2003) and Reason and Bradbury (2001b; 2001c) address questions of quality and validity in action research, assisting researchers such as myself as we reflect "*am I doing good work*?" Their focus, as is mine, is to move beyond an unattainable quest for 'truth'. Rather, as encouraged by Reason and Bradbury (2001c p.447) my interest is to begin to consider pragmatic outcomes and engagement, emergent and reflective practices so that I might begin to develop an emergent sense of what is important.

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[1] Additional influences on the chairperson's attitude at this time cannot be discounted. For example, there was the issue of the school room at the meeting site about to close, and his already explicit concerns about how ICTs may reduce the personal/human side of interaction. These influences may have further contributed to what the chairperson perceived as 'problems' within the research process, which in turn led to the decision to cease participation.

A focus on pragmatic outcomes may re-frame issues of validity, credibility and reliability in action research practices such as this investigation. Outcomes may be considered in terms of "the willingness of local stakeholders to act on the results of the action research, thereby risking their welfare on the 'validity' of their ideas and the degree to which the outcomes meet their expectations" (Greenwood & Levin, 2000 p. 96). In a similar manner, Reason and Bradbury (2001c) encourage action researchers to ask themselves questions about how their work has emerged and developed over time, whether it is sustainable into the future and how it will influence related work. Reflection on any enduring consequence of research deepens consideration of 'value' and 'validity' and can be applied at several levels. The expression of interest by Boards from Schools B and C to be able to continue to use the online forums may be interpreted as expressions of perceived 'value' and 'validity' as defined by Greenwood and Levin (2000). Access to the sites was maintained for schools throughout 2004 and 2005, but no further activity took place. Although the identification, development and application of ICTs as a tool to assist with governance could continue beyond the formal research period without my involvement, in this instance I doubt that it would. The change of Trustees following the April 2004 elections will have impacted on this activity to a certain extent, but had the outgoing Boards been more committed to the project, I suspect they may have promoted it better to the new Trustees.

As the individuals who combine to create a Board of Trustees change, so too may the collective perception(s) of the Board with regard to ICT applications. For example, my continued connection with School D has allowed me to observe that the 'new' Board uses email a lot more than their predecessors did. With only one parent representative from the group who participated in this investigation having sought re-election in 2004, the combination of the new attitudes and perceptions introduced by incoming Trustees may have contributed to this change.

Enduring consequence for this research goes beyond applications of ICTs however. As concluded in chapter 9, this investigation has highlighted the need to better understand and resource governance within schools must be addressed before tools such as applications of ICTs to enhance governance processes might be seen as relevant to Trustees and/or have emancipatory potential. Changes will need to be

made beyond the realms of individual Boards, for example at a national level, for these consequences to have the ability to make a positive and enduring contribution.

The foregoing is not to suggest that I perceive my application of appreciative inquiry to be ineffective. In chapter 5 I observed the use of ICTs should not be blindly interpreted as a measure of 'success'. In a similar vein non use of ICTs should not be perceived as 'failure'. Although the research outcomes discussed in chapter 9 may not have been as overtly practical as my underlying functionalist tendencies may have hoped for, the process through which the research developed remained true to the intentions and preferences signalled by the participants rather than my own ideas. I now recognise the benefits of this process far outweigh any practical, functional outcomes I initially anticipated.

Reason and Bradbury (2001b) encourage inquiry that forges a direct link between intellectual knowledge and moment to moment personal and social action, so that inquiry might contribute directly to the flourishing of persons and their communities. Expressions of confusion and frustration by participants within research discussions are evidence of consciousness raising – the first step towards new ways of knowing. Feedback from the participants during the process identified benefits they perceived from their involvement. Positive contributions to the decision making processes of School C were acknowledged, as was the completion of the strategic plan by School D. Likewise, the reflective approach to governance applied by several participants in response to the research discussion generally begins to illustrate outcomes consistent with the professional development objectives which motivated the initial engagement of Boards A and C[1].

My decision to implement an action research approach saw broader issues emerge as a result of participant influence on the process. As such, the investigation took on a different stance to a 'regular, evaluative' project. A deeper understanding of governance was achieved by all participating Boards, supporting Nobbie and Brudney's (2003) claim that a thoughtful, deliberate process which encourages close examination of procedures of governance may be helpful to Board members.

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[1] Trustees at School A perhaps perceived the least benefit, as was illustrated by their early withdrawal from the inquiry process.

> *I was thinking in terms of the Board meetings, but it is more than that isn't it ....*

In this instance however, deeper understanding and new ways of knowing were achieved through the application of a reflective, emergent process rather than the prescriptive approach advocated by Nobbie and Brudney (2003). Continuing this line of thought, the conscious effort to adopt 'vocabularies of hope' (Ludema, 2001) facilitated increased awareness by the Board of School D. Identification of potential 'domestication' may be the first step towards transformation as Trustees resolved to adopt a more proactive stance towards challenging aspects of their governance activities. New ways of knowing were introduced to many participating Trustees as they became conscious of how the lexicon they invoked might influence their approach to issues at hand. Participants from School C in particular reported merit in the influences they perceived the appreciative approach had on their governance process:

> *I see this* [a positive approach] *as pivotal to me having motivation and purpose to being on the Board. If I considered that there was great negativity, ongoing attitudes and comments that knocked – then I would doubt my ability to contribute much, or continue as a Board member.*

The introduction of vocabularies of hope and orientation of positive discourse is an approach any Trustee could invoke and/or sustain; and implement across all levels of interaction, not just governance processes. Appreciative inquiry may become a philosophy for living, a methodology for implementing change, and/or an approach to leadership and human development (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). A conscious choice and in some cases a re-patterning of thought and action would be required by individuals seeking to adopt this level of application (Fitzgerald et al., 2001). Given the single loop of inquiry and loss of contact with most participants at the end of the formal research period, I have little evidence as to the extent to which individuals made such choices. My position as an insider on the Board of School D however, allowed me to observe deliberate efforts made by the chairperson to apply appreciative/positive discourse to difficult situations the Board faced later on during its term of office. That seeds appear to have been sown, suggesting there are alternative approaches to be tried, is in itself an enabling outcome of this research.

And so…?

Limitations within my original research question as to the emancipatory potential that applications of ICTs may have on the governance processes of school BOTs are now evident. As observed in chapter 9, I now recognise the preliminary focus was oriented towards functional objectives of 'efficiency and effectiveness' of process and task rather than emancipatory aspirations associated with the broader concept of governance as an expression of democratic values. Opportunities for sharing new knowledge developed within the process would have been greater had participating BOTs felt able (and willing) to move beyond their single levels of participation to interact with other Boards. Instead, the importance of identifying new questions has been highlighted. For example, what is the cost to the community of school based governance? The shift in focus which occurred has reoriented the research beyond its original technically oriented research question towards engagement with more emancipatory concerns with regard for the well being and development of Trustees' potential. As well as assisting participating Trustees discover new ways of knowing through which they may approach their governance tasks, opportunities to inform policy may also eventuate now we have a better idea of what issues really need addressing, and what questions might need to be asked along the way.

I believe however, benefits from applications of appreciative inquiry extend beyond the overt, almost simplistic focus on the positive. Some of the analysis and the outcomes described in this thesis have still had a problem orientation – challenging the original intent of my investigation! Critical theory provides a link through which the emancipatory intent of such outcomes may be better understood. The combination of critical theory and appreciative inquiry which has informed this thesis has extended my own epistemological range. My future actions and iterations of appreciative inquiry will focus less on the technicalities of implementation and more on the spirit of appreciation - reflecting the greater depth of understanding I have been able to achieve. I hope that by sharing my experiences and the challenges I have faced with other emerging researchers they may be better informed as they undertake their own investigations. Reframing concepts of appreciation to encompass a wider definition and encourage applications of critical appreciative processes have introduced new ways of knowing, and hence a contribution has been made to scholarship and the wider community through presentation of this thesis.

The application of a critical theory lens to my analysis and interpretation has highlighted an additional dimension to appreciative inquiry. In chapter 2 I described how definitions signifying value may inform our understanding of the term 'appreciate'. Through the lens of critical theory I encourage an enhanced definition: 'to know, to be conscious of, to take full or sufficient account of'. The apparent paradox between the two theoretical lenses has provided theoretical opportunities rather than generate problems. New conceptions of appreciation have been encouraged, providing me with the insight to develop new critical appreciative processes (CAPs) (Grant & Humphries, 2006). The deeper understanding of governance processes by participating Boards was identified in chapter 9 as a research outcome. In this context, for example, Board members began to *appreciate* that governance is more than the discussion which happens at the monthly Board meeting, just as I have come to appreciate the generative capacities of appreciative inquiry released from its functional constraints. Within this enhanced definition, applications of appreciative inquiry may help us uncover things we may not be conscious of, for example consider 'hidden' sources of power and thus gain a deeper appreciation of the situation and process under investigation. Application of these critical appreciative processes (CAPs) contributes an element of critique, further informing my analysis of appreciative inquiry as a research process. Examples of these processes are described in the next section.

10.2   Critical appreciative processes (CAPs)

Reflection, influenced by intentions of critical theorists as identified in chapter 2, has contributed to my development of critical appreciative processes. Applications based on scholarship such as the works of Foucault, Freire, and Habermas have helped me to better understand how an appreciative inquiry may develop, as well as consider the knowledge and power influences which might be negotiated as the process unfolds. Each application has helped me uncover aspects of the research process I was previously unconscious of, thus allowing me to develop a deeper appreciation of the situation and process under investigation; which in turn further informs my analysis of appreciative inquiry as a research process. Although the applications of these processes are presented here in a 'tidy', almost linear manner suggesting each was a separate incident of its own making, I emphasise this form of presentation has been

adopted for ease of reading only! It does not represent the messy, inter-related, emergent nature through which I began to understand – indeed, appreciate - these interactions.

10.2.1   The influence of statements and questions

The types of questions asked, and intentions of subsequent analysis will influence how social reality is portrayed and understood (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000). My earlier reflections in section 10.1 on how my original research question shaped and potentially inhibited this investigation illustrate how 'reality' may subsequently be 'constructed' in this manner. Alvesson and Deetz (2000) focus on how different modes of analysis seek to consider different phenomena for different reasons. They do not consider the creative potential of these questions. Through the shaping and answering of questions we create something new. Thus, the types of questions posed and manner in which they are presented may alert a researcher to how participants perceive a given question, as well as potential influences on their response. Reflecting on the 4D cycle of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000), I now have concerns about the use of verbs such as 'should' which may imply a sense of obligation. For example: 'what should be the ideal?' is suggested as a starting question within the design phase (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000). The extent to which people are, or feel obligated, to be motivated by expectations of another person's 'should' (for example in this case the researcher) needs to be considered. There is an unquestioned acceptance of legitimacy around the assumption that there might need to be 'more'. Is this an inadvertent form of control? Or perhaps an unanticipated outcome faced by even the best of intentioned researchers? If so, is the control initiated by the researcher, or does it echo the impersonal systems of control, power and hegemony identified by Foucault and Gramsci (Swingewood, 2000)?

> Once appreciation is treated as a tool for greater production, the nature of caring is altered….When appreciation, altruism and other positive sentiments are used as a means to profit, rather than as ends in themselves, they cease to be significant as positive sentiments. They are transformed into mere strategies or manipulations (Gergen, 1999a, p.153-154).

Are participants able to openly choose the lexicon with which they construct their responses and ensuing realities? Or are these discourses imposed (explicitly or implicitly) upon them - in this instance through the formal lexicon of governance and accountability or perhaps even through their perceptions of the researcher's expectations? The extent to which members of the Board of School A sought affirmation to their responses *"did I get it right?"* suggests the risks of such (mis)perceptions are relatively high. Having identified the risk, it is then important to consider how and why this form of control is manifest, and whether it may continue to do so. With regard to the investigation discussed in this thesis, having more time available for the research discussions may have provided me with the opportunity to further clarify aspects of the research process, which in turn may have reduced anxiety felt by participants.

10.2.2   The social construction of knowledge

The generation/creation of knowledge, according to Gergen and Gergen (2003), resides in community participation. Such participation is fundamental for the manifestation of a democratic society. Diminished participation from citizens, through reasons of disinterest, over-commitment to practical matters, or hegemonic compliance all weakens the fabric of such a society. The interactions and engagement evident within this research have illustrated how participation in governance activities may be affected by such influences. Examples include the difficulty in attracting sufficient people to fill Board positions, the pragmatic responses to excessive task demands of those who have agreed to serve, and the limited view of how their responsibilities contribute to the enhancement of democratic values within society as a whole.

Through my experiences in this research, I suggest that appreciative inquiry as a transformative process of research has potential to contribute to the invigoration of democracy and the emancipation of people. However, the method as currently described in literature may be disregarded by traditional organisational academics who tend to work within a functionalist paradigm and apply narrow concepts of validity and unrealistic aspirations for the generalisation of their research results. The problem orientation typically applied by these academics implies a 'need' which may

be generated as an outcome of research, which in turn may be seen to be met through the power of those 'experts' able to 'help'. Gaventa and Cornwell (2001 p.73) describe how expert knowledge producers may exercise power over others through their expertise. Alvesson and Deetz (2000 p.145) describe this dynamic as 'domination as knowledge'. Power gained through the construction of dependence/domination or the domestication of others establishes a relationship of need. Where such 'need' is not redressed in a mutually liberating way the potential for exploitation is generated on both sides of the relationship. The powerful hold power over the powerless. The 'needy' may attempt to harness or control those who they perceive may hold 'solutions' to their real, manufactured or imagined needs. Such dynamics are inconsistent with the emancipatory vision for individuals articulated in democratic societies. In the context of organisational studies, this dynamic of need construction and service may promote the lucrative employment of so called experts. By removing a focus on problems, appreciative inquiry has the potential to refocus perceptions of need and thus empower participants so they might be better placed to take control of their destiny and the process through which it might be achieved.

Through applying a Habermasian approach to my analysis I began to also reflect on the communicative practices which shaped relationships within the action research process (Forester, 2003) and how these practices and my subsequent reactions to them may further facilitate or constrain the knowledge which might be generated.

Reflection during the analysis and write up stages of this research raised the question whether the proactive encouragement of positive discourse that characterised the process might also have been a process by which participants' local and grounded knowledge was being disqualified. "The questions we ask set the stage for what we 'find', and what we find becomes the knowledge out of which the future is conceived, conversed about, and constructed" (Ludema et al., 2001 p.198). Appreciation with a focus only on what is perceived to be good may be seen as an indirect form of conflict avoidance (Pages, 1999). Through the evocation of 'the positives' that which might have been perceived as negative may have been 'dismissed', 'overlooked', or 'suppressed' in the discussion. During a particularly slow moving session, I made frequent attempts to move the conversation from what I perceived as 'deficit discourse' to discussion of more positive aspects of the organisation, so as to invoke

'vocabularies of hope'. Participants seemed aware of the negative focus with one remarking "*Sorry to get bogged down in this negativity but….*" Such awareness did not facilitate a change in focus however. The degenerative spiral identified by Cooperrider and Whitney (2000) was beginning to build!

Reflecting on the notes of this session I wondered to what extent this attempt to steer the group away from their expressions of concern might have generated (undisclosed) anger or frustration. And if so, were these actions indicative of what Reason (2000) describes as the 'danger of ignoring the shadow'? In deflecting attention away from the seeming negative issues shared by participants, I may have lost valuable opportunities: to learn something unexpected; to demonstrate my commitment to participant directed research; and to deepen trust! Opportunities to examine and expose some of the potential institutional constraints associated with the governance of schools may have deflected attention from any liberatory opportunities within the discussion. Any exercise of exposure, be it positively or negatively portrayed, can contribute towards an appreciation of a situation, encouraging hope and achievement of human well being and potential through action.

During a review of the research process undertaken a Trustee from School D declared his belief that "*not enough problems came out*". With an identifiable researcher predisposition to emphasise the positive in the shaping of the research conversations, participants may have perceived invalidation and/or non affirmation of the less positive perspectives they contributed to the discussion. Unwittingly, my researcher bias could have exacerbated participant perceptions of a relative power imbalance within the research group and the devaluing of local knowledge within the action research process. A potential outcome from this imbalance may be a diminishing sense of trust within the group, thereby reducing the depth of openness and disclosure likely to be granted.

Similar to Barge and Oliver's (2003) call for researchers to be able to 'appreciate' within a relational context, application of critical appreciative processes (CAPs) in this instance drew my attention to the limited interpretation I risk, should I overlook or deflect attention from discourse I perceived to be negative and hence, contrary to the positive/appreciative process I hoped to achieve. By 'appreciating', i.e. being

conscious of and taking sufficient account of, *all* modes of interaction within the context(s) it is set, those involved with appreciative inquiry are less likely to succumb to such risks. Reaching beyond the immediately pragmatic, into the social, economic and political context of organisational situations would be one way to demonstrate a willingness to hear about external stressors and thus prepare for a conversation of resistance or transformation that may be difficult or even painful. What might be appreciated, in such a scenario would be the courage and the fortitude of those seeking to contribute to democratic processes such as freedom, justice and equality.

10.2.3   Habermas - The lifeworld and system

The usefulness of Habermas' theory of communicative action for the critical analysis of field work has already been noted in this chapter. The repeated applications of the concepts of 'the lifeworld' and 'the system' within chapter 9 have illustrated how the theoretical work of Habermas provided a useful lens through which to interpret my experiences with school BOTs and their interactions with government. Conceptual parallels can be drawn between the potential domestication of BOTs by the state through practices which may encroach upon wellbeing and/or constrain achievement of the potential of Trustees, and Habermas' concern for the colonisation of the lifeworld of BOTs. While they may not have been aware of the domesticating influence, Trustees often identified the increasing presence of systemic influences within their activities:

> ❖ *…the kind of business management practices that you are required to do in schools now just didn't really exist (before Tomorrow's Schools);*
> ❖ *…80% of this job is bureaucracy…(and) it has become a defensive sort of environment because of that.*

Discussion in the preceeding chapter illustrated how under resourcing of Board activities often influenced day to day concerns of the Board. In doing so the attention of Trustees was deflected away from broader, strategic governance activities such as the representation of the community; potentially diminishing the ability of both Board and the school community to contribute towards democratic ideals.

Habermas' positing of an ideal lifeworld – a state of free and equal, undistorted communication (Swingewood, 2000) complements the dream phase of the 4D appreciative inquiry cycle (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000). It is the influence of system imperatives such as power, perceived status, and/or money which complicate interactions. Habermas describes how colonisation of the lifeworld by system imperatives may constrain communicative action. The potential negative influence which system constraints may have on the relationship between the BOT and school community is vocalised as one Trustee laments:

> *When you are a parent you just think 'They want **more** money from me! What do they think I am??.'...But once you are on the Board you understand...*

Continuing the example of the 4D cycle of appreciative inquiry, the potential tension between lifeworld and system spheres, must be taken into account as an appreciative inquiry enters the design and destiny phases. In the case of the Board of Trustees of School A, perceptions of this colonisation were seen to be so great that potential for further communicative action was 'closed down'. In the case of the Board of School D, a lack of operational funding was seen as the primary constraint of future actions.

From a methodological perspective, the foregoing discussion initiates consideration of how critical appreciative processes may be applied to facilitate emancipatory aspirations, such as the well being and (ongoing) potential development of Trustees. Stephens and Cobb (1999 p.30) identify 'ideal speech' as the social structure most likely to achieve emancipation, whether at a macro (government) or organisational level. The contribution to effecting change able to be made through dialogue was illustrated by the reaction of a Trustee from School B to the online discussion of governance:

> *Well it took me by surprise how much dialogue was there about governance when I went in to have a look...like I thought I had a fair idea on what it was, in my own perception, and after I read all that I was like 'Man, I'm confused'....There was just so much to take in, my perception of it had changed...and I couldn't just sit there and type... so I thought I'm not sure about this now....*

This Trustee acknowledged that the discussion had raised new questions for him to consider, and in doing so he begins to articulate how transformation and change may emerge. Ensuring a communicative space for the development of ideal speech conditions may also diminish the likelihood that BOTs might become harnessed to the interests of the state or principal rather than represent the interests of their school communities. At a pragmatic level the pressure of day to day expectations and requirements of government within an under resourced context may encourage Trustees to take shortcuts which may impede the development and nurturing of a communicative space.

So, can a critical (enhanced) appreciative inquiry as introduced within this thesis help create/facilitate a communicative space within which 'ideal speech' may develop? "A communicative space is constituted as issues or problems are opened up for discussion, and when participants experience their interaction as fostering the democratic expression of divergent views" (Kemmis, 2001 p.100). For example, School A began to recognise the benefits of dialogue as they articulated both their 'improved' interactions with other health schools and government officials:

> *...After the conference the contact has become more meaningful shall we say...Previously the Boards met to be 'talked to' by Ministry officials. At this one there was much more dialogue...*

Communicative space may be constituted in a variety of forms (Kemmis, 2001), including applications of ICTs such as the online forums implemented within this investigation. As noted in chapter 9 however, emancipatory potential of such applications should not be simplistically assumed.

Communicative space does not occur on its own, is not constant, nor achieved 'once and for all'. It must be facilitated and nurtured, be it through interactive, participative processes such as action research and/or appreciative inquiry or through day to day, moment by moment interactions. Within this space provision can be made to appreciate the various dimensions of the lifeworld; personal, cultural and social. The BOT of School A illustrates this appreciation for diversity in their recognition of the various contributors to their school community. In contrast, the BOT of School B may be at risk of not only assimilation, but of 'scheduling' interaction with the community

lifeworld; potentially weakening community values and identity rather than representing them as the BOT is mandated to do. The tight agenda adhered to by the BOT of School A (to ensure return travel arrangements could be met) further illustrates how time limits may constrain ideal speech situations, inhibiting the development of dialogue. That governance *is* interaction, and that potential for interaction should be nurtured and encouraged to emerge rather than be 'scheduled' was recognised by a Trustee from School A while reflecting on their meeting:

> *…just with us having the meeting here today…the different groups arrived from different places, we had this beautiful food on the table, but trying to get anyone to come and eat was a major (challenge) because there were little groups talking there, and little groups talking there. It's actually the face to face stuff isn't it that happens not officially as part of the meeting…*

Deetz's (2003) portrayal of communication as a social act which in its democratic form seeks to produce was identified in chapter 5. (Public) dialogue is essential if existing needs are to be critically assessed and transformed as part of the processes of participatory democracy. "For only by publicly discussing our needs can we assess their impact on the lives of others. And only by assessing their impact on the lives of others, can we determine their rationality, or compatibility with the general interest of all concerned" (Ingram, 1990, p.147). Appreciation of what is, and what might be as per an appreciative inquiry may be a useful first step to initiate such dialogue. I observed in section 10.1 how too narrow a focus on the technicalities of Ai implementation may detract from the development of an appreciative spirit. Such functional attempts may be a form of colonisation which researchers should guard against, lest emancipatory potential within the inquiry process be constrained. An enhanced application of appreciation as advocated within this thesis will ensure that liberatory potential, be it expressed in a positive or negative manner, is less likely to be overlooked. Within the context of this investigation, dialogue might profile the concerns raised in chapter 9 regarding resource constraints and/or the heavy workload of Trustees. Such dialogue may contribute to debate within the public sphere on the democratic processes by which government may be held accountable to the community and BOTs.

Continuing the conception of an appreciative inquiry, appreciating the present as well as what might be provides a platform from which plans for the future may be developed. Within these plans there is further scope for the formation of a communicative space (the location for ideal speech) as promoted by Habermas. Kemmis (2001 p.100) proposes that part of the 'task' of action research is to open communicative space and "to do so in a way that will permit people to achieve mutual understanding and consensus about what to do….". To this end, application of a critical appreciative inquiry may be similar to many other action research practices. The value added through the application of a critical appreciative process is the greater depth of understanding that may be achieved through the combination of the two approaches, as well as the explicit focus on emancipatory ideals.

The preceding discussion has introduced critical appreciative processes and illustrated how they have been applied within the context of this thesis. Potential for transformation has been unleashed through their application within the research process at two levels. First, within the realms of school governance the need to look beyond issues of 'efficiency and effectiveness' towards emancipatory ideals concerned with the freedom and ability of Trustees to address the broader concerns of their mandated task has been highlighted. The way in which applications of ICTs may enhance or diminish this ability has also been considered. Second, school governance may potentially make a significant contribution towards processes within our democratic society. Challenges identified within the market driven aspirations of Tomorrow's Schools reforms illustrate how democratic processes should be driven by aspirations of freedom, participation and equality rather than market forces.

It is important to recognise that these applications are works in progress and that the examples described here are not the only facets of critical theory and/or appreciative inquiry which may be applied. Research situations and the relationships within them are unique. Accordingly, some theories may prove more relevant than others in subsequent applications, depending on the circumstances of the investigation.

Guided by reflection, I have identified areas of this investigation which I could perhaps have either examined further (had time and/or participants allowed), or even done differently. As a research process, appreciative inquiry cannot be 'held responsible' for issues of application. I must be, for it was through my actions and influence as a researcher that decisions were made with regard to time, planning and approaches taken. Thus, I now turn my attention inwards, considering the influence of my presence within the research process, the influence this process has had on my personal development, and on who I may yet become as a researcher and teacher.

10.3   First Person Action Research

> *"Who you are at the beginning is not necessarily who you are at the end"*
>
> *(Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p.30)*

The importance of identifying and reflecting on my contributions within the research process and the influences I may have had on the process was recognised in chapter 2. My early attempts at self awareness were also described in chapter 2. Identity is not static however, so there is no unitary response to these concerns. Similarly, the research process has been interactive with others, as well as myself, identifying outcomes where the process has influenced my own development. In combination these influences contribute to the third path of my PhD journey, and are shared here in the hope that the reader may begin to glimpse some of the less explicit outcomes of my PhD process.

In many respects the application of critical appreciative processes described in the previous section incorporate first person action research practices. Potential for transformation comes not only through new applications, but through understanding and changing ourselves and our practice. Transformational change may be reflected in subsequent revised iterations of research practice. In this instance, a critical analysis of the research process also required self review of the contribution and influence of myself as the researcher. I found self reflective questions such as *why did this outcome surprise me*? particularly enlightening as I began to challenge preconceived ideas I had subconsciously brought to the research process.

Such questions set the scene for a range of reflective processes. Building on the self awareness initiated in chapter 2 as well as the enhanced applications of appreciation supported within this thesis, in the following section I begin to describe my appreciation of my interactions within this investigation.

What did I bring to the investigation?

What effects did the investigation have on me?

Harris (2001) observes how a researcher 'constructs' the research setting. Subsequent to my researcher driven initiatives of topic choice and invitations to potential participants, I worked separately with each of the four Boards, each 'constructing' their own setting. Four seemingly separate case studies became interlinked in my mind. In chapter 2 I acknowledged how my understanding of a situation will be influenced by my previous experiences, while in chapter 9 I described my growing awareness of how my own view of governance had initially been 'flavoured' with the distinctiveness of my time as a Trustee at a small semi rural, decile 10 school. I learnt more about the diversity required within community based school governance through my attendance at the Board meetings of the participating schools than I would ever learn from formal training sessions. For this I thank the participating Boards.

Initially I perceived my identity within the research process as a fellow Trustee, parent, and researcher. It was only when prompted by reading of literature that I also framed myself in terms of age, gender, and ethnicity. Although some participants, particularly those from School A, may have viewed me as an 'expert' it was an identity I did not feel comfortable with. These feelings of discomfort grew as the research progressed; emerging into areas and outcomes I had not anticipated. Perceptions (although premature) of 'failure', and the challenge of 'not getting it right first time' were relatively new experiences which took some getting used to! As someone whose family describes as 'bit of a control freak'[1], I had to learn to 'let go', and allow the research to take its participant determined course, whatever that may (or may not) be. For example, I experienced frequent angst over the issue of whether or not I should have taken a stronger leadership role within the discussions. Early

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[1] Evidence of my controlling nature can be seen in my unwillingness to have someone transcribe the research tapes for me.

transcriptions highlighted to me my tendency to attempt to fill a pause in conversation, rather than sit and see what develops. I made a conscious effort in later sessions to let these pauses in discussion be – only to find myself worrying about should I have done more? In doing so, I began to explore and implement notions of systemic thinking (Marshall, 2004a).

While presenting some preliminary insights at a Doctoral Symposium in 2004 (Grant, 2004b), feedback I received suggested my findings had been presented in an 'unappreciative way', and as such were contrary to the vocabularies of hope I had been promoting/encouraging participants to adopt. Was I 'wrong' *again*? Kerdeman (1998) suggests that genuine learning takes place when we question what we think we know. By doing so, I gradually came to recognise this mode of representation as paving the way for my critical analysis of appreciative processes. The first few iterations of analysis (as described in chapter 9 and parts of chapter 10) still had a noticeable functional, structural orientation. I struggled against these influences, with regard to both process and presentation. Eventually I began to recognise the formative influence of the functionalist style dominating much of the literature I had been working with. Emerging skill and competence at viewing literature through alternative theoretical lenses, such as my identified epistemological preferences of social constructionism and critical theory, began to be reflected in my analysis and interpretation.

My findings (such as those presented in chapters 9 and 10) while not all positive and glowing, reflect a greater awareness and understanding of the processes and interactions which have emerged during the last four years. As such, I have come to 'appreciate' in the greater sense of the word, just as my thesis encourages other researchers to do. The style in which my interpretations have been presented also help signify the struggles I have faced, as my developing mind sought to adopt new lexicons. The struggle with 'appreciation' was not in isolation. Throughout chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 I recognised the difficulties I encountered as my mind sought to break beyond the constraints of its original functionalist trainings, and encompass broader, more relational approaches. My chosen epistemological framework of social constructionism was often at risk of domination, from the literature presented as well as my mind straying back to 'easier', 'more comfortable' modes of analysis. In many

ways my emerging, developing lifeworld was battling 'traditional' systemic expectations and requirements. I believe the scene is now set for me to begin to challenge the functionalist, mechanistic metaphor which often dominates organisational literature. The challenge will be an ongoing one, for increasingly I recognise mechanistic lexicon within my own everyday discourse. Even social constructionist approaches, my now proclaimed epistemological preference, have the mechanically inclined functions of 'construction' and 'de-construction' as their base!

I remember expressing some (then current) concerns and frustrations to my supervisor during the early stages of the PhD process. She reminded me that 'a PhD is a marathon not a sprint' and 'to be patient!' Janesick (2000) observes how metaphor in general creeps up on you, surprises you. Sure enough, the enormity of this seemingly simple metaphor has become evident. To me, the PhD marathon/journey is set in a cross country environment, with a number of hurdles to overcome along the way. But also, a marathon is ultimately about a person stretching themselves to a limit, and seeking to achieve a personal best.

Self emancipation was identified in chapter 2 as both an impetus for and outcome of first person action research processes. Throughout the PhD journey I have written various 'think pieces'(Grant, 2003), similar to the reflective notes included at the conclusion of chapters 3, 4, and 5. Often these pieces were written with a sense of frustration, as a means of verbalising an issue I was struggling to identify and address. Marshall (2004a) describes this process as articulating notions of living systemic thinking. Two examples of these think pieces, one from the early stages of my journey in 2002 and a second from the later stages in 2005, are shared in Tables 10.1 and 10.2 respectively. The second piece highlights how I had perceived my development as a researcher up until that point as being linked to respondents, working with them, information gathering in the field and so on. My struggles while re-viewing literature highlights my need to be aware of how I interact with *all* resources and forms of information. Secondary information, such as scholarly literature is also a crucial part of the research process – it must have been or I would not have got so stressed over the internal struggles I experienced! I now recognise how my ability to interact with written words has also developed……and will continue to do so. I find evidence of

this form of development (and the self recognition that goes with it) to be both encouraging and frustrating – lifting that metaphorical bar of achievement yet higher!

Gergen (1991) observes a Western preoccupation with the concept of a unique individual. Perhaps then it is the market driven Western culture which often assumes individuals will act according to motives of self gain that may lead these same individuals to steps of self preservation, and an unwillingness to open up and share our innermost thoughts. The vulnerability that is experienced as one articulates processes of first person action research is well noted in literature (M. Harris, 2001; Marshall, 2004a; Marshall & Mead, 2005), yet I have also found the process to be transformational. The process of verbalising my hopes and fears has helped me to better identify and understand the changes that have been occurring within me. Consistent with my original appreciative inquiry intentions, I am now better placed to build on these changes as I move into the future.

Marshall (2004a) espouses her willingness to accept that she cannot know everything. My own acceptance that knowledge is not static has not necessarily been easily translated into pragmatic outcomes however. My reflective encounters begin to expose my struggles. Expressions of the dynamic nature of knowledge do not reduce the discomfort and feelings of inadequacy I experience at a personal level. I found myself reluctant to discard early drafts – just in case I needed to come back to them, and because I was 'attached' to a particular section or line of thought. The PhD journey has reinforced to me how sense making processes are always open for revision! This thesis is only one tangible outcome from a long, complex and incomplete journey. Maintaining the metaphor, I have begun to realise the overall importance of the entire journey - the perceived or anticipated outcome(s) may never eventuate. Gergen (1999b) suggests there is value in doubt – a transitional but necessary phase towards appreciating the potential of social constructionist based modes of inquiry. If this is the case, I am currently experiencing my advocated enhanced applications of the concept of appreciation at both practical and theoretical levels.

Table 10.1

Stop, look, and listen… The power of reflection (December 2002)

In recent weeks (months!) I have been becoming increasingly frustrated at my self perceived lack of progress. Work, family and community commitments increasingly encroached on the time I had mentally allocated to 'study'. As this perceived tardiness grew, so too did my discontent and stress. I was falling into a degenerative cycle- in direct contrast to the appreciative inquiry (Ai) focus of my research! Advice my husband gave me earlier in the year resounds in my head: "Practice what you preach, apply the Ai concepts to your life not just your research".

I had almost filled two and a half exercise books with notes and ideas before I realised the importance of sitting down, retracing my thoughts and idea, in order to redirect my progress. Constant (albeit self inflicted) pressure, the drive to be 'doing', searching for ideas in support of my thesis drives me to constant reading. Nagging thoughts get to me as I trudge through the reading…I begin to realise that if it is boring me then it does not inspire me, and hence does not fit the passion and drive which has signalled the key progress made to date on my thesis. Fear is ever present, but what if I miss something that could be crucial? At times I feel like a child faced with a massive smorgasbord of unknown delicacies. I feel the need to taste a bit of everything in case I miss something 'good'. There does not seem to be enough time to delve as deeply as I need into each portion. And what is the outcome of such constant sampling? A headache and I am not necessarily any further ahead and/or better off. Time after time the same names appear in my reading, until I become confused as to who takes what stance. I sit down to revisit notes I have made from an earlier session and *voila* the importance of reflection and structure is once again impressed upon me…Slow methodical steps, guided by instinct as well as application, theory, (and of course good supervision), are required to put me back on track and achieve the 'progress' I strive for.

In tandem with the perception that I must be 'doing' something (in this instance reading is the action), is the fear that not enough is being put on paper. I should be writing, I should have something to show for my time (to myself and to others- not the least my family who are banished from the house for days on end!). I have read of the importance of writing but again am stumped. I have little of significance to write…again the importance of reflection solves this dilemma, as this current piece of prose illustrates.

We teach our children to stop, look, and listen as they set out on adventures to explore their worlds. As a researcher I have come to realise that we must remember to revisit this call, and apply it to our journey in search of knowledge. We need to 'stop' ourselves from being caught in the continuous cycle of 'action' which runs the risk of becoming a treadmill that never gets anywhere. Take a step back and 'look' at what we have achieved to date and how it compares with where we want to be now and in the future. And perhaps most importantly, we need to 'listen' to ourselves and those around us.

But wait! While it may never feature in my thesis proper, I now see that this brief outburst has met many of the objectives I have been searching for for weeks. I have something meaningful down on paper, I have rediscovered my focus, I feel renewed and refreshed. And how did I reach this? Reflection – I stopped, looked and listened!

Table 10.2

Stop, Look, Listen – AGAIN! (April 2005)

After almost two weeks of struggling with my literature review I come to the realisation of the need to stop struggling, and reflect. What was happening? Why could I not do 'it' to my satisfaction? Why? I realise that I have learnt so much over the last few years, that on the re-view of my work, the gaps are now painfully obvious. Is it this 'pain' that is causing the discomfort I am experiencing or is it just a mental block?

There is also an element of appreciation in my current struggle. I know I have already written some 'good' work towards my thesis draft, and this struggle is in part because of my difficulty in achieving an equivalent standard in this current chapter. I recognise my strengths as motivation to move forward!

But still I have grappled in 'problem mode' for two weeks before I found value in reflection. Recognising the need to stop and reflect is a jolt in itself. Why did it take me 2 weeks of struggle to realise this? Had I come all this way to stumble at the first lesson I had taught myself back in December 2002, in "Stop, Look and Listen"? There is still a long way to go as I develop as a researcher!

10.4   Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed key sections of the second and third paths of my PhD journey, my critical analysis of appreciative inquiry as a research method and reflection on my personal development through my involvements in the research process. Applications of critical theory have assisted me to consider influences I may have introduced to the inquiry through my application of appreciative inquiry, as well as communicative practices which occurred. The influences of power and language within the research process have been identified as key areas to consider as an investigation develops.

The discussion has highlighted how an appreciative inquiry might focus on changing how people think rather than what they do. Such objectives indicate powerful, emancipatory intentions. I have come to recognise how not achieving anticipated outcomes within the research process need not be perceived as 'failure'. In retrospect had I initiated a less functionally oriented research question at the beginning of this

investigation the door may have opened for more transformational outcomes. This observation does not suggest however, that my application was ineffective. New ways of knowing were introduced to each of the participating BOTs, and enduring consequences of the research may be seen in the enhanced applications of appreciation supported by this thesis.

Reflection and critique within this chapter has highlighted that appreciative inquiry should be seen as a process for, not master of change (Alvesson & Willmott, 2003). Perceptions of this potential change should not be restricted to expectations of tangible outcomes from the research investigation. My accounts of first person action research shared in this chapter illustrate how change might also occur at a personal level for the researcher.

I have highlighted within this chapter how knowledge is not static. In many ways this thesis is a 'snapshot', reporting a moment in time. Akin to the discovery phase of the 4D cycle of Ai, identifying and describing my current stage of development is a precursor to further transformation and development. Change, at what ever level it occurs, may evoke a response. New beginnings are hence the focus of the final (next) chapter of this thesis.

Chapter 11
New Beginnings

"A person is not a fixed entity but forever a possibility in motion –
actualised as perspectives are adopted and realised in action"
(Gergen, 1999a, p.170)

11.0   Introduction

Typically a report or thesis ends with the presentation of conclusions and suggestions for further research. Remaining true to the metaphor of a journey invoked throughout this thesis to describe my PhD process, I perceive the 'conclusion' to be just the beginning of many more paths on a 'journey of life' - for myself, as well as fellow researchers and those in the community who seek to further enhance the well being and potential of humanity.

I approach this chapter through a combination of reflection and anticipation. I draw attention to some specific observations made as a result of this investigation that contribute to the fields of research methodology, governance in the not for profit sector and schools in particular, and to the transformational aspirations of critical theory and appreciative inquiry. This review is followed by discussion of areas of concern that have arisen from my work. I highlight these concerns so as to provide 'signposts' for future journeys. Signposts provide information. In this instance they also serve as a signal that further attention is required. They express my hope that further research may be conducted in the areas highlighted so that we may begin to address the issues at hand. Finally, I share the anticipation that has begun to grow within me. This PhD journey is but a beginning, and I am excited at the prospect of new challenges which may contribute to my future research, as well as my personal development.

11.1   Summary and contributions

I began this investigation with what I now recognise to be somewhat functional intentions, influenced by functional and market driven perceptions of 'efficiency and effectiveness'. I sought to identify current and potential applications of ICTs that might assist a school BOT enhance their governance activities. Although this objective remained important to me throughout the research my aspirations deepened to also encompass emancipatory concerns as to how such applications may/may not contribute towards the well being and further development of Trustees. There appears to be a paucity of scholarship providing in depth research relating to BOTs at individual school level, so this research contributes towards filling this gap. Similarly, research oriented toward ICT use within education has tended to focus on pedagogical and/or administrative applications rather than strategic activities such as governance. This research begins therefore, to also address this imbalance.

Scholars such as Blyth (2002) and Burt and Taylor (2000) suggest that while many not for profit organisations currently underutilise ICTs, there is scope for applications which may potentially provide a means of strategic enablement. Consistent with such suggestions, a variety of levels of application and potential for application were identified within my investigation. Some groups, such as the BOT of School C appear to be well on the way to using ICTs in a manner that supports governance activities, while others, such as the Board of School D, were struggling and/or display little inclination to identify what/if enabling capabilities might be able to be achieved. Potential applications of ICTs identified during this research process may be 'helpful' to BOT governance processes, but are not necessarily consistent with the emancipatory intentions aspired to within this investigation. Growing awareness of the already heavy workload of participating Trustees and concern for the well being of these individuals heightened my understanding of the potential disciplinary effect of efforts to achieve systemic gains. Choices appear to be made to apply ICTs with a view to 'streamlining' governance processes. Such action contributes to an outcome more akin to functional concerns for 'efficiency and effectiveness' than critical aspirations of improved well being and further development of one's potential.

It would be misleading and overly simplistic however, to only assess these observed outcomes from a 'what' perspective, disregarding related issues of 'how' and 'why' (Boyd, 2001). To do so might incorrectly imply that any use of ICTs is an indicator of 'success' and that non-use should be deemed a 'failure'. Those Boards who chose not to pursue ICT applications expressed commitment to the values and concerns of their members. As with most activities within an organisation however, the decision to use or not use ICTs and levels of such adoption are never static. As new members and/or new circumstances present themselves, new attitudes and perceptions will influence the approach(s) taken by the Board to governance activities, including the (non)use of ICTs.

In parallel with my increasing awareness of the limitation of functional and mechanistic paradigms of research I became increasingly wary of deterministic approaches to technology and/or its applications that still predominate in the literature. Enchanted by the transformational aspirations of critical theory and the methodological potential of Ai to 'make a difference', I embarked on the investigation with the recognition that any participants in this research have the potential to transform governance processes *through their choices and actions* regarding ICTs. Merely describing the attitudes participants have towards the use of ICTs does not fully express the transformative effect of our mutual engagement. Internet access and usage appeared to be accepted unquestioningly by some Trustees while for others the medium was of little interest. Perceptions held by individual Trustees were identified as most likely to influence the decision to implement potential applications (or not) of technology within the BOT environment. Perceptions of relevance, both with regard to the technology itself and the content of the application are key influences. These perceptions may also be influenced by related perceptions of resourcing.

Leadership attitudes and values of members are identified in literature as key influences on decisions affecting the ICT adoption process (Berlinger & Te'eni, 1999; Blyth, 2002; Burt & Taylor, 2000; Schneider, 2003). Although statute prescribes the chairperson as 'head' of the Board, in several of the participating BOTs the attitudes and perceptions of the principal appeared to be the dominant leadership influence on the adoption of ICT applications at a Board level.

As I extended my focus beyond the initial interest to contribute to the functional improvements to governance in schools I came to see the extent to which attitudes and values of school Trustees are influenced by the bigger picture of the social, political and cultural environments within which they operate. The participant driven nature of the research process saw a complementary focus emerge, as some participants took the opportunity to explore issues of governance more deeply. In doing so we began to address Miller-Millesen's (2003) call for richer, deeper consideration of what Boards actually do, rather than provide a prescriptive account of what they should do.

As my analysis and reflection deepened so too did my awareness of imbalances of power and the potential for exploitation within the environments of the participating BOTs. Domination of Board processes, be it by a principal or government requirements, is contrary to the aspirations of community empowerment promoted as part of the Tomorrow's Schools reforms under which BOTs were established. My engagement with critical analysis drew my attention to the emergence of emancipatory ideals that might challenge the neoliberal assumptions still prevalent since the reforms to education governance which took place in the 1980s and 1990s. The challenges of community governance appear to have been 'normalised' by many members of the community who are serving 'on the front line'. I call for further research to deepen this awareness, so that informed changes can be made through government policy to provide communities with the resourcing required to achieve purported levels of empowerment. In doing so I also set the scene for further investigations, considering the extent to which the processes and concerns I have identified within education governance may also be manifest in other parts of society.

Through discussions, observation and reflection it became evident to me that attempts to enhance governance, such as through the applications of ICTs, will be of minimal effect if efforts are not made first to better understand and resource the governance efforts of school Trustees. Uncritical uptake and application of ICTs will contribute little towards addressing emancipatory concerns. Use of ICTs will not address issues such as those associated with resource constraints and competitive influences. Indeed, it could be said that some applications of ICTs may amplify problems when they 'free up' Trustees so that additional tasks such as fundraising can also be undertaken. ICT

applications, be they intended as tools or as strategic enablers, may help redistribute the load of governance, but until the content of this load is more critically considered and/or made lighter it will still be a load, and may even be potentially dangerous! At what point might the intentions of enablement become exploitation?

Devolution of power to the community was purported as an intended outcome of the Tomorrow's Schools reforms through which BOTs were created. Scholarship, including this investigation, illustrates that decentralisation provides a more accurate description of the power relations between BOTs and government. Emancipation, concern for the well being and potential development of school Trustees, was an aspiration of my own research. In many ways, my observations within this investigation suggest the concepts of devolution, decentralisation and emancipation to be poles apart. But do they need to be? Drawing on Eikenberry and Kluver (2004), I suggest this incongruence has been fuelled by the adoption within education of organisational approaches and values of the market sector. A similar wide spread effect has been evident across the not for profit sector, influenced by the economic reforms which took place in New Zealand during the 1980s and 1990s. Greater harmony between 'efficiency', 'effectiveness' and 'enhanced governance' may be achieved if change is motivated by the aspirations of democracy and citizenship. Relationships and interaction at any level can be facilitated and/or constrained by dialogue. Democratic processes and ideals may help create a communicative space within which 'ideal speech' might develop.

On reflection I (now) smile at the somewhat naivety of my initial approach to the investigation. Reviews of literature had ill-prepared me for an investigation which would eventually invite me to 'stray' from my intended journey with its singular and focussed path. Few scholars have described unsuccessful attempts at research (Grant, 2003, 2004b, 2005b; Mirvis & Berg, 1977) or discussed at length complex and time consuming aspects of the research process such as finding, establishing, and maintaining sound relationships with research participants. I had identified my chosen theoretical lenses and preferences of social constructionism and critical theory through which I sought to base and develop my investigation, yet I had underestimated the underlying dominance of my earlier functionalist modes of thought, encouraged and developed throughout my undergraduate studies. As I

became more confident in working with emergent research processes (as contrasted with prescriptive 'cook book' approaches) I have found some of the value in the appreciative inquiry process resides in its ontological foundations, rather than the mechanics of its implementation. I have observed first hand how appreciative inquiry may provide a means through which people change how they think, rather than change what they do (Bushe & Khamisa, 2004). Within this viewpoint the somewhat functionalist orientation of my original research questions may not have been the most appropriate approach, and may have stymied my appreciative inquiry application to some extent.

My critical analysis of appreciative inquiry as a research method contributes to our understanding of how this approach can be applied within a research context. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) have noted the difficulty of applying critical theory to empirical work, so the empirical basis of this research enhances this area of scholarship. Consistent with suggestions by Alvesson and Deetz (2000), the combination of empirical research and this mode of critique has illustrated that critical theory need not be constrained by negativity. Through conscious application of a critical theory lens, my awareness and understanding of relations between power and language within the research process has intensified. As a result of this new awareness I advocate for enhanced definitions and applications of appreciation within the research process. Appreciation can be much more than a focus on what is good. I also encourage people 'to know, to be conscious of, to take full and sufficient account of'. Whereas critical theory often seeks transformation at an abstract level, application of appreciative inquiry begins to address pragmatic issues of transformation. Applying the heightened sense of appreciation to this work, and combining this experience with an amplification of the transformational aspirations of critical theorists, the critical appreciative processes (CAPs) (Grant & Humphries, 2006) developed within this thesis have shown how transformational potential may be achieved at multiple levels. Embedded influences such as imbalances of power may be highlighted, better understood, and where desired transformed to serve the emancipatory aspirations of participants. In this instance, governance has been enhanced at the micro/individual school BOT level. I have also begun to consider more deeply how school governance processes, and governance protocols more generally, facilitate and/or constrain

democratic principles across society and are thus integral to the strength of society and ways in which democracy is experienced within nations.

Bridging the apparent paradox between traditional critical and appreciative approaches has provided theoretical opportunities rather than generate problems. My thesis illustrates that appreciative inquiry need not deflect attention from engagement with complex ideas, particularly those which may express 'the shadow' of participants consciousness; while critical theory need not be dominated by an overly negative focus. In chapter 1 I expressed my wariness of promoting a mantle of arrogance. Who am I to pose questions people were not necessarily asking themselves? Critical appreciative processes provide a means through which I may address this concern. I now recognise that as a citizen I have a mandate to enhance democratic ideals. As a scholar I remind myself that the posing of provocative questions that might challenge the status quo is consistent with the principles of Ai. The potentially productive tensions between critical theory and appreciative inquiry can contribute to the development of new research and practitioner activities (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000), endorsing Flood's (2001) emancipatory concerns for people's well being and the development of their potential. The counter balance provided by such tension may reduce the risk of distortion which may occur should one approach dominate indiscriminately.

11.2   Concerns

Analysis undertaken as part of this investigation has raised several concerns for me. These concerns however, in no way reflect on the activities of the individual Boards with whom I was privileged to have shared part of this journey. Each Board presented itself as a blend of capable and dedicated individuals, intent on serving their own community to the best of their ability. My concerns relate to the implications that might be inferred when my observations are considered at the broader, macro level of social organisation.

Lewis' (2004) observation that schooling provides a powerful exemplar through which to consider the restructuring of the state was noted in chapter 3. Kelsey (1997, p.291) describes government attempts at decentralisation and/or devolution as "the privatisation of dependency". Promoted as a means of "empowering the community", she observes this "double speak" to be an under funded means of shifting a burden [of responsibility] from the state to volunteers, who are assumed to have limitless capacity for unpaid labour "in the community". My experiences and observations within this investigation support many of Kelsey's concerns. Established under the purported objective of devolution of power to individual school communities, it appears schools and observers have come to accept an environment which more closely resembles the decentralisation of power (Boston et al., 1996; Wylie, 1997a, 1999). Yet, this investigation suggests to me that even this level of decentralisation may be at risk, as inadequate resourcing by government (Wylie & King, 2004) accompanied by increased standardised reporting and accountability requirements undermines attempts by Trustees to implement localised governance and management approaches which meet the unique needs of their individual schools. The issues highlighted within the analysis of this inquiry run deeper than what a functionalist 'fix it/improve it' orientation may seek to achieve. The responsibilities of school BOTs within the greater sphere of our democratic society must be considered more deeply.

Habermas' concepts of the lifeworld and system have provided a useful framework through which to consider the interaction(s) between BOTs and government. The prevalence of instrumental directives faced by BOTs has been identified, highlighting the potential systemic requirements of government may have to 'colonise' the lifeworld of BOTs. Issues of domestication may be further replicated should the ideas and leadership of the principal dominate Board processes. Internal democratic processes of the Board, as well as democracy at societal levels may be diminished through these domestication influences.

While all the school leaders I worked with doubted that any school would wish to return to the administrative environment which preceded Tomorrow's Schools, it is a major concern that a lack of funding was identified by Boards at both ends of the decile scale as restricting their governance activities. The special character, local goals and unique circumstances exhibited by each Board within their approach to

governance may be insufficient to circumvent the challenges of a lack of operational funding. An observed consequence of this under resourcing was that financial matters and related outcomes often dominated Board activities, often to the detriment of other activities. Related to this concern is the issue of Trustee workloads. Trustees at all participating schools reported a lack of time to adequately complete their duties, yet appeared to accept this limitation as 'part and parcel of their role'. Time and funding constraints suggest BOTs may be being prevented from reaching their true potential. Purported empowerment of the community appears to have a heavy cost attached to it, both for schools and individuals. The true costs to society of this so-called empowerment must be considered more critically.

It is perhaps a related consequence of under funding that a support network proposed to one of the participating BOTs in this investigation met with a hesitant reaction. Within the paradigm of a market economy, roll numbers correlate to funding dollars. Hence schools that may be seen to compete against each other for students (and hence funds) may be reluctant to support each other. It is sad, even discouraging, to contemplate that principles of self governance may have reached the point that 'self' is taken too literally; that there is little room for networking and support amongst those who might under any other circumstance be considered like minded people. For such attitudes to be developing (and hence reflected) within an environment as influential on future generations as is a school is alarming. If left unattended, the social costs associated with this neoliberal mind set may reach far beyond school staff/Board rooms and playgrounds.

My concern over how the leadership and ideas of the principal at times appeared to dominate Board processes, for example with regards to modes of communication, was identified in chapter 9. From a social constructionist perspective communication is a significant part of organisational processes, and hence may be central to perceptions of democracy (Wellington, 2005). If allowed to spread to the extent that this dominance is applied across the realm of Board processes and activities, then alarm bells should sound within the community! I suggest this ad-hoc delegation of power may occur when overworked Trustees are unable to attend to governance related issues in as timely a manner as they might like. To leave decision making and/or action taking to the 'on the spot' principal may be seen as an 'efficient' alternative.

While the ideals and attitudes of the principal may not be a form of covert state domination, it still puts the ideals of community governance at risk to the dangers of particularism (Salamon, 1987). Further research is needed to investigate the extent to which this ad-hoc delegation of power occurs throughout schools, and if similar issues regarding Board/CEO relations are also manifest at a more general level within the community/voluntary/not for profit sector.

'Fuzzy', poorly defined lexicon such as the rhetoric of partnerships which underpins the concepts of BOTs and Tomorrow's Schools has been associated in literature with ideas of third way politics (Curtis, 2003; Larner & Craig, 2002). In terms of Habermas' theory of communicative action, the ambiguity of such language could be seen as inhibiting the ability of stakeholders involved to develop a dialogue which facilitates mutual understanding and agreement (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000). Third way politics have been said to encourage "a depoliticised form of engagement with the citizenry through partnerships between government and 'civil society'" (Kelsey, 2002, p.52). Kelsey (2002, p.79) proposes such 'partnerships' to be "a euphemism for conferring responsibility without power" on groups such as school Boards. She both warns and challenges government however, observing "partnerships create expectations and demands that may lead to backlash if people are engaged with no visible returns"(Kelsey, 2002, p.84). This investigation has begun to highlight some of the high, and to certain extents hidden, costs to the community of the ideals of democratic process. Within the context of this research the cost is borne by individuals, schools, and their communities. I suspect further research would identify other areas within the community which also struggle with this associated burden of purported empowerment. I suggest the time has come for community and government to work together so that these concerns may begin to be addressed.

11.3 Excitement and anticipation

The personal dimension of the research process/journey has been far greater than I anticipated. The processes associated with the personal development phase of this journey have often taken me out of my comfort zone; challenging and changing my approach to my research and expectations of academia, as well as my approach to life in general. (My family assure me this is for the better!) There is a degree of sadness as this part of my life's journey draws to an end; after all it has been a major focus of my life for the last four and a half years! But feelings of sadness are tempered with the excitement and anticipation I feel for the future.

Management literature reviewed within this investigation illustrates how this stream of scholarship often has a strong positivist and functional orientation, providing purported 'clear cut' and 'objective' boundaries and observations of empirical experiences. Prescriptive advice on how problems an organisation may be facing should be addressed may also be provided. Increasingly set against a backdrop of neoliberal policy, function (by way of purpose or utility) is seen as the primary organising principle (Rohmann, 2000), with 'the market' best able to determine which 'functions' are optimal. Advocates suggest the clearly defined boundaries and resulting categories applied within these approaches facilitate understanding of the situation under investigation. Also, through eliminating elements of uncertainty, greater control over the situation may be implied. (Perhaps these outcomes go some way to explaining why undergraduate management qualifications espouse these approaches! Indeed, my experiences in writing this thesis have highlighted how my undergraduate degree in management ensured I was skilled in instinctively perpetuating the functionalist approach in my work and research activities).

In line with the identified 'objective boundaries' categories are established by scholars and practitioners, for example to distinguish between activities attributed to those areas of society commonly identified as government, business and not for profit 'sectors'. Understanding of activity and organisations within each category may purportedly be 'enhanced' through replication of functional and positivist approaches to management research (Salamon, 1994, 2002; Salamon & Anheier, 1997); to the extent that specific rights, responsibilities and even values and opinions may been

assumed to be synonymous with a particular sector. I recognise such categories to be social constructions, i.e. artificial boundaries and demarcations that distinguish one group of people and their activities from another, imputing identities to concepts to negotiate or impose meaning, which in turn may provide a medium for the transfer and development of knowledge, understanding and action. The level of unquestioning acceptance within our society with regard to these categories is so great however, that they are rarely challenged in everyday discourse; and thus may provide an implicit 'structure' within which our daily activities occur.

Functionalist approaches to organisation and research invoke for me a mechanistic metaphor. I perceive a 'machine' within a functionalist paradigm as representative of the 'fix it' mentality often associated with problem oriented approaches to research. Both invoke strong control connotations which concern me. A machine is typically calibrated to operate within clearly defined boundaries. Specifications are set to reflect what has been identified by the 'expert' as the optimum settings. But what if an alternative application/approach/activity is sought by those who must use the machine? A change/challenge to the specifications is one possible approach. But why not challenge the existence of the machine itself?

Continuing a critical line of thinking, a mechanistic approach may be seen to be synonymous with adjectives such as 'robot like', 'unconscious', 'involuntary' and 'automatic'. Each of these terms removes consideration of any human involvement and subsequent interactions. The ability of individuals and communities to influence their actions, (guided by values and beliefs), and associated outcomes is overlooked. Subjectivity, shaped by experience, is undervalued and the existence of alternative realities may not be recognised. Further, 'mechanistic/mechanical' terminology may invoke perceptions of 'power driven'. For advocates of technology, such vocabulary may seem indicative of advancement. Yet supporters of a critical approach may instead hear alarm bells ringing! Who is driving this power? What are the sources and influences of such power? Does the normalisation of machine oriented approaches to organising human activity diminish the opportunities for practicing the organisational disciplines required for democratic ideals to be realised? Does this metaphor enhance the risk of hegemonic control of communities through their domestication, where community interests may be subsumed by state and/or market interests?

Not only do such approaches seek to undermine the local knowledge held by participants of any activity under consideration, but they may also encourage 'deficit discourse' (Ludema, 2001), which I have suggested may encourage dependence on 'expert others'. Through this thesis I have challenged such problem oriented approaches through the application and subsequent critical analysis of appreciative inquiry as a research method. As my journey has progressed, so too has my discomfort with the functional/mechanistic approaches taken in much of academic literature. In terms of the metaphor discussed above, I believe my development as a scholar has reached the stage that I am now theoretically and discursively more able to challenge the mechanistic metaphor which prevails through much of the lexicon of management based scholarship. Invoking Habermas' concepts of the lifeworld and system, I begin to challenge the colonisation of my own lifeworld (Welton, 1995). In doing so I seek not only an alternative approach to understanding organisational activity, but also a new vocabulary through which I might extend my understanding, and negotiate new meaning(s) with others. My new lexicon will contribute towards my own 'vocabulary of hope' (Ludema, 2001), both mandating and enabling my responsibilities as a citizen and scholar who seeks transformation towards emancipatory ideals.

Organisational scholars are pressing beyond the constraints of the functionalist and mechanistic approaches to their work. They are developing alternative paradigms and approaches such as qualitative, interpretive (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) and critical (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000; Alvesson & Willmott, 2003; Smircich & Calas, 1995) orientations to challenge both researchers and practitioners. Increasing recognition within organisation theory of the benefits of adopting a holistic approach to management has encouraged consideration of spirituality and the values shared by members of an organisation (Benefiel, 2003; Garcia-Zamor, 2003; Neal & Biberman, 2004). Similarly, alternatives from different cultures (such the Eastern philosophy of Taoism) and ecological approaches (such as Gaia theory) are becoming more visible in Western society.

Efforts to develop new and creative paradigms in the organisational disciplines are still embryonic leaving researchers, such as myself, who seek alternative lexicons faced with a literary foundation of functional accounts of mechanistic activities. My personal experience while writing this thesis attests that there is no easy way to integrate such differences. Through inclusion of a formal reflection on each area of literature reviewed in chapters 3, 4 and 5 of this thesis I have been able to share with the reader my angst and frustrations as I 'outgrow' my functionalist researcher origins, as well as begin to articulate what I hope may become a more generative lexicon and process through which to contribute to organisational research and education. Wittgenstein (1922) pronounced 'the limits of my language are the limits of my world'. Thus; it is difficult to challenge such approaches when one is still developing suitable alternative lexicons. Even my acknowledged theoretical preference of social constructionism has mechanistic connotations, while Flood's (2001, p.140) emancipatory aspirations which have provided an important influence within this investigation identify human existence as restricted by *"instruments of re-engineering* in today's drive for efficiency and effectiveness"! (emphasis added) Perhaps a re-conception of the social constructionist paradigm as *social creation* and an associated lexicon may be developed further to provide a more helpful epistemology.

Processes such as applications of appreciative inquiry (although not necessarily structured to the extent of Cooperrider and Whitney's (2000) 4D cycle) which encourage us to consider 'stories' through various lenses provide a helpful place to start. Each new story provides a context within which new lexicons may develop. Already I have several potential areas for investigation simmering in my mind, within which I may begin to integrate my own developing knowledge gained thus far with the ideas of some of the scholars noted above. In addition to my interest in exploring further the idea of social creation introduced above, my thoughts are also turning to the following areas which I hope to explore and develop further….

This investigation has confirmed how Trustees may benefit from a thoughtful, deliberate process which encourages Board members to closely consider processes of governance (Nobbie & Brudney, 2003). While appreciative inquiry processes may encourage Trustees to reconsider their existing activities through new lenses, I am

also excited about the potential that alternative theoretical approaches to governance may offer. Bradshaw's (2002) socially constructed story telling metaphor may provide a useful alternative to school BOTs (and other community based Trustees) who at times appear constrained by the prescriptive functionally based approaches which dominate literature and training. Governance reframed within the metaphor of a story telling entity becomes the process of questioning, challenging, testing and refining the organisation story (Bradshaw, 2002). Application of governance approaches within this paradigm may help free Trustees from some of their prescriptive tasks, and instead encourage them to engage in critical reflection and proactive behaviour.

New lexicon which may develop from redefinition(s) of organisational stories might then be applied to other areas of not for profit activity. For example, BOT efforts to address financial short falls may be considered through the developing scholarship of social enterprise. Critical appreciative processes may provide a fruitful means through which to consider this potential paradox. Similarly, tasks such as strategic planning and accountability may become more meaningful and valuable to the Board and its stakeholders when framed within a discourse which reflects their own values and intentions rather than those imposed by neoliberal/market driven expectations.

There are also new stories to be investigated, as school Trustees begin to consider how their activities contribute beyond their individual schools to the wider sphere of democratic society. What perceptions of accountability to Trustees have, and do their actions match their perceptions? Do their actions enable democracy and manifest the will of the community? Why? Why not? Any attempts to challenge domesticating/colonisation influences such as those identified within this investigation will potentially enable further transformation across society.

Chapter 1 opened with an account of "The Station". Have I reached my 'station' within this context? I hope not! Knowledge is not static, and nor (I now realise) am I. Consistent with the enhanced application of appreciation I have advocated within this thesis, I believe I have only just begun to 'appreciate' the journey ☺ .

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Appendices

Appendix 1

<u>National Education Guidelines (NEGs)</u>

The National Education Guidelines are defined by Sections 60A of the Education Act 1989

The National Education Guidelines have four components:

1   **National Education Goals**, which are

i)   statements of desirable achievements by the school system, or by an element of the school system; and

ii)   statements of government policy objectives for the school system

2   **Foundation curriculum policy statements**, which are statements of policy concerning teaching, learning, and assessment that are made for the purposes of underpinning and giving direction to –

i)   The way in which curriculum and assessment responsibilities are to be managed in schools:

ii)   National curriculum statements and locally developed curriculum

3   **National curriculum statements,** that is to say statements of :

i)   The areas of knowledge and understanding to be covered by students; and

ii)   The skills to be developed by students; and

iii)   Desirable levels of knowledge, understanding, and skill, to be achieved

4   **National Administration Guidelines (NAGs)**, which are guidelines relating to school administration and which may (without limitation) :

i)   set out statements of desirable codes or principles of conduct or administration for specified kinds or descriptions of person or body, including guidelines for the purposes of section 61;

ii)   set out requirements relating to planning and reporting including

iii)   communicate the Government's policy objectives

iv)   set out transitional provisions for the purposes of national administration guidelines

The National Education Guidelines are given effect by three parts of the Education Act

- section 61 (2) which states:

The purpose of a school charter is to establish the mission, aims, objectives, directions, and targets of the Board that will give effect to the Government's national education guidelines and the Board's priorities.

- section 61 (4) (b) .

A school charter must include the Board's aims, objectives, directions, priorities, and targets in the following categories:

... (b) the Board's activities aimed at meeting both general government policy objectives for all schools, being policy objectives set out or referred to in national education guidelines, and specific policy objectives applying to that school:

- and section 62 (2) which states

A school charter must be prepared and updated in accordance with national administration guidelines.

Source: Ministry of Education. http://www.minedu.govt.nz

Appendix 2

<u>National Education Goals</u>

Education is at the core of our nation's effort to achieve economic and social progress. In recognition of the fundamental importance of education, the Government sets the following goals for the education system of New Zealand.

1   The highest standards of achievement, through programmes which enable all students to realise their full potential as individuals, and to develop the values needed to become full members of New Zealand's society.

2   Equality of educational opportunity for all New Zealanders, by identifying and removing barriers to achievement.

3   Development of the knowledge, understanding and skills needed by New Zealanders to compete successfully in the modern, ever-changing world.

4   A sound foundation in the early years for future learning and achievement through programmes which include support for parents in their vital role as their children's first teachers.

5   A broad education through a balanced curriculum covering essential learning areas. Priority should be given to the development of high levels of competence (knowledge and skills) in literacy and numeracy, science and technology and physical activity.

6   Excellence achieved through the establishment of clear learning objectives, monitoring student performance against those objectives, and programmes to meet individual need.

7   Success in their learning for those with special needs by ensuring that they are identified and receive appropriate support.

8   Access for students to a nationally and internationally recognised qualifications system to encourage a high level of participation in post-school education in New Zealand.

9   Increased participation and success by Mäori through the advancement of Mäori education initiatives, including education in Te Reo Mäori, consistent with the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.

10   Respect for the diverse ethnic and cultural heritage of New Zealand people, with acknowledgment of the unique place of Mäori, and New Zealand's role in the Pacific and as a member of the international community of nations.

Source: Ministry of Education. http://www.minedu.govt.nz

Appendix 3

NAG 1

Each Board of Trustees is required to foster student achievement by providing teaching and learning programmes which incorporate the New Zealand Curriculum (essential learning areas, essential skills and attitudes and values) as expressed in National Curriculum Statements.

Each Board, through the principal and staff, is required to:

(i)   develop and implement teaching and learning programmes:

   (a) to provide all students in years 1-10 with opportunities to achieve for success in all the essential learning and skill areas of the New Zealand curriculum;

   (b) giving priority to student achievement in literacy and numeracy, especially in years 1-4;

   (c) giving priority to regular quality physical activity that develops movement skills for all students, especially in years 1-6;

(ii)   through a range of assessment practices, gather information that is sufficiently comprehensive to enable the progress and achievement of students to be evaluated; giving priority first to:

   (a) student achievement in literacy and numeracy, especially in years 1-4;

and then to:

   (b) breadth and depth of learning related to the needs, abilities and interests of students, the nature of the school's curriculum, and the scope of the New Zealand curriculum (as expressed in the National Curriculum Statements);

(iii) on the basis of good quality assessment information, identify students and groups of students;

   (a) who are not achieving;

   (b) who are at risk of not achieving;

   (c) who have special needs (including gifted and talented children)

and

(d) aspects of the curriculum which require particular attention;

(iv) develop and implement teaching and learning strategies to address the needs of students and aspects of the curriculum identified in (iii) above;

(v) in consultation with the school's Maori community, develop and make known to the school's community policies, plans and targets for improving the achievement of Maori students;

(vi) provide appropriate career education and guidance for all students in year 7 and above, with a particular emphasis on specific career guidance for those students who have been identified by the school as being at risk of leaving school unprepared for the transition to the workplace or further education/training.

NAG 2

Each Board of Trustees, with the principal and teaching staff, is required to:
(i) develop a strategic plan which documents how they are giving effect to the National Education Guidelines through their policies, plans and programmes, including those for curriculum, assessment and staff professional development;
(ii) maintain an on-going programme of self-review in relation to the above policies, plans and programmes, including evaluation of information on student achievement;
(iii) report to students and their parents on the achievement of individual students, and to the school's community on the achievement of students as a whole and of groups (identified through 1(iii) above) including the achievement of Maori students against the plans and targets referred to in 1(v) above.

NAG 3

According to the legislation on employment and personnel matters, each Board of Trustees is required in particular to:
(i) develop and implement personnel and industrial policies, within policy and procedural frameworks set by the Government from time to time, which promote high levels of staff performance, use educational resources effectively and recognise the needs of students;
(ii) be a good employer as defined in the State Sector Act 1988 and comply with the conditions contained in employment contracts applying to teaching and non-teaching staff.

NAG 4

According to legislation on financial and property matters, each Board of Trustees is also required in particular to:

(i)   allocate funds to reflect the school's priorities as stated in the charter;

(ii)   monitor and control school expenditure, and ensure that annual accounts are prepared and audited as required by the Public Finance Act 1989 and the Education Act 1989;

(iii) comply with the negotiated conditions of any current asset management agreement, and implement a maintenance programme to ensure that the school's buildings and facilities provide a safe, healthy learning environment for students.

NAG 5

Each Board of Trustees is also required to:

(i)   provide a safe physical and emotional environment for students;

(ii)   comply in full with any legislation currently in force or that may be developed to ensure the safety of students and employees.

NAG 6

Each Board of Trustees is also expected to comply with all general legislation concerning requirements such as attendance, the length of the school day, and the length of the school year.

Source: Ministry of Education. http://www.minedu.govt.nz

Appendix 4

Information Sheet for Participants

1. Title of Project:

An appreciative inquiry into the current use and potential development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) by New Zealand Primary School Boards of Trustees in fulfillment of their governance function.

2. Researcher(s) name and contact information:

Suzanne Grant

9 Diomede Glade

Hamilton

Email: slgrant@waikato.ac.nz   Ph 021 387 587

3. Supervisor's name and contact information:

Assoc. Professor Maria Humphries

Waikato Management School

University of Waikato

Private Bag 3105

Hamilton

Email: mariah@waikato.ac.nz

4. Brief Outline of the Research Project (what is it about and what is being investigated):

This investigation considers the current and potential application of ICTs by school Boards of Trustees as they fulfill their governance role. Use of ICTs may include, but not be restricted to, technologies such as telecommunications, personal computers, digital cameras, software packages and the Internet. This topic is of particular relevance given that the Ministry of Education has signaled its intention to establish electronic communication with schools in the near future. The appreciative inquiry approach used for this investigation focuses the research on what already works well within the organisation, and how these strengths can be built on with regard to potential use of ICTs by school boards. The study will contribute towards improved governance, management and leadership within New Zealand schools.

5. Company or Organisation sponsoring or funding the research:

New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) supported this research with a study award in 2002.

6. Explain how any publications and/or reports will have the consent of participants, and how the anonymity of participants will be protected.

As this is an action research project, participants will be actively involved in the research process. As well as involvement during the data collection and analysis stages, participants will be given draft transcripts, case studies etc to approve prior to publication. If requested, the identity of schools and individual participants will be protected through the use of pseudonyms. Research findings will only be shared between schools should all participants agree to do so.

7. How will your processes allow participants to:

   a) **refuse to answer any particular question, and withdraw from the study at any time**

   b) **ask any further questions about the study, which occur during participation**

   c) **be given access to a summary of the findings from the study when it is concluded.**

Any individual or school Board of Trustees may seek further information, decline from answering a particular question, or withdraw from the study by indicating their wishes to the researcher at any time during the research process. Participants will be provided with summaries of their specific research context at the conclusion of the research.

8. Explain what will happen to the information collected from participant.

Interviews will be transcribed for analysis. As noted above, participants will be involved with the analysis process. Data will be archived for a minimum of 5 years following completion of the thesis, as per University of Waikato PhD requirements.

Appendix 5

<u>Ethics Consent Form</u>

THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO

Waikato Management School

An appreciative inquiry into the current use and potential development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) by New Zealand School Boards of Trustees in fulfilment of their governance function.

Consent Form for Participants

I have read the Outline of Research Project form for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out on the Information Sheet.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Outline of Research Project form.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's Name and contact information:

        Suzanne Grant
        9 Diomede Glade
        Hamilton
        Email: slgrant@waikato.ac.nz   Ph 021 387 587

Supervisor's Name and contact information:

        Assoc. Professor Maria Humphries
        Waikato Management School
        University of Waikato
        Private Bag 3105
        Hamilton
        Email: mariah@waikato.ac.nz

Appendix 6

(Questionnaire to be completed by each Trustee, prior to the introductory session)

<u>ICT usage by School Boards of Trustees – PhD/Action Research Investigation</u>
<u>Background Demographics Individual Questionnaire.</u>

Please complete the following questions, either circling as appropriate or filling in the space indicated. Feel free to continue open ended answers on another sheet of paper if necessary. All personal data will remain confidential, but is required so that I can collate a demographic profile of each school Board.

If you have any questions regarding this questionnaire, please contact me.

Thank you for your assistance.

<u>Suzanne Grant</u>
Ph 07 854 0616 (evenings)
Ph 021 387 587
Email: slgrant@waikato.ac.nz

1. School

……………………………………………

2. Trustee's Name

……………………………………………

3. Gender   Male   Female

4. Age: 20-29   30-39   40-49
                  50+

5. Ethnicity: NZ European   Maori   Pacific Islander
                 Asian   Other (please specify)………………

6. Occupation

……………………………………………………………………………..

7. No. of years on this School Board   <1   1-3   3+

7a. Do you have experience from serving on other School Boards of Trustees

Yes   No

If yes, how long was/is this service?...

8. What is your role on Board   Parent rep   Co-opted
                                 Staff   Principal
                                 Ministry Appointed

9. Do you have access to a personal computer?

        Yes, (at home)   Yes, (at work)   No

9a. Do you use this computer?   Yes   No

10. Do you have access to the Internet?

        Yes, (at home)   Yes, (at work)   No

10a.   Do you use the Internet   Yes   No

11.   Do you use email?

                Yes, (at home)   Yes, (at work)   No

12.   What portfolio/positions do you hold on this Board of Trustees (e.g. chairperson, secretary etc)

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13.   Why did you choose to serve on this School Board of Trustees?

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14.   What skills and/or experience do you believe you contribute to the Board?

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Appendix 7

<u>ICT usage by School Boards of Trustees – PhD/Action Research Investigation</u>
<u>Background Demographics School Questionnaire</u>

Please complete the following questions, either circling as appropriate or filling in the space indicated. Feel free to continue open ended answers on another sheet of paper if necessary. The information requested in this questionnaire will with the development of your school profile within the research case study. If you have other information you would like to contribute, e.g. copy of your school charter, school profile, strategic plan etc, please attach it to this questionnaire.

If you have any questions regarding this questionnaire, please contact me.

Thank you for your assistance.

Suzanne Grant
Ph 07 854 0616 (evenings)
Ph 021 387 587
Email: slgrant@waikato.ac.nz

1.   School

………………………………………………………………………………

2.   Decile rating   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3.   Roll as at beginning Term 1 2003………………………………..

4.   Does your school have an internet web site?   Yes   No

If yes, what is the address?

………………………………………………………………………………………

If yes, who is responsible for updating the site?

....

5.   Does your school use email?   Yes   No

If yes, for what purposes?

Administration

Teaching

Communication with parents

Communication with Ministry of Education

Other (please specify)

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

6.   Is your Principal involved in the Laptops for Principals' scheme?

                                    Yes   No

7.   Does your Principal have their own email address?

                                    Yes   No

If yes, how often do they use it?

Daily   2-3 times a week   Once a week

2-3 times a month   Once a month   Never

8.   Does your Principal use "Leadspace"?

Daily   1-2 times per week   1 -2 Times per month

Never

9.   Do you advertise either your school web site or email addresses?

Yes   No

If yes -

how?...

10.   What is the size of your Board of Trustees?

…… Parent Representative(s)

…….Staff Representative(s)

……..Principal

……. Co-opted Member(s)

…….. Ministry Appointed Representative(s)

If I require any further information, who should I contact?

…………………………………………………………………………………

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