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**An investigation of the relationship between governance, decision-making,  
and school effectiveness: a case study of four high schools**

Behnaz Mohajeran  
*University of Wollongong*

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An Investigation of the Relationship  
between Governance, Decision-Making,  
and School Effectiveness: A Case Study of  
Four High Schools.

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the  
degree

*Doctor of Philosophy*

From

University of Wollongong

By

Behnaz Mohajeran

Bachelor of Educational Management and Planning, Master of Educational  
Management

Faculty of Education

2006

# **Thesis Certification**

## CERTIFICATION

I, Behnaz Mohajeran, declare that this thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualification at any other academic institution.

(Signature)

Behnaz Mohajeran

31 August 2006

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank and acknowledge the following individuals for their valuable contribution to this thesis:

To my supervisors Associate Professor Narottam Bhindi and Professor Stephen Dinham who shared their experiences and perceptions with me throughout the research process and also for their personal support, and my previous supervisor Professor Terry Burke who guided and supported me kindly during the early phases of my research.

To Professor Barry Harper, Dean of Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong, who supported this study through his generosity to providing editorial support, and to the Associate Dean (Research), Professor Jan Wright who helped me to solve my problems during my study.

To Peter Keeble who has given his valuable time to read this work and for his kindness and friendship in assisting me with the necessary professional and editorial revisions.

To the participants who shared their experiences and perceptions with me.

To my dear husband Alireza, who gave me the love, space, energy, and support to enable me to continue my study and who gave so much of his time to caring for our son during the time that I spent in my office, and to my dearest son, Iman who tolerated his mum's university days and who provided constant inspiration for successful completion of my study.

## **ABSTRACT**

The Purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between governance, decision-making, and particular indicators of school effectiveness: parental involvement, professional development of teachers, planning and budgeting, facilities and resources and student outcomes. The study focused on the Principal, teachers, parents, and students of four high schools in the Wollongong area of NSW. The schools represented different governance arrangements: one government; one independent Catholic; one independent Christian parent-controlled; one Catholic systemic. Each school represented a case study in which was applied mixed-method research utilising quantitative and qualitative approaches including questionnaire, semi-structured interview and document review.

The results indicate similar approaches to and constraints on governance/decision-making across the four schools. An apparent relationship between type of governance and school effectiveness was not established. Different governance structures were not shown to have major impact on different school effectiveness indicators.

However, a clear finding was that the Principal is central to the management and direction of decision-making in the school more so than any factors or differences there may be in other aspects of governance. It is not just the structural and hierarchical aspects of the Principal's role that is important, but how he or she directs and manages school governance.

The centrality of the Principals in these schools, the way they perceived and enacted their roles both generally and in relation to the roles of other stakeholders, and their participation in school decision-making, were thus critical in the governance of their schools.

The findings of this study, as of other studies, were inconclusive on relationships between other structural governance factors and school effectiveness indicators, and suggest that the Principal's impact on such indicators as student outcomes may be significant but indirect. The study findings do, however support other findings on the importance of the Principal's role – their perception of it and the roles of others related

to it, their personal and professional capabilities, and the extent to which they lead and involve others collaboratively in school governance and decision-making.

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