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**The Complexities and Tensions of School Governance: A Case Study of the Governing
Body of an Australian Independent School**

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Abstract

This research presents and explains the role and work of the governing body of an Australian independent school and explores the complex and dynamic interplay of factors that influence the educational and governance practices of the School Council. My experience as a member of a governing body of an independent school led me to investigate the world of independent school governance. A review of the literature on corporate governance, nonprofit governance and school governance provided insights into the theoretical underpinnings of governance models; however, these were revealed as one-dimensional and inadequate to explain the complex and dynamic governance environment of an independent school. The majority of the literature was founded in normative prescriptions for governance, with little support from empirical investigation and a paucity of empirical research on governance in the independent school sector was noted. The literature also revealed the growing influence of corporate governance ‘best practice’ models and principles on nonprofit organizations and schools. The conventional governance literature therefore offered few tools with which to study governance in an independent school, and required investigation beyond the governance literature to identify an appropriate theoretical approach as a framework in which to interpret, structure and present research findings from a case study research method. Bourdieu’s sociologically based thinking tools of *habitus*, *capitals* and *field*, together with the complementary conception of organizational culture of Schein, were selected to illuminate and explain the different facets of the complex integrated social processes of governance of an independent school by its governing body. The case study research method facilitated access to rich data, through twelve months of observations at School Council meetings, interviews and documents, on all aspects of the governing of a large, well established, metropolitan, independent school by its School Council, including cultural and social practices. An auxiliary qualitative research method, in the form of interviews with members of governing boards of ‘like’ independent schools, assisted to frame the themes that emerged from the data sets and placed the case study school in the context of these schools.

The major findings of this case study are organized into five themes; namely the specificities of educational governance, accountabilities, culture, school ownership and gender. Governance in a school context presents unique challenges, including the complexity of stakeholder management, the presence of stakeholders as members of the governing body, and the relationship between the governing body and the school Head. That relationship is undergoing significant evolution in response to the dual nature of the role of the contemporary school Head as Chief Executive Officer and

Educator-in-Chief. Defining and operationalizing the roles of the School Council *vis-à-vis* the school Head presents significant challenges and is influenced by the experience of the school Head as a Chief Executive Officer relative to his or her experience as an Educator-in-Chief, and the collective skills and experiences of School Council members. The School Council's conception of accountability, for the authority conferred upon it to govern the School, was identified as a significant generating structure for the governance practices of the School Council. A clear notion of accountability to the Church that owned the School, to parents, to students (present and past) and to staff informed the work of the School Council. The School's history informed and shaped the School's culture and the deeply embedded assumptions that guided and constrained the work of the School Council. The School Council was faced with the challenge of responding to emerging 'hyper competition' between like schools for excellence in academic scholarship, within the cultural construct of an all round educational journey, laid down by the School's founder some one hundred years previously. The ownership of the School by a mainstream Christian Church created a significant tension for the School Council, who saw their role to govern the school as an entity separate to, although owned by the Church. In governing the School, the School Council's focus was primarily to strengthen and develop the School as an institution and educational services business. The School Council facilitated the conversion of religiosity to values so the School could respond to the expectations of its predominantly secular clientele. The Church, however, saw the School as an integrated part of an organization, and had a different approach to governance. Issues of interpretation of the Church's mission, financial contributions by the School to broader Church activities and appointments to and composition of the School Council created points of tension between the Church and the School Council. The final theme that emerged from the data concerned gender. The School, specializing in boys' education, was an environment shaped and dominated by men. Although there was gender diversity on the School Council, with two female Councillors in a Council of nine members, the data revealed that the cultural capitals valued within the School Council privileged male Councillors. This dynamic was a significant influence on the governance practices of the School Council. Communication styles also privileged male Councillors, although were moderated to some extent by cultural norms of respectful communication and decisions by consensus.

The contestation between the governance role of the School Council and the management role of the School's Head and how that contestation shaped governing and managing tasks in the School was a central theme in the findings. The interfaces between the School Council and the Head were a source of continual tensions and required ongoing and skilful oversight by the Chairman of the School

Council. These tensions were replicated in the interfaces between the Church, as the owner of the School, and the School Council, as the governing body. The Chairman also had a critical role in navigating these interfaces. The findings reflected a universal theme in the corporate governance and nonprofit governance literature of tension at the boundary of board and management and the call for an approach founded in a notion of ‘shared accountability’ and governance practices that are responsive to the specificities of the organization.

The findings of this research may inform the educational and governance practices of governing bodies of schools, and in particular independent schools. Schools will benefit from governance practices that enable them to be contemporary learning environments, while remaining responsive to their own context, ethos and stakeholders. Given the paucity of empirical research on independent school governance, the findings of this research may also inform further governance research in this sector. Although the structure of governance is broadly similar across independent schools, the sector is characterized by significant diversity in terms of type, size, focus and stakeholders and there is an opportunity to understand the influence of these factors on governance practices. The choice of research method for this research and the methodological issues addressed during the study may also contribute to the ongoing development of qualitative research approaches to educational research.

Declaration by author

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

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Schools, governance, boards, independent schools, culture, context, stakeholders, Bourdieu, accountability

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List of Acronyms

- ACARA Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ASX 200 Index of market capitalization weighted and float-adjusted stocks listed on the Australian Securities Exchange
MCEECDYA Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
NAPLAN National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy
OECD Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development
ISCA Independent Schools Council of Australia
SCSEEC Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood

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Chapter I

Introduction

Preamble

Upon graduation in the discipline of law in the late 1970s I worked in the legal profession in private practice and as a partner of a national commercial legal firm until the late 1990s. During my time as a practitioner I also completed a postgraduate degree in law, exploring emerging legal principles and new areas of government regulation. From this time my interest in governance led me to a second career as a non-executive director of companies and a board member of governmental and nonprofit bodies. Some sixteen years on I have participated in the governance of over twenty organizations across a diverse range of sectors and industries, including as a trustee of a Grammar School. Governance of organizations in all sectors has undergone a transformation in the time I have been serving on boards, in response to growing concern within the community about large scale organizational failures that have had significant adverse effects in economic and social terms. Governance changes that emanated in the corporate sector have been embraced, and in some cases mandated, for the nonprofit and government sectors and a ‘best practice one size fits all’ approach has emerged with limited empirical evidence in support. I saw these changes being implemented in the school where I was a governor and I began to question what was appropriate governance for an independent school, as a nonprofit organization entrusted with the care of children for a formative educational journey.

The Origins of this Study

In 2009 I commenced further postgraduate study, enrolling in a Doctor of Philosophy research degree with the support and guidance of the University’s School of Education. I had decided that I wanted to investigate the governance of independent schools to understand how governors saw their role and the factors that were determinative influences on their governing task. I did not want the lens of this further study to be law or business; rather I wanted to develop a deeper understanding of the context of school education to provide a foundation for exploring school governance. Although a School Council’s deliberations, decisions and actions, and relations with each other, with the school community and the broader community have far reaching and important impacts, school governing has, to date, not been a substantive focus for researchers in educational leadership and management.

I was aware that it is people like me most often selected as board members for independent schools; people far removed from the field of education, who have backgrounds in commerce and hold senior positions in the business community. We often reflect the product of an independent school

education and bring our business experience and networks to the School Council table. Yet we also bring preconceived notions of governance from other organizational contexts and may not appreciate the context and dynamics of schools.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

I located this study primarily within the literature of governance given the significance of the emerging governance trends and legal frame for independent schools. I reviewed literature on governance in the corporate sector, nonprofit sector and schools (government and independent). The literature revealed an increasingly corporatized approach to school governance, particularly the role of School Councils in the government sector, influenced by governance models and norms of for-profit and nonprofit organizations. Whilst the literature review identified normative prescriptions for the role and responsibilities of the governing bodies of independent schools and practices that are 'good governance', there is a paucity of empirical research to support these prescriptions and little empirical research which explore how governing bodies perceive their work or how they actually function. This study responds to that gap in the literature for empirical research and explores how in an Australian context an independent school is governed by its School Council.

The conventional governance literature offered few tools with which to study governance in an independent school. Whilst offering some theories to explain the purpose of boards as governing bodies, these theories are one-dimensional and inadequate to explain the complex and dynamic governance environment of an independent school. To make sense of the private social space of a School Council requires methodological approaches that will provide a framework within which to interpret and present the multiple facets of the governance task. For this study I therefore looked beyond the governance literature for an appropriate theoretical approach to provide a framework in which to interpret, structure and present the research findings. I chose Bourdieu's sociological thinking tools of *habitus*, *capitals* and *field* together with the complementary conception of organizational culture of Schein, to illuminate and explain the different facets of the complex integrated social processes of governance of a school by a School Council.

Research Method

I chose a qualitative research method, a case study, to facilitate access to observational and interview data on the work of a School Council; work which is fundamentally a set of cultural and social practices that occurs primarily in private settings and which is mediated by factors such as context, stakeholders and complex dynamic social interactions.

The case study School Council governed a pre-eminent, century old, independent, non-selective, metropolitan, single sex school, catering for boarding and day students from years P to 12, through three sub-schools, with religious affiliation to a mainstream Christian church (the School). The School had approximately 1700 students, including 150 boarders (in years 8 to 12) and strong forward enrolments. The School offered a comprehensive academic program to provide a broad liberal education based on the State's curriculum and new Australian curriculum, and performed comparably in the senior year tertiary entrance scores published by the State education authority against other leading schools.

Research Questions

I formulated the following research questions to illuminate the governance task and processes of a School Council of an independent school. These research questions were formulated in response to a gap in the literature on the governance of independent schools.

1. What is the role and authority of the School Council?
2. Does the School Council see itself as accountable for the authority it holds? If so, to whom, why and how?
3. What are the factors that have determinative influence on the way the School Council undertakes its work and why do those factors have determinative influence?
4. How and why does the School Council carry out its governing task?
5. How do members of the School Council relate with each other, the School community and the external world in relation to the governing task?

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into a series of chapters. The first set of chapters, chapters 2 to 6, contain the literature review and theoretical grounding of the research. Chapters 7 to 13, contain the research method and findings. Chapter 14 contains further discussion and the conclusion.

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SECTION ONE

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Introduction

The following five chapters present the different streams of literature that have informed this study of the governance of an independent school. This study is primarily located within the literature on the governance of organizations. The word ‘governance’ derives from the ancient Greek verb, ‘kybernáo’ which means ‘to steer’ (Clarke, 2007) and is today understood to mean the responsibility and accountability for the overall operation of an organization. The United Kingdom, the United States and Australia¹ have been selected as the appropriate jurisdictions to explore the literature as each is based on the English legal system with democratically elected governments and strong national interest, business, educational and cultural connections, which is reflected in their approach to organizational governance.

Chapter 2 examines the extensive literature on corporate governance. Corporate law and corporate governance theories, research and self regulation models of good governance have influenced the development of the literature and research on nonprofit organizations, including schools; although nonprofit organizations exhibit different characteristics to companies. Corporations and nonprofit organizations share a key governance feature; the organization is governed by a board comprised of individuals who are responsible and accountable for the organization. The influence of corporate governance has also spread to the emerging body of literature and research on school governance as a result of the now widespread practice in government schools of devolving governance to the school level and the creation of governing boards.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine the literature on governance of nonprofits and schools and identify an absence of research and literature on the governance of ‘private’ schools throughout the world.

Chapter 5 provides a summation of the governance literature and its significance for this study.

Chapter 6 moves beyond the governance literature to explore social conceptions that provide a theoretical frame for illuminating and explaining why school governors govern the way they do. A school governing body is a social construct; a group of people who are conferred collective authority and responsibility for the governing task. Bourdieu’s thinking tools of *habitus*, *capitals* and *field*, together with Schein’s complementary conception of organizational culture, can reveal and explain the social and cultural practices of the governing body.

¹ Governance of schools in New Zealand is also specifically explored

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Chapter 2

Corporate Governance

Defining the Concept

Corporate governance essentially ‘concerns the exercise of power in corporate entities’ (Clarke, 2004, p.1). It is the ‘system by which companies are directed and controlled’ (Cadbury, 1992, p.15). Contemporary definitions recognize that the system includes the relationships between the company’s board, management², shareholders and other stakeholders (OECD, 2004, p. 11). Other definitions acknowledge the role of a company within a broader economic and social context. For example -

In its broadest sense, corporate governance is concerned with holding the balance between economic and social goals and between individual and communal goals. The governance framework is there to encourage the efficient use of resources and equally to require accountability for the stewardship of those resources. The aim is to align as nearly as possible the interests of individuals, corporations and society. (Cadbury, 2004, p. vii)

Mechanisms of corporate governance are a combination of institutions, laws and norms which have evolved over time shaped by cultural, political, social and economic factors of the country (Clarke, 2007; Farrar, 2003; Eisenberg, 2005; Claessens, 2003; Guillen, 2000)³. Corporate governance is only part of a broader economic, political and social context that corporations operate within (OECD, 2004).

Corporate Model and Corporate Governance

An examination of corporate governance requires an understanding of what a corporation is and the different forms it can take. A corporation is a ‘... legal device by which legal rights, powers, privileges, immunities, duties, liabilities and disabilities may be attributed to a fictional entity equated for many purposes to a natural person’ (Austin & Ramsay, 2007, p. 5). Although there are many different legal forms of association for people who wish to co-operate for business or community purposes, such as partnerships, cooperatives and trusts, for many enterprises incorporation is

² The term ‘management’ and ‘executive’ are used interchangeably in this thesis to describe staff of the organization with management responsibilities.

³ In common law countries (eg Australia, Britain, United States of America, Canada (except Quebec), New Zealand, India, South Africa and Singapore) the legal regulation is a combination of legislation passed by different levels of government (eg Federal and State) and law made by judges. In civil law countries (eg European and South American countries, Russia, China) the legal regulation is by codifications of laws passed by legislature. Civil law is the most widespread system of law in the world. Countries with religious law systems or pluralistic systems combine elements of some or all of these major legal systems (eg Pakistan, Philippines).

compelling. Incorporation can be achieved through registration as a company, registration as an incorporated association or created by a special legislation, such as public authority corporations.

The advantages of a corporate structure have allowed the company to become the dominant form of economic organization across the world (Cadbury & Millstein, 2005; CAMAC, 2006). Today corporations⁴ play a key economic and social role in society and are integral to everyday life (Monks & Minnow, 2004).

In Anglo-American jurisdictions, the laws, regulatory systems and internal systems of control for companies have created a system of governance which features dispersed equity ownership, separation of ownership and control and disclosure based regulation (Farrar, 2008; Clarke, 2007). This ‘outsider’ based system depends on an active external market for shares (Farrar, 2008).

A more explicit approach to corporate governance has been developed over the last twenty years as a result of discontent with company performance, large corporate collapses and a rapidly changing economic environment. Governments recognized that the governance of corporations is a key element in a country’s economic growth and efficiency and for stable financial markets and systems (OECD, 2004). Recent governance reform began in the United Kingdom in 1992 with the development of a *Code of Best Practice* for companies (Cadbury, 2002). This work led to the development of an international governance code by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2004) and to specific industry codes (e.g. financial services) and codes developed by institutional investors setting out standards expected of boards of companies in which they invest (Cadbury, 2002).

Work has been ongoing on this self-regulatory approach and codes of best practice now form an important part of the governance framework for listed companies in the United Kingdom, United States and Australia. The basis of a code of best practice is to articulate principles and practices for good governance, to enable boards to be more effective and contribute to corporate accountability and require disclosure by boards as to how they have approached compliance. The codes have focused on clarifying the role of the board and the division of responsibilities between boards and managers. It has become accepted that a balance of regulation and soft law, through self regulatory mechanisms, will enhance corporate governance. A body of normative literature has developed to expand upon the principles of the codes and present ‘best practice’ governance documents and processes.

The global financial crisis brought to light corporate governance failures. Recent reports by the IOSCO (2008) and the OECD (2009) have identified severe corporate governance weaknesses in risk

⁴ From this point the terms ‘corporation’ and ‘company’ are used interchangeably in the text.

management, executive remuneration, board practices and the exercise of shareholder rights as key causes of the global financial crisis. Notwithstanding the increased focus over recent years on risk management in corporate governance codes and regulatory frameworks, the OECD report noted that ‘one of the greatest shocks from the financial crisis has been the widespread failure of risk management in what was widely regarded as institutions whose specialty it was to be masters of the issue’ (OECD, 2009, p.31). The OECD report concluded that the governance weaknesses could be addressed by more effective implementation of the existing OECD Principles of Corporate Governance (2004).

Notwithstanding the need for enhanced levels of accountability, there is concern that the growth and consolidation of shareholder power over the past two decades and the influence of proxy advisory firms, has moved beyond a mechanism for accountability into the realm of constraining Boards and management from managing in the long term (Lipton *et al.*, 2010). Many major institutional investors have short term trading objectives which are not aligned to the interests of other shareholders and the company’s long term success. Governance bodies in the US, UK and Australia are responding through a new focus on the responsibilities of shareholders and proxy advisory firms, such as initiatives to increase the transparency of how proxy advisory firms formulate their voting recommendations.⁵

Related to the issue of how a corporation conducts its business is the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR), that is, a commitment by business to contribute to sustainable economic development (WBCSD, 2002). Interest in CSR is growing due to the increase in the role and influence of the private sector in the global economy, the increasing scrutiny of organizational activities aided by global and instant communications, the more prominent roles of non-government organizations and the global nature of many environmental and health issues (ISO, 2008; CAMAC, 2006; Cadbury, 2002). To date, international discussion has largely focused on the conduct of multinational and other large private sector companies (CAMAC, 2006); however, the focus is spreading to all corporations and the notion of a ‘social licence to operate’ is entering the discourse.

Political and Theoretical Basis for the Corporate Form

There are two different schools of thought for the basis of the right to incorporate in Anglo-American jurisdictions. On one view the right to incorporate is seen as an extension of the property rights of individuals and their freedom to contract and associate (‘property conception’) (Farrar, 2003). Under this conception, the corporate form is an extension of the shareholders and has the same rights.

⁵ For example, the UK Stewardship Code published by the Financial Reporting Council in 2010.

The alternate view is that the right to incorporate is a concession from the State and the rights of the corporate form are separate from and not derived from the property rights of the shareholders ('social entity conception') (Allen, 1992).

The difference between these conceptions was not particularly relevant with early corporate forms when shareholders had close involvement in the management of the company. However, with the rise of the large, multi unit modern business enterprise from the late 1800s, professional management and dispersed shareholding, the consequences of the separation of management and ownership came into focus (Chandler, 1997). These two conceptions have informed the development of a number of corporate governance theories. Early economic theories attempted to explain the firm, and develop mechanisms to deal with the issues thought to come from the separation of ownership and control in large publicly traded corporations (Branson, 2001). These theories had little regard for the inherent complexity of organizations and the institutions and rules that shape their operating environment. Over time other governance theories, some complementary, some contradictory to economic based theories, have been developed from the fields of law, finance, sociology and psychology. There is an emerging consensus that no one theory will illuminate the spectrum of corporate governance as all theories have flaws (Stiles & Taylor, 2001). Some researchers are endeavoring to understand whether some theories are more appropriate to particular governance phenomena and others are using methodological pluralism in their research.

Economic Theories

Classical economic theory proposes that the market, through a series of exchange transactions co-ordinated by the price mechanism, determines the most efficient allocation of resources (Coase, 1937). Economic theory explains the existence of business entities as a way of reducing the costs of using the price mechanism and assumes that maximization of profit is the prime driving force of these entities, the same as for the classical entrepreneur (Berle, 1965). The primary economic theories relating to governance of corporations are agency theory, shareholder value theory and team production theory.

Agency theory emerged in the 1970s and has become the dominant theoretical framework for corporate governance (Clarke, 2007). It aims to explain and resolve the issues of goal conflict and agent monitoring arising from the agency problem created by the separation of ownership and control (Alchian & Demsetz, 1972; Jensen & Meckling, 1976). In agency theory a firm is a series of 'constantly renegotiated contracts contrived by an aggregation of individuals each with the aim of maximizing their own utility' (Clarke, 2002, p. 4; Jensen & Meckling, 1976). Shareholders are

principals who engage managers as their agent to conduct the business of the company. This contractual relationship requires the principal to delegate decision making authority to the agent. Underpinning this relationship is the assumption that the principal and the agent are both utility maximisers and therefore the agent will not always act in the best interests of the principal. The principal therefore, as part of the contract, provides incentives to the agent to act appropriately and monitors the activities of the agent. The costs of the incentives, the monitoring and any reduction in the optimal outcomes for the principal because of the agency relationship are ‘agency costs’ (Jensen & Meckling, 1976).

Agency theory relies on the property conception of corporations and assumes that shareholders are owners of the corporation with consequential rights of control over private property. However shareholders own equity which confers limited rights against the company (Blair, 1995). Under agency theory the rights of stakeholders, such as employees, creditors, and others are strictly limited to statutory, contractual and common law rights (Allen, 1992). Researchers have used agency theory to espouse a range of governance mechanisms that solve or mitigate the agency problem. For example, aligning the interests of the principal and agent through agent ownership in the organization (Jensen & Meckling, 1976); the threat of takeover to orient a corporation’s decision process (Fama & Jensen, 1983) or through outcome based contracts where outcomes are measurable and controllable (Eisenhardt, 1989). A comprehensive study by Stiles and Taylor (2001) examining large UK public companies concluded that assumptions that the board needs to be an independent controller of management activity was warranted only in extreme conditions. Once a threshold level of monitoring has been established, board effectiveness is characterized by a ‘cooperative relational process enhanced by development of board-trust relationships between board members’ (p. 118). They found that trust and control are interdependent as boards operate in complex and uncertain conditions. ‘Control mechanisms serve to focus members’ attention on organizational goals, while trust mechanisms promote decision-making and enhance cohesiveness’ (p. 124).

Since the 1980s the economic approach to corporate governance has been supported by shareholder value orientation which demands that companies be managed so as to maximize shareholder value (shareholder value theory) (Lazonick and O’Sullivan, 2000; Clarke, 2002). Like agency theory, shareholder value theory is founded on the belief that the market, not the organization, should control the efficient allocation of resources (Fama & Jensen, 1983; Jensen & Meckling, 1976). Corporate resources should only be allocated so as to maintain shareholder value and any free cash flow should be distributed to shareholders as a resource which can then be reallocated to an efficient

alternate use. Under this model the rate of return on corporate stock becomes the critical performance measure for a company (Lazonick & O'Sullivan, 2000). The validity of this theory has been challenged on the basis that it creates an unsustainable environment for company performance (Lazonick and Sullivan,2000).

A competing economic hypothesis about the nature and purpose of the public corporation called 'team production theory' has been proposed by Blair and Stout (1999). They argue that a "public corporation is a team of people who enter into a complex agreement to work together for their mutual gain" (1999, p. 278). Participants, including shareholders, employees and other stakeholders, voluntarily contribute resources and relinquish important rights (including property rights) to the corporation in order to benefit from the production of the corporation. Team members give up control rights as they understand 'they would be far less likely to elicit the full cooperation and firm-specific investment of other members if they did not give up control rights' (1999, p. 277). Explicit contracts are not appropriate as the joint production is too complex and fluid. Control over the assets of the corporation is exercised by an internal hierarchy 'whose job is to coordinate the activities of the team members, allocate resulting production, and mediate disputes among team members over that allocation' (1999, p. 251). The board of directors sits at the peak of the hierarchy holding absolute authority. The primary job of the board is to act as trustees for the corporation itself, not as agents for shareholders to pursue shareholders' interests at the expense of other stakeholders. Directors are to protect the interests of the corporation and thereby all the interests of the team members. Corporate law and culture encourage directors to act in the interests of the corporation. Team production theory has been criticized for only being workable in a narrow set of conditions (Coates, 1999).

Organizational Theories

Agency theory and other economic approaches to corporate governance have been criticized by a number of organizational theorists as being too restrictive and reducing corporate governance to the issue of control of managers by shareholders (Learmount, 2002). Labeling all motivation as utility maximization does not explain the complexities of human action (Doucouliagos, 1994). The dominance of economic approaches to corporate governance over many decades has meant organizational approaches to corporate governance have been less developed theoretically and have had less influence on policy development (Clarke, 2002). Organizational approaches to corporate governance are based on a more complex concept of the firm and generally allow for more positive orientations of the participants (Clarke, 2002). The principal theories area managerial hegemony theory, stewardship theory and stakeholder theory.

Managerial hegemony theory posits that the board of directors is ineffective to control managerial behaviour or be decision makers (Galbraith, 1968; Herman, 1981; Vance, 1983). Under this theory the real authority within a company is held by corporate management as they have an intimate knowledge of the business and exercise day to day control. The power imbalance between the board and management, and management influence in board selection was confirmed in large scale research in the 1970s and 1980s (Mace, 1971; Pfeffer, 1972; Lorsch & MacIver, 1989). Other researchers dispute managerial hegemony theory, referring to the limited way in which ‘control’ has been defined to support the theory (Mizruchi, 1983; Herman, 1981; Stiles & Taylor, 1981).

Stewardship theory was developed to explain organizational relationships and argues that managers are stewards whose motives are aligned with the objectives of their principals because a steward maximizes their utility in achieving organizational objectives. The focus under this theory is on organizational structures that ‘facilitate and empower rather than those that monitor and control’ (Davis, Schoorman & Donaldson, 1997). Davis, Schoorman and Donaldson argue that the psychological and situational characteristics of the principal and manager influence the expectation and understanding that each has about the nature of their relationship. Issues of trust and risk appetite are paramount in underpinning a business or organizational relationship between people.

Stakeholder theory is based on the social entity conception of the corporation and assumes that all stakeholders have some legitimate interest in the corporation which is appropriate for consideration in decision making concerning the direction and operations of the corporation (Blair, 1995). Under this theory corporations are wealth-creating machines with a social purpose of maximizing wealth (Blair, 1995). The purpose is determined by reference to the stakeholders who have something invested in and at risk in the enterprise (Blair, 1995). Stakeholder theory responds to the changing nature of corporations from the ‘factory model’ to knowledge based organizations where most knowledge is created and stored by individuals (Clarke, 1998). Current management theory and practice and numerous empirical studies have confirmed that effective stakeholder management is critical to sustained corporate success (Clarke, 1998).

The OECD *Principles of Corporate Governance* (2004), a best practice governance guide for corporations, supports the recognition, within a governance framework, of the interests of stakeholders and their contribution to the long-term success of the corporation. However, stakeholder theory has not been accepted in Anglo-American jurisdictions as a replacement for the key accountability of corporations to shareholders (Charkham, 1994; Monks & Minnow, 2004).

Other organizational theories relevant to corporate governance are resource dependency theory⁶, institutional theory⁷, strategic choice theory⁸, contingency theory⁹ and network governance theory¹⁰. Whereas agency theory and stewardship theory focus on the internal governance mechanisms of an organization, these theories examine the issues of connection of an organization with its external environment (Clarke, 2002); acknowledging the significance of interactions with and dependencies upon external environments (Stiles & Taylor, 2001).

Board of Directors

The law places the management of the corporation in the hands of directors¹¹ and requires a director to,

- act in good faith (i.e. honestly),
- exercise care, skill and diligence,
- exercise powers for a proper purpose (i.e. for the purposes and for the benefit of the company only),
- avoid conflicts of interest,
- retain discretions, and
- exercise care, skill and diligence.

Legislation¹² also requires directors and officers¹³ to act in the interests of the corporation. This simple statement belies the complexity of balancing the reasonable short term demands of shareholders, the cost of capital, interests of stakeholders and the long term health of the business (Garratt, 2010).

These duties are relevant for independent school governors as in most Australian jurisdictions the governing bodies are required to be incorporated and members of governing boards will be subject to the same duties as directors of corporations. The requirement to act in the best interests of the corporation has been interpreted to mean that a director's fiduciary duties are owed to the company, as

⁶ This theory proposes that boards are mechanisms for managing external dependencies and therefore should be composed of members reflecting those dependencies (Hillman, Canella & Paetzold, 2000).

⁷ This theory advocates that an organization should be structured to respond to the external environment (Zucker, 1987).

⁸ This theory advocates that organizational members, including the board, should help the organization to adapt to and shape their environment (Judge & Zeithaml, 1992).

⁹ This theory posits that organizational performance will be enhanced if the organization's structures and processes fit its context (Rogers, 2005; Donaldson, 2001; Miner, 2003).

¹⁰ This theory proposes that firms form socially based networks to provide an efficient mechanism to engage in complex tasks with intense time pressures (Jones, Hesterly & Borgatti, 1987)

¹¹ *Corporations Act 2001; Bell Group v Westpac*, 2008)

¹² This requirement is also legislated in the United Kingdom and the United States, although with different judicial interpretations.

¹³ Defined to include those members of management that make or participate in making decisions that affect the whole or substantial part of the corporation's business or financial standing (*Corporations Act 2001*, section 9).

a separate entity, not the shareholders (Esplanade Developments, 1980). Although the interests of shareholders and the interests of the company may be correlative, the duty being owed to the corporation means that the directors may take into account a range of interests in making decisions (Bell, 2008).

It has only been in the last two decades that the law or the literature has provided any meaningful guidance to directors on how they should govern their companies to best achieve their purpose. The normative literature on the role of a company's board is a combination of practitioner writing and codes (developed following reviews initiated by government or peak industry bodies). Contemporary corporate governance articulates the role of the board as,

... providing a means of bringing a range of minds and of viewpoints, backed by a variety of experience, to bear on the issues which confront companies. Boards are deliberative bodies and at their meetings ideas are formed and turned into policies and plans of action, through debate. They are a resource to which those who have executive responsibility for running a company can turn to. They are also a source of authority of the executives. (Cadbury, 2002, p. 34)

Cadbury posits the main functions of a board to,

- define the company's purpose,
- agree strategies and plans for achieving that purpose,
- establish the company's policies,
- appoint the chief executive,
- monitor and assess the performance of the executive team, and
- assess their own performance (Cadbury, 2002).

The ASX Corporate Governance Principles and Recommendations (2007) describe the responsibilities of the board as being,

- overseeing the company, including its control and accountability systems,
- appointing and removing the chief executive officer,
- ratifying the appointment and removal of senior executives (where appropriate),
- providing input into management's development of corporate strategy and performance objectives,
- reviewing, ratifying and monitoring systems of risk management and internal control, codes of conduct and legal compliance,
- monitoring senior executive's performance and the implementation of strategy,
- ensuring appropriate resources are available to senior executives,

- approving and monitoring the progress of major capital expenditure, capital management, and acquisitions and divestitures, and
- approving and monitoring financial and other reporting.

These principles are a ‘best practice’ guide for listed Australian companies. They have been adopted on a voluntary basis by many other corporations, including government owned corporations, private companies and nonprofit organizations.

Many of these board functions are a process of iterative conversations between the board and management and the outcomes are shared goals and strategies (Cadbury, 2002). For example, Cadbury describes the role of the board in setting strategy as being,

The Board is ... responsible for the strategy of the business and for agreeing the operating plans and targets required to turn the strategy into action. It does this in conjunction with the management with whom lies the responsibility for achieving the results. The company’s strategy and action plans may well move backwards and forwards between the board and the management until final agreement is reached on their form. The outcome is thus a board/management dialogue, rather than the board passing on a set of instructions to those who have to execute them. In this way both board and management are committed to a jointly agreed strategy. (Cadbury, 2002, p. 38).

Stiles and Taylor (2001) present the role of the board under the themes of monitoring and control, strategic (monitoring and influencing strategy) and institutional (providing links with external constituencies).

Director Attributes

The normative literature, supported by evidence gathered in various government inquiries, also prescribes a ‘best practice’ approach to directors’ qualifications, skills and experience. The following key personal attributes are required for an effective director,

- relevant experience and company knowledge (Higgs, 2003; Tyson, 2003),
- integrity and high ethical standards (Cadbury, 2002; Higgs, 2003, Tyson, 2003; Hilmer, 1998),
- sound judgement (Higgs, 2003; Hilmer, 1998),
- the ability and willingness to challenge and probe (Cadbury 2002, Higgs, 2003),
- strong interpersonal skills (Higgs, 2003),
- independence of mind (Cadbury, 2002; McNulty, Roberts & Stiles, 2003); and
- high levels of engagement (McNulty, Roberts & Stiles, 2003; Cadbury, 2002).

Drawing on a combined forty years of research into qualities for an effective director, researchers Pye, Pettigrew, Roberts, McNulty and Stiles summarized the three key attributes as

effective communication, capability and, most importantly of all, a ‘conceptual awareness that enables them to see a much wider horizon with an ability to conceptualize what is happening and act in a conceptually appropriate manner’ (Pye & Pettigrew, 2005, p. S35).

The Chairman has a ‘pivotal role in creating the conditions for individual director and board effectiveness’ (Higgs, 2003, p. 5). An effective Chairman,

- ‘upholds the highest standards of integrity and probity,
- sets the agenda, style and tone of board discussions to promote effective decision-making and constructive debate,
- promotes effective relationships and open communication, both inside and outside the boardroom, between non-executive directors and the executive team,
- builds an effective and complementary board, initiating change and planning succession in board appointments, subject to board and shareholders’ approval,
- promotes the highest standards of corporate governance and seeks compliance with the provisions of the Code wherever possible,
- ensures a clear structure for and the effective running of board committees,
- ensures effective implementation of board decisions,
- establishes a close relationship of trust with the chief executive, providing support and advice while respecting executive responsibility, and
- provides coherent leadership of the company, including representing the company and understanding the views of shareholders’ (Higgs, 2003, p. 100).

Cadbury (2002) sees the essential task of the Chairman is ‘to turn a group of capable individuals into an effective board team’ (p. 109).

The *ASX Principles and Recommendations* (2007) do not offer guidance as to a director’s qualifications, skills or experience, other than to say they should be ‘appropriate’. The UK Code refers to the need for every company to be headed by an effective board, however, it offers no other guidance as to a director’s individual attributes.

Board Effectiveness

Boards are complex social units; a set of persons expected to work together to fulfill their role. The ‘effectiveness’ of a board may be impacted by a range of external and internal factors. The normative literature advocates a range of structural and process elements to assist a board to be effective in its role. A number of research studies have examined different corporate governance structures; however, there is little empirical evidence to demonstrate that board effectiveness is linked

to board structure and composition (Burton, 2000). For example, a recent study by Tan (2009) found no correlation between governance structure and performance or likelihood of failure. He concluded that correlations that may be first observed are spurious in nature and are the product of factors that have yet to be accounted for. Tan notes that this has important implications for policy makers as a broad and uniform approach to corporate governance requirements may not result in an improvement to organizational outcomes.

Most studies do not consider the context of the organization or other contingencies which may moderate the relationship between structure and performance. For example, Zahra and Pearce (1989) note that ‘board attributes must possess a beneficial match with internal and external contextual factors to productively facilitate board execution of its roles ... and ultimately on company performance’ (p. 305-6). Some studies incorporate external or internal contextual factors as antecedents of board structures (for example, Pearce II & Zahra, 1992; Zajac & Westphal, 1994; Finkelstein & D’Aveni, 1994). Very few studies explore contingencies that moderate the relationship between elements of board structure and company performance (for example, Pfeffer, 1972; Boyd, 1995).

Research has not established any significant relationship between the size or composition of the board and corporate performance (Kiel & Nicholson, 2003; Dalton *et al.*, 1999; CAMAC, 2009; Tyson, 2003). The normative literature advocates for a separation of the roles of Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, and for a majority of Non-Executive Directors (FRC, 2008; ASX, 2007), although this position is not supported by evidence (Rogers, 2005; Boyd, 1995). Cadbury (2002) argues that a board needs both outside and inside directors for effective functioning,

The executive directors bring to the board their inside knowledge of the workings of the business and the nature of its markets while the outside directors bring their experience, knowledge and independence of judgement. (p. 52)

Cadbury’s view is supported by the results of a large-scale investigation of Australian ASX companies conducted by Kiel and Nicholson (2003). Similarly, some regulators have concluded that one of the learnings from the Global Financial Crisis was that there was insufficient industry expertise and insider knowledge in the boardrooms of financial institutions, thus supporting the role of executive directors (Lipton *et al.*, 2010).

Policy makers are focused on the diversity¹⁴ in a board’s composition as gender and ethnic diversity on corporate boards is limited (Brammer, Millington & Pavelin, 2007). Although some

¹⁴ Board diversity concerns the degree of similarity and difference between the members of the board (CAMAC, 2009). Measurable factors of difference include demographic factors of age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic and cultural background (Brammer, Millington & Pavelin, 2007; CAMAC, 2009).

international studies have established a positive relationship between company performance and the number of women on boards (Joy *et al.*, 2007; Campbell & Minguez-Vera, 2008), the evidence is not unequivocal (Adams & Ferreira, 2009; Dalton, Daily, Ellstrand & Johnson, 1999). Cadbury (2002) observes that many boards are self-perpetuating with their members sharing similar backgrounds¹⁵. Social similarity of board members leads to self-validation, ease of communication and trusting relationships (Burgess & Tharenou, 2000,) offering one explanation for the homogeneity of board membership. There are a number of grounds advocated in the academic literature to support diversity on boards, including corporate governance theories, concepts of social responsibility and organizational effectiveness (van der Walt & Ingley, 2003; Leighton, 2000; Selby, 2000).

In Australia the constitution of the company usually sets up the system for the election, term of office and retirement of directors. Boards have been criticized for the lack of transparency and rigour in their selection process, the implication being that a formal and transparent process will ensure the best possible candidates and thus a more effective board (CAMAC, 2009). Although directors are ultimately elected by the shareholders the board selects candidate directors and endorses existing directors for further terms. The ASX Corporate Governance Council's *Corporate Governance Principles and Recommendations* (2007) recommend a board nomination committee comprising a majority of independent directors to advise the board on a formal and transparent process for the selection, appointment and re-appointment of directors¹⁶. Boards have also been criticized for directors holding office too long on the basis that long serving directors may be less effective due to complacency. The normative literature advocates terms of no longer than approximately nine years, although this may be longer if the director assumes the role of the Chairman in that time.¹⁷

Since the UK Higgs Review (2003), there has been a shift in focus from board structure and composition to the conditions and behaviours of non-executive directors for an effective board. This reframing sets the scene for how boards and individual directors will evaluate their effectiveness and requires a more detailed understanding of how boards and directors actually behave or conduct their roles effectively (Pye & Pettigrew, 2005). A study of directors by Leblanc and Gillies (2005) sought to establish whether there were behavioral features of directors at board meetings that influenced the

¹⁵ The Higgs Review of the role and effectiveness of non-executive directors, commissioned by the UK Department of Trade and Industry, noted that the population of non-executive directors was narrowly drawn, being mostly 'white males nearing retirement age with previous plc director experience' (Higgs, 2003, p. 13).

¹⁶ The UK Combined Code on Corporate Governance (FRC, 2008) also supports a formal, rigorous and transparent procedure for board appointments with a board nomination committee leading the process.

¹⁷ In the UK the Combined Code (2008) recommends any term beyond six years be subject to particularly rigorous review and directors who have already served nine years should be subject to annual re-election.

collective decision making capacity of boards of directors. They found that three basic behavioral characteristics were fundamental behavioral characteristics determining the effectiveness of an individual director in board decision-making. The characteristics were a) persuasiveness versus non-persuasiveness; b) the tendency to dissent or work for consensus; and c) a preference for working alone rather than in the group. Functional directors ranked high in their ability to persuade fellow directors to accept their point of view and worked constructively with their board colleagues in seeking effective decisions for perplexing problems. The researchers concluded that the way to build a more effective board is to match the competencies and behavioral characteristics of individual directors to the strategies followed by the company. Research by Reyner, Mann and Phillips (2010) reinforces the ‘inconvenient truth’ that a Board can have the clearest and most robust processes and adherence to governance principles, but if its members do not have the courage and judgement to call out and deal with the real issues facing the business in a timely and direct manner, the Board will fail to add value and may end up destroying it’ (p. 2). Their research supports the premise that behaviour impacts effectiveness. Recent board process work by Roberts, McNulty and Stiles (2005) seeks to link board characteristics to board outcomes within the concept of accountability to differentiate between effective and ineffective board conduct.

A formalized system of board evaluation is becoming the norm in public companies in the UK, US and Australia and is a requirement of many of the corporate governance codes (Minichelle, Gabrielsson & Huse, 2007). Institutional investors, regulators and other external stakeholders are increasingly demanding that boards demonstrate they are effectively fulfilling their role (Kiel & Nicholson, 2005). Regular evaluations may identify a board’s strengths and weaknesses (Kiel & Nicholson, 2005), assist board members develop a better understanding of what is expected of them individually and collectively (Cascio, 2004); increase the level of discussion about governance (Leblanc & Gillies, 2005); and communicate to stakeholders a board’s commitment to improving their effectiveness (Minichelle, Gabrielsson & Huse, 2007). Board members should undertake education to deal with specialized or complex issues and keep abreast of the dynamic environment the business is operating within (Lipton *et al.*, 2010).

Conclusion

Corporations play a key economic and social role in our society. Governments recognize that corporations are a key element in a country’s economic growth and efficiency and for stable financial markets and systems (OECD, 2004). As a result governments, institutions and the broader community will continue to demand higher standards of governance from boards of directors. A combination of

statute, common law, self regulation through codes of practice, and extensive practitioner literature on board structure and processes provide the framework for boards of directors.

The codes and practitioner literature primarily focus on governance mechanisms such as board structure and processes and there is scant regard for the importance of contextual factors or the human dynamics of boards as social systems.

The governance framework is by the normative literature presented as ‘best practice’ and is premised on the assumption that complying with the law and following the framework will mean an effective board and a significant contribution to an effective corporation. However, there is little empirical evidence that demonstrates that these corporate governance mechanisms will produce an effective board. As explained by Lipton *et al.*, (2010),

The ultimate responsibility and objective of boards is not to ensure perfect compliance with the latest best practices and checklists, but rather to thoughtfully exercise their oversight role, promote a culture of excellence and integrity within the corporation and work with management to develop strategies for long-term value. (p. 2)

There is a gap between what empirical research has been able to demonstrate about corporate governance mechanisms and performance and the response of policy makers and corporate leaders. There is also limited research on how boards function as a complex social unit and the impact of internal and external factors. Thus providing a justification for the research reported in this thesis and the research questions chosen.

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Chapter 3

Nonprofit governance

Introduction

Nonprofit organizations exist worldwide and are established for a community purpose, usually to provide goods and services. Collectively these organizations are known as the ‘third sector’ to distinguish them from the ‘private sector’ and the ‘public sector’ (Hudson, 2009). This sector includes community organizations, charities, trade unions, religious organizations and educational organizations, including independent schools. Economic theory defines a nonprofit organization as one that cannot distribute any profit and explains the existence of nonprofit organizations because of market failure or government failure (Enjolras, 2009). Hansmann (1980) defines nonprofit organizations as neither established nor managed to make a profit for an owner or for distribution to shareholders.

Nonprofit organizations, as we understand them today, have existed in Australia, since white settlement (Hudson, 2009). These organizations have grown rapidly in Australia over the last decade with annual growth of 7.7%. The sector now comprises some 600,000 organizations and makes up just over 4% of gross domestic product (approximately \$43 billion) with nearly five million volunteers contributing an additional \$14.6 billion in unpaid work (Productivity Commission, 2010). Education and research are the most economically significant nonprofit organizations in Australia (Productivity Commission, 2010). The growth in the size and importance of the third sector has, in part, been in response to the reduction in the scope of government and a shift in responsibility for public policy implementation to nongovernmental entities (Stone & Ostrower, 2007; Alexander & Weiner, 1998). This shift has created a more competitive climate among nonprofit organizations, for example through competitive tendering processes for government contracts and funding (Steane & Christie, 2008; Alexander & Weiner, 1998).

Characteristics of Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofit organizations are treated differently to for-profit organizations for taxation and some regulatory purposes. The Productivity Commission has found that the current regulatory framework for nonprofit organizations is complex, lacks coherence, sufficient transparency and is costly for nonprofit organizations (Productivity Commission, 2010) and has made a number of recommendations for changes to the framework. The Commission noted in its report that there are a number of organizational weaknesses in governance, strategic planning and evaluation within the sector and that

there is a greater call by governments and the community for accountability (Productivity Commission, 2010, p. 37).

Governance and management of nonprofit organizations are complex, principally due to the mission and context of the organization, expectations of stakeholders; nonprofit organizations are often resource constrained and dependent on uncertain and multiple sources of funding (Green & Griesinger, 1996; Hudson, 2009; Steane & Christie, 2008). Nonprofit boards differ in size and composition to private sector boards. They are larger and more diverse, reflecting stakeholder participation, and comprised almost exclusively of non-executive board members (Steane & Christie, 2008).

Nonprofit Governance

The characteristics of nonprofit organizations differentiate nonprofits from private sector organizations and call for a reflexive governance and management approach (Drucker, 1990a). Hodgkin (1993) argues that the corporate governance model is not appropriate for nonprofit organizations due to the complexity of mission and success factors, diverse stakeholders, the fundraising role of board members and the high level of required public accountability. Other writers also caution against adopting the structures and practices from the private sector (Alexander & Weiner, 1998; Lyons, 2001; Steane & Christie, 2008). However, government contracting arrangements, higher standards of accountability, corporate social responsibility and increasingly complex operating environments for nonprofit sector entities are lessening the divide between nonprofit and private sector organizations from a governance perspective (Steane & Christie, 2001). Further, there is evidence that many nonprofit organizations are adopting corporate governance models in an endeavour to demonstrate 'good' governance (Steane & Christie, 2008; Chait, Ryan & Taylor, 2005; Miller-Millesen, 2003; Stone & Ostrower, 2007). Nonprofit organizations may be mimicking private sector organizations to legitimate their board activities as explained by institutional theory (Miller-Millesen, 2003).

Nonprofit organizations cannot be measured against profitability or stock market performance. Their mission often requires careful balancing of conflicting goals and intangible services and the complexity of their stakeholders and environment require context specific approaches (Forbes, 1998; Herman & Renz, 2008). However, nonprofit organizations have and will continue to make and act on assessments of effectiveness (Herman & Renz, 1997). Governments and stakeholders are increasingly demanding performance be measured, most noticeably at the program level. The Productivity Commission (2010) in its recent research report recommends more uniform and comprehensive

measurement techniques for the contribution of nonprofit organizations and the effectiveness of their services and programs.

The growing importance of the nonprofit sector, the collapse of some significant nonprofit organizations from fraud and incompetence, and the increased focus on corporate governance has led to a number of reviews of nonprofit governance in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia, with recommendations to improve the standards of governance (Cornforth, 2003; Stone & Ostrower, 2007). This has led to more structured foundations of governance in the third sector, although there is limited empirical evidence that demonstrates improved governance or links the normative standards of governance with an effective and sustainable organization.

Nonprofit Boards

Most nonprofit organizations are governed by a board. Boards are constituted by election or selection, for example, board members are elected by the members of the organization or by a subset of members appointed for this purpose by the members, or appointed by a third party (such as government), or selected by existing board members (Hudson, 2009). Additional governance mechanisms, such as advisory councils, are not uncommon in nonprofit organizations as a means to provide representation for key stakeholders. In federated organizations the board is usually selected by the local organizations and often on a representational basis¹⁸.

Although there is an array of different legal structures for nonprofit organizations, all members of the governing body have duties at law to act in good faith and loyalty, to act with care and diligence and in the interests of the organization (Fishel, 2008; Chait, Ryan & Taylor, 2005; Stone & Ostrower, 2007). The discussion on these categories of duties in the corporate governance section is relevant for board members of nonprofit organizations. A second level of more specific legal duties for board members is created by legislation and case law that may apply to all organizations or industry specific organizations.

The purpose and functioning of boards as the key governance mechanism of nonprofit organizations are relatively under-theorized in comparison with the governance of business corporations (Cornforth, 2003; Miller-Millesen, 2003). There is a consistent theme in the literature that organizational context is critical and as a result there cannot be a one size governance model (Mills-Millesen, 2003; Chait, Ryan & Taylor, 2005). Yet the practitioner literature developed since the 1960s has converged on a functional approach to governance for all nonprofits, describing roles

¹⁸ Federated nonprofit organizations provide a vehicle for state or locally based organizations to come together to form a central body for advocacy or service provision (Hudson, 2009).

and responsibilities of board members to ensure compliance with fiduciary and legal obligations (Stone & Ostrower, 2007). Functionally the board is expected to,

- determine the mission,
- appoint and monitor the Chief Executive Officer,
- ensure sound financial management,
- ensure resourcing and protection of assets,
- ensure organizational planning, and
- represent the organization to key stakeholders and the external environment (Cornforth, 2003; Hudson, 2009; Miller-Millesen, 2003; Chait, Ryan & Taylor, 2005; Stone & Ostrower, 2007; Houle, 1997; Herman, 1989).

Research by Green and Griesinger (1996) found substantial agreement among board members for the board responsibilities addressed in the normative literature. Several of these functional roles for the board reflect the orientations of agency theory, resource dependency theory and institutional theory. However, as in the private sector, the different economic and organizational theories are proving to be one-dimensional, giving pre-eminence to one particular role of the board and inadequate to explain the complex, dynamic governance environment of nonprofit organizations (Miller-Millesen, 2003; Cornforth, 2003).

All governance literature recognizes that a responsibility of the board is the selection and induction of board members and ongoing assessment of the board's performance through a systematic approach (Carver, 2006; Herman, 1989, Hudson, 2009, Chait, Ryan & Taylor, 2005; Brown, 2007)¹⁹.

The majority of nonprofit boards are not remunerated; although some organizations are assessing remuneration as a mechanism to attract suitably qualified board members (Productivity Commission, 2010). Research confirms that Australian nonprofit boards have a broader representation of their members than boards in the private sector (Steane & Christie, 2001).

Board Effectiveness

The normative literature advocates different 'best practice' approaches to governance for nonprofit organizations, without differentiation between types, with the principal differences between the models being the parameters of the board's work vis-à-vis management. Carver's (2006) 'policy governance' model developed in the earlier 1970s positions governance failures as failures of processes which can be overcome by clear delineation between the role of the board and the role of

¹⁹ The empirical research indicates this area of responsibility is performed at a lower level of effectiveness compared to other areas such as oversight of financial management (see for example, Green & Griesinger, 1996).

management. He posits that boards should determine the mission and strategic direction and a set of policies within which management will manage the organization on behalf of the board. This model has been criticized as not recognizing the representational role of the board with stakeholders and external relationships and presenting an idealistic approach to governance (Fletcher, 1999). In contrast, the model by Herman & Heimovics (1994), following Drucker (1990a), places the executive as the core of the governance model on the basis that executives should be at the centre of leadership and decision making in the organization. The work of the executive will assist the board meet its functional role. More recently Chait, Ryan & Taylor (2005) proposed a modal approach where boards are required to operate reflexively in three modes being the,

- fiduciary mode – acting as stewards of tangible assets,
- strategic mode – creating with management strategic priorities and drivers, and
- generative mode – collaborating with management to provide leadership through making sense of challenges and opportunities.

This modal approach requires collaborative and high functioning relationships between the board and management as roles may not be neatly defined. Studies on board-management relationships confirm the criticality of the relationship in governance and indicate that individual, organizational and environmental factors influence this relationship (Chait, Holland & Taylor, 1991; Stone & Ostrower, 2007). A study by Erakovic (2009) found that managers placed greater emphasis on differentiating governance from operations and clarity of role separation than board members did.

The normative literature for nonprofit governance follows the corporate governance literature prescribing structures and processes for effective board governance (Stone & Ostrower, 2002). Research has however found a significant gap between the normative expectations of effective board performance and board member perceptions regarding their performance (Millesen & Lakey, 1999; Green & Griesinger, 1996). Research has not identified factors such as board size and composition as significant for board effectiveness (Bradshaw, Murray & Wolpin, 1992).

Holland, Chait & Taylor (1989) developed a competencies model with six dimensions to assess nonprofit board performance covering contextual, educational, interpersonal, intellectual, political and strategic. Subsequent studies (Holland, 19991; Jackson & Holland, 1991; Brown, 2005) have used this model to construct a board self assessment tool which they found was a reliable, valid and sensitive measure of board performance' (Jackson & Holland, 1998, p. 176). Holland and Jackson (1998), in their three year study of twenty four diverse nonprofit organizations, found that boards that undertook board development activities experienced 'statistically significant gains in every board competency but

one' (p. 126)²⁰. A study by Brown (2007) found a correlation between best practice recruitment, orientation and performance evaluation practices and board member competencies.

Research by Bradshaw, Murray and Wolpin (1992), found strategic planning was the single most important process characteristic for an effective board, followed by a shared mission, good meeting management and informal board groups that were especially active and positive about change. Herman, Renz and Heimovics (1997) found that Chief Executive Officers believed that boards following the recommended board practices were more effective boards, particularly practices facilitating board involvement in strategic planning, developing a shared mission and operating according to the guidelines for good meeting management. The results did not show that use of recommended board practices was strongly related to judgments of greater board effectiveness by other kinds of stakeholders.

Conclusion

Nonprofit organizations will continue to be a key provider of goods and services for our community. There will be increased pressure for accountability and clear indications of effective performance of the organization and its services and programs from government, funders and other stakeholders. Governance of nonprofit organizations and its contribution to organizational effectiveness will continue to be under the microscope, 'although ... we are still unable to say whether or how boards make a difference to the organizations they govern or the wider public environment in which they are embedded' (Stone & Ostrower, 2007, p.422). Board members, executives and stakeholders of nonprofit organizations will most likely continue to use a 'best practice' approach from the prescriptive literature notwithstanding the lack of support from empirical research for some of these prescriptions. Any governance structures and processes should aim to respond to the organization's environment, circumstances and stakeholders' (Herman & Renz, 2008). The analysis of the nonprofit governance literature provides a justification for the research questions chosen for this research.

²⁰ The six competency dimensions were contextual, educational, interpersonal, analytical, political and strategic. The only dimension that showed no statistically significant gain was analytical.

Chapter 4

School governance

Context of Australian Schooling

Australia has a population of over 22 million people (ABS, 2011) and is a diverse society with a range of young people from varying socioeconomic, cultural and language backgrounds (ACER, 2007). There are approximately 3.4 million full time school students (1.97 million primary and 1.47 million secondary), attending over 9,500 schools (ABS, 2008). Levels of education of young people are increasing and economic, social and educational changes have contributed to more young people completing secondary education (ACER, 2007). Australia has a high performing school system based on the results of the PISA survey administered by the OECD (OECD, 2010).

Under Australia's federal political structure education is a State and Territory responsibility²¹. This has led to separate educational systems for each State and Territory with significant differences in curriculum and approach to schooling. More recently the Council for Australian Governments (COAG) comprising the Federal and the eight State and Territory governments has supported a greater national consistency in schooling. In December 2008 COAG signed the National Education Agreement which commits to high quality education and sets out Australia's shared objective for all Australian school students to acquire the knowledge and skills to participate effectively in society and employment in a globalised economy. The agreement contains outcomes for schooling, policy directions, roles and responsibilities of each level of government, performance indicators and performance benchmarks and progress measures towards the outcomes (COAG, 2008). The policy focus is to improve teacher and school leader quality, increase school accountability, enhance learning environments, promote parental engagement and for more effective strategies for low socioeconomic school communities. The agreement commits all parties to a national curriculum and standardized reporting on school performance.

Under the National Education Agreement, state and territory governments are responsible for developing policy, delivering services, monitoring and reviewing performance of individual schools and regulating schools. The National Education Agreement is supported by the Melbourne Declaration of Goals for Australia's Schools and Young People issued by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA, now replaced by the Standing

²¹ Section 51 of the *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1901* does not confer on the Federal parliament any power with respect to education. Federal Government funding with respect to school education commenced in the late 1950's pursuant to s 96 which permitted funding to any State on such terms and conditions as Federal Parliament thinks fit.

Council on School Education and Early Childhood, SCSEEC). The goals are twofold, firstly for Australian schooling to promote equity and excellence and secondly for all young Australians to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens (MCEETYA, 2008). The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) has been established to oversee the national curriculum and testing and accountability (ACARA, 2011). The Authority publishes school results under the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy and benchmarks their performance against national averages and ‘like’ schools. There is growing concern that this approach will lead to ‘test-focused schooling, with a consequent narrowing of curricula and pedagogies’ (Lingard, 2010).

There are three primary groups which provide primary and secondary schooling in Australia - the relevant state or territory government, the Catholic Church and the independent school sector. The number of schools and students in each of these sectors is shown in table 4.1. The proportion of students attending government schools has declined from 70% in 1998 to 65.94% in 2008 and this downward trend is expected to continue.

Table 4.1

Number of Australian Schools and Students by Sector (as at August 2008)

Type of school	Number of schools	Number of full time students	Percentage of students to total number of students
Government schools	6,833	2,264,554	65.94%
Catholic Schools*	1705	696,577	20.20%
Independent Schools	1024	473,160	13.76%
Totals	9,562**	3,434,291	100%

Source: ABS (2008)

* ABS includes independent catholic schools as part of catholic schools

** This total comprises 6448 primary²² schools, 1455 secondary schools and 1241 combined primary and secondary schools

State and Territory governments currently bear primary funding responsibility for government schools. In comparison, the Federal Government is the primary public funder of non-government schools under the *Schools Assistance Act 2008* (Deloitte Access Economics, 2011). Financial assistance for the period 2009 to 2012 is estimated at \$28 billion (Bruniges, 2009). Schools receive

²² Statistics for the number of primary and secondary schools per sector is not available through the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

three types of funding; recurrent, capital and targeted funding (Deloitte Access Economics, 2011). Funding for recurrent expenditure is determined by reference to the socio-economic status (SES) of the school community. In 2010 the Federal Government announced a review of school funding, the first such review of funding for schooling since 1973 (Gonski, 2010). The aim of the review was to achieve a funding system which is transparent, equitable, financially sustainable and effective in providing education (Review of School Funding Panel, 2011). The deliberations of the panel leading the review were informed by research, in the form of commissioned research papers, and submissions. The Panel released its report in February 2012 recommending an additional \$5 billion in school funding, the introduction of a national schools resource standard and 12 year funding agreements. The Federal Government has issued a holding statement and is yet to announce whether it will accept the recommendations in total or in part.

Catholic schools and independent schools supplement government funding through school fees and endowments (ACER, 2007). On average Catholic schools receive about 72% of their income from government sources and 28% from private sources. Independent schools receive about 40% of their income from government sources and 60% from private sources, although the proportions of government and private funding vary greatly from school to school (ISCA, 2009). On average, parents and donors in independent school communities contribute 80% of funds for capital developments such as school buildings, grounds and equipment (ISCA, 2009). Australia's subsidization of Catholic and independent schools with public funds is unique across the OECD countries (Nous Group, 2011).

Federal government funding for government schools is provided under the National Education Agreement which forms part of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations (the overarching framework for the Commonwealth Government's financial relations with the states and territories) agreed by the Council of Australian Governments in 2008 (COAG, 2008). There are no tuition fees for government schools, although parents are requested for financial contributions towards specific activities or facilities (ACER, 2007). Government schools receive additional limited financial support through the fund raising efforts of school parents and friends associations.

All schools are being drawn into an increasingly demanding accountability framework as evidenced by increased reporting requirements as a condition of government funding. The recently established Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) will publish nationally-comparable information on all schools to support accountability, school evaluation, collaborative policy development and resource allocation (COAG, 2008). The Authority will provide the public with information on each school in Australia that includes data on each school's

performance, including national testing results and school attainment rates, the indicators relevant to the needs of the student population and the school's capacity including the numbers and qualifications of its teaching staff and its resources²³. The stated purpose for publication of this information is to allow comparison of like schools and comparison of a school with other schools in their local community (COAG, 2008). A national curriculum is currently being developed for K-12 for implementation progressively over the next several years (ACARA, 2010).

School Governance in Government Schools

Until the 1970s the Australian states had a highly centralized system of education with classical bureaucracies (Lingard *et al.*, 2002). Since that time school based management has been a feature of government schools in Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and Queensland (Lingard *et al.*, 2002; Gammage, 2008)²⁴. Although the continuing public justification for school based management is improving student academic and social outcomes, there have been a number of versions of school based management, each grounded in the politics of the time.

School based management thus has no essential meaning, but is grounded in a particular politics at a particular time and is continually contested and rearticulated across time and political changes. At any time its usage probably represents a suturing together of competing aspects across the social democratic, managerialist and market perspectives. (Lingard *et al.*, 2002 p. 15)

A key feature of school based management is School Councils who are representative of stakeholders including government, staff and parents and who have responsibility for educational policies, resource allocation and stakeholder management. A review in 2005 by the Victorian Minister for Education confirmed that "school councils are an integral and valued part of the governance of government schools" and initiatives were proposed to clarify the respective roles of the school council and principals and to formulate a set of governance principles and standards based on best practice. (DET, 2006, p. 6; Gammage, 2008). Subsequently, legislation in Victoria has clarified and refined the objectives, powers, and functions of School Councils (*Education and Training Reform Act of 2006 (Vic)*). Similarly, the ACT's evaluation of school based management in 2004 recommended continuation of the system with initiatives to strengthen the existing approach (DET, 2004). A further review in the ACT in 2009 found that school based management was 'widely supported as an appropriate system for managing the operational function' of government schools (Allen Consulting Group, 2009, p. v). In 2010, Western Australia extended its school based management model with the creation of independent public schools providing increased autonomy to School Councils and

²³ The primary source of reporting will be through the *My School* website - <http://www.myschool.edu.au/>

²⁴ Decentralization of school systems has become a global trend affecting developed and developing countries (OECD, 2005).

Principals. In transitioning to independent public school status a school can select 'authorities' best suited to their local context. Authorities are available in areas of curriculum, student support, human resources, financial management, procurement and buildings and facilities. Perceived benefits are greater flexibility to select and appoint staff with the skills and experience to meet the diverse range of student needs and strengthen connections with parents and the local community. This model supports Ranson's (2012) proposition that the 'engagement of young people in learning will be in proportion to the capacity of schools to listen and respond sympathetically to the voices of their communities' (p. 40). In Queensland, decisions relating to key governance, strategic and operational matters such as curriculum, finance, infrastructure, enrolments and staff continue to be made centrally by a government department. The department appoints a Principal for each school to act as the Chief Executive in the day to day management of the school. In more recent years there has been the opportunity to establish School Councils, to provide greater collaboration with the local school community. Under the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*, a School Council can be established by government to 'improve student learning outcomes' (section 78(1)). The School Council has four functions,

- monitor the school's strategic direction,
- approve policies and plans affecting strategic matters,
- monitor the implementation of strategic policies and plans, and
- advise the school's principal about strategic matters.

Queensland government School Councils cannot interfere with the management of the school by the Principal and do not have the power to deal with property or funds (section 81(3)). Members of the School Council cannot sue or be sued.

In New Zealand government schools are self managing and governed by locally elected boards of trustees within a national framework of regulation initiated in the 1980s (Ministry of Education, NZ, 2010; Wylie, 2007). Boards of trustees are Crown entities and are responsible for the governance of schools in the best interests of the students and the community. They are required to provide assurance to the government that students in the school are receiving a high quality standard of education and that resources are being used effectively (Ministry of Education NZ, 2009). The role of the board of trustees includes setting strategic objectives, priorities and goals for improvement of learning, providing oversight of programs and resources, appointing staff (including the principal) and monitoring their performance (Ministry of Education, NZ, 2009). The benefits from moving to self management and boards of trustees have principally been schools setting priorities, making their own

decisions, better meeting community needs and the sharing of support and learning between school professionals and members of their school community (Wylie, 2007). Although some persistent issues have been identified with the governance system, research confirms that government and school communities are positive about the governance model and the role of boards of trustees (Wylie, 2007; Robinson *et al.*, 2003).

In the United Kingdom school governing bodies became responsible for the conduct of their schools from the 1980s predicated on the assumption that ‘greater autonomy will lead to improved educational outcomes’ (Bush & Gammage, 2001, p. 39). Governing bodies are a mixture of elected parent and staff governors and other governors appointed by the board from the wider community (James *et al.*, 2011). The Principal has the choice of being a member of the board. Lay members are unpaid volunteers. Ranson (2012) argues that a stakeholder model of governance is critical to effective governance practice as this model ‘mediates the social and cultural conditions that engage young people in their learning; and it constitutes the practices of participation and deliberation which secure that mediation’ (p. 42).

In the United States of America government schools have been organized into school districts and have been governed by independently elected School Boards for over one hundred years (Wong, 2011). More recently declining public confidence in urban schools is driving a call for governance design. One emerging trend is for greater mayoral responsibility in public education with mayoral control of all appointments to School Boards. Charter schools, which came into existence in the 1990s to allow more autonomy and freedom from district procedural requirements, are still part of the public school system and are also governed by a board.

In each of these jurisdictions the responsibilities of governing bodies has increased over time, while accountability through mechanisms such as government regulation, performance standards, inspections and audits, contractual obligations and other accountability mechanisms has also become more demanding and intense. These factors have implications for recruitment and retention, capability, characteristics and training of board members and governing processes (James *et al.*, 2011). More research is emerging on school governing bodies (as discussed below); although there remains a paucity of research to link school based management and improved student outcomes (Lingard *et al.*, 2002; Kimber & Ehrich, 2011; World Bank, 2007). The desired goal is often quoted as fact in current discourse, such as the statement in the Deloitte Access Economics Report (2011) for the Review of School Funding, that ‘educational systems successful in improving student performance have progressively moved towards decentralized models of management’ (p. i).

Catholic School Governance

The Catholic Church is the second largest provider of school education in Australia. The Church is a complex array of groups and individuals operating under a code of canon law. Archbishops and bishops govern defined territories, called archdioceses and dioceses and meet annually in an assembly, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC), to collaborate on Church matters (ACBC, 2008). Since the late 1960s each of the twenty eight archdioceses and dioceses has had responsibility for the management of the catholic schools within its borders (Catholic Education, 2006). The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC), established by the ACBC in 1974, has primary responsibility for representing catholic education at a national level, including liaison with the federal government and other national educational bodies. The NCEC also complements and supports at the national level the work of the state and territory catholic education commissions (NCEC, n.d). The principal functions of the state/territory commissions are advocacy, such as the negotiation of funding by state / territory governments and facilitating collaboration between the educational bodies at dioceses level (QCEC, 2008). The governance of catholic schools differs from state to state although the majority operate within a systemic environment (MCEETYA, 2008). Some catholic schools with autonomous governance classify themselves as part of the independent school sector rather than the catholic school sector²⁵.

Independent School Governance

The independent school sector principally comprises schools that are self-managing entities, not governed by a centralized authority (MCEETYA, 2008; ISCA, 2008a). Some independent schools belong to small systems, such as Anglican and Lutheran schools. Systemic schools account for approximately 17% of the independent schools sector (ISCA, 2008). Independent schools are very diverse in terms of type, size and focus, educating boys and girls, students with special needs, and overseas students (ISCA, 2009). 84% of independent schools have a religious affiliation. Independent schools have grown approximately 20% in number and student enrolments in the 10 years to 2008 (ABS, 2008). Independent schools employ approximately 16% of school teachers (ISCA, 2009).

The independent school sector is represented by State associations of independent schools. These associations provide training and support in governance and management of independent schools, industrial relations services, administration of government funding for certain programs and

²⁵ The Australian Bureau of Statistics does not include independent catholic schools as part of the independent schools sector. If these schools were included with independent schools it would add 75 schools.

act as advocates for the sector (ISCA, 2008b). The Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) is the national peak body for the sector.

Self-management in independent schools is seen as key to ensure high standards of social and financial accountability and responsiveness to the school community (ISCA, 2008b). Independent schools are nonprofit organizations that are set up and governed independently on an individual school basis (ISCA, 2008b). All independent schools are required to be nonprofit organizations in order to be accredited under the relevant State and Territory based legislation. It is an offence to operate a school without accreditation. In most of the Australian jurisdictions legislation requires an independent school to be incorporated or to be the responsibility of an incorporated organization (ISCA, 2008a). For example, under the *Education Act 1990 (NSW)* a pre-requisite for registration as a school is that the 'school's proprietor must be a corporation or other form of legal entity approved by the Minister'.²⁶ In Queensland, the *Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2001* requires the governing body of a Queensland school to be incorporated²⁷. By contrast, in Victoria there is no requirement for incorporation²⁸; however, it would be unlikely that many (if any) independent schools would be operating other than under a corporate structure due to such benefits as limited liability and perpetual succession.

Boards or councils are the key decision making bodies in independent schools with accountability for the effective functioning of the school and the delivery of educational services. McCormick *et al.*, (2007) posit that the institutional role of an independent school board is likely to be quite different and more significant than the role of a board of a systemic school. In assessing an application for accreditation the State based accrediting body will have regard to the suitability of the governing body, including for example, individual board member conduct and whether appropriate principles and processes are in place to deal with conflicts of interest. For some independent schools with religious affiliation, the governing body for the purposes of the accreditation legislation will be the Church. For example, the governing body for many Lutheran and Anglican schools is the Church, which through decrees of synod delegate management of the schools to a School Council. The schools are not separately incorporated entities and all assets are owned by the Church.

²⁶ Section 47(a) Education Act 1990 (NSW)

²⁷ Section 11(3)

²⁸ Refer part 4.2 of the Education and Training Reform Act (Vict) 2006 and regulations 7 and 51 of the Education and Training Reform Regulations (Vict) 2007

A report by the ISCA in 2008 (ISCA, 2008c) noted that the success of independent schools was underpinned by their autonomy and good governance. The report found that, although circumstances varied considerably between schools, ‘overall school governing bodies are well founded and have the support structures in place to allow them to recognize and address the challenges they are facing’ (p. 2). Further that ‘across the sector schools are established under recognized legal arrangements, are guided by principles of governance, have policies in place to inform their deliberations, are supported by committees, have broad representation, and review their performance regularly’ (p. 3). Anecdotally a different picture may be painted with the larger, longer established schools seen as having well developed governance systems while smaller, newer schools are seen as struggling to implement and maintain a robust governance system.

Independent schools are complex organizations and exhibit many of the characteristics of other nonprofit organizations that add to organizational complexity²⁹. Governing boards of independent schools also share many characteristics with governing boards of other nonprofit organizations and the normative literature on the roles and responsibilities of school governing boards reflects the ‘best practice’ standards for nonprofit organizations more broadly. The approach to governance by independent school boards (and nonprofit organizations more broadly) is also informed by the corporate governance literature. A review of governance guidelines and other publications issued from ISCA and anecdotes from conversations with members of independent school Councils revealed a significant influence of ‘best practice’ governance practices and principles advocated in the normative corporate governance literature. The boards of most of the larger independent schools have members from the corporate sector who bring their views on governance from this arena.

The normative literature on independent school governance prescribes the following role of the School Council,

- determine the school’s mission. For systemic schools the mission will be informed or determined by the Church or overarching governing body,
- appoint and monitor the Principal,
- deliver educational services to students,
- ensure sound financial management,
- ensure resourcing and protection of assets,
- ensure organizational planning, and

²⁹ Refer to discussion in Chapter 3.

- represent the organization to key stakeholders and the external environment (McCormick *et al.*, 2006).³⁰

Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ, 2009) advocates board evaluations as a mechanism to monitor the functioning of the board, reflecting good governance practice in the corporate and nonprofit sectors.

As with boards of private sector companies and other nonprofit organizations, independent school board members have duties at law to act in good faith and loyalty and to act with care and diligence (Fishel, 2008). A second level of more specific legal duties for board members is created by legislation and case law that apply to specific areas of the school's operation. For example, every board member is required to hold a 'blue card' under the *Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000*.

Research on School Governing Bodies

(1) Australia

There is a lack of research in Australia on the functioning of school boards and most notably a lack of research on independent school boards as a key element of the governance framework, although some writers report anecdotal evidence supporting the elements of the governing task as discussed above (Harper, 2005; Mills, 2005). Although there is research on school administration, there has been a failure to treat school boards as discrete units of analysis (Land, 2002). For example, the focus of the research has been on the relationship between the board and the Principal. Several doctoral theses researching school boards were identified; namely Kefford (1990) which explored the decision making process of the governing body of an independent school through a conceptualization of educational organizations as organized anarchies; Beavis (1992) which examined school governance through the lens of autopoietic social systems; and Payne (2004), which analyzed the governance structures and processes of a sample of independent schools to understand the dilemmas of competing value systems of community and organization. Kloeden (1999), in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Education, through a survey study researched the perspectives of members of the governing bodies and Principals of Lutheran secondary schools in Australia. He made a number of findings concerning council composition, roles and relationships. Of note were his findings that Principals were opposed to representation from stakeholder groups on the governing body and that councillors did not think formal qualifications were necessary for council membership, other than for the chair. Councillors also did not see the need for self appraisal or for regular reporting on

³⁰ These are similar to the role of the board of trustees in independent schools in the USA. Refer NAIS, 2009.

the school's activities to the Lutheran Church, as owner of the school. He also found a lack of agreement between Principals and council members on their respective roles. It would be interesting to understand whether, some thirteen years later, perspectives of council members of the surveyed schools had changed.

ISCA (2008c) released a report based on a 2007 survey of chairs and principals of independent schools which affirmed structures and processes supporting governance prescribed in the normative literature. McCormick *et al.*, (2006) propose a conceptual model based on governance, leadership and group processes literature to describe the relationships of the variables that may influence school board effectiveness in independent schools. They hypothesize that 'board group processes moderate the relationship between context and school board effectiveness' (p. 438).

(2) New Zealand

There is a growing body of research in New Zealand on the functioning of public school boards. National surveys have been conducted since 1989 and researchers have drawn on these and other data to consider issues of board functioning (Wylie, 2007). Surveys of Trustees found that contributing to their community was the main reason for joining the board (Wylie, 2007); although recruitment of Trustees is becoming an emerging issue with boards working hard to fill vacancies (Springford, 2006). Although boards see their role largely as articulated by government, giving priority to providing strategic direction, and focusing on student learning and performance, Trustees acknowledge that financial issues tend to dominate board time (Wylie, 2007). Trustees are concerned about funding and believe they need more support from the Ministry of Education in their roles. Other aspects of their role that Trustees would like to change include spending more time on strategic issues and knowledge development and reducing the compliance burden (Wylie, 2007). Working relationships between Trustees and Principals were judged predominantly to be good or very good with high levels of trust (Hodgen & Wylie, 2005; Wylie, 2007). Parent contact and engagement with school board activities are limited and have been identified by boards and parents as areas for improvement (Wylie, 2007). Most Trustees and Principals thought their board lacked some expertise with strategic planning and legal skills consistently identified by Trustees and Principals (Wylie, 2007). A study by Robinson *et al.*, (2003) found key governance tasks posed substantial difficulties for Trustees with a major category being limitations in Trustees' knowledge, skill and understanding of educational matters. These limitations were described as limited conceptual understanding, limited understanding of professional language and limited understanding of practical procedures and processes.

(3) United States

In the United States schooling is primarily categorized as public (approximately 73%), private (24%) and charter (3%). Research on the functioning and effectiveness of public school boards in the United States (including charter schools)³¹ is limited³² and research on private school boards likewise³³; although there is a body of practitioner literature that posits the core characteristics of effective school governance as being,

- improved student academic performance,
- setting the educational vision,
- focus on policy making, rather than management,
- financial oversight, resource allocation and protection,
- good working relationship between the board and the superintendent³⁴,
- collective board decision making through collaboration,
- interagency collaboration and linkages with outside groups and government,
- representing the school to key stakeholders and the external environment, and
- evaluations of the board and the school and board development programs (Land, 2002; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011).

Danzberger *et al.*, (1992) defined effective governance as ‘the collective ability of board members to fulfill their obligations and responsibilities across the spectrum of responsible governing behaviours’ (p. 82). The primary obligation of improved student academic performance can be measured and benchmarked against standardized test scores. However, there is not universal agreement as to the other roles and responsibilities of board members and what constitutes responsible governing behaviours, nor the relative importance of each to effective governance (Land, 2002). The complexity of influences on and effects of school boards may account for the lack of quantitative

³¹ School boards are a key part of public school governance in the United States (Land, 2002). Local schools boards, vested with authority by their state, have operated for over 150 years. Most of these boards operate at a district level responsible for the governance of all schools in the district. In the last several decades, State and Federal governments have gradually expanded their role in education, through increasingly prescriptive legislation and funding models (Land, 2002). Improvement of student achievement is now mandated as a primary goal for public school boards and has become the predominant measure of board effectiveness (Land, 2002). Charter schools are becoming an increasingly common educational governance reform in the United States (Land, 2002). These schools, although part of the public education system, have been freed from some of the rules that apply to other public schools in exchange for accountability for producing certain results, set out in each school's charter.

³² Foundational research on school board effectiveness was conducted in 1986 by Carol and colleagues and followed by qualitative research studies by Danzberger and colleagues (1992), Goodman and Zimmerman (1997), McAdams (2000) and the Iowa Association of School Boards in 2000.

³³ Foundational research on independent school boards by Ledyard (1987) with follow up studies by Kane (1992) and Price (2005).

³⁴ Note the school board has the authority to hire and fire the superintendent.

studies to date on US school board effectiveness; however, future use of a variety of research methodologies and advances in statistical analysis may see more studies emerge (Land, 2002).

A survey study by Ledyard (1987) found that the work of school boards did not follow the guidelines for Trustees issued by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) in relation to clarity and separation of roles of the board and management. Research by Kane (1992) found that, ... in most independent schools, neither a clear-cut division of responsibilities nor a policy-setting role for the school head is feasible or desirable. More typically, authority is shared, but school heads understand that working with their board is an essential part of the job, often occupying 25 percent of their time. (p. 14)

Kane noted the need for improved professional development and high level communication skills for Trustees to meet the challenges of trusteeship.

A study by Price (2005) also explored the board and Principal relationship in an independent school context, concluding that respectful and trusting relationships between Trustees and the Principal, board engagement on important issues, professional development, a culture of continuous improvement and board evaluations were important characteristics of effective boards. Price also acknowledged the historical context of many independent schools where traditions and culture exerted strong influences on board functioning.

Independent school boards in the United States share a number of characteristics with charter school boards. Sparks (2009) drew on research on these schools and nonprofit governance in his study of charter schools. He found that many charter school boards focus attention on immediate concerns at the expense of strategy and long term planning notwithstanding the emphasis on strategizing and planning found in the normative literature (for example, Chait *et al.*, 2005). He also found the,

... classic tension between governance and management that is evident in many governing bodies ... not only exists in charter schools, it is exacerbated by the complexity of these organizations and by resource constraints that often force board members to step into what are traditionally considered to be management roles or activities ... Rigid conceptions of the line between governance and management may also have negative consequences for charter school boards as they create an atmosphere of inflexibility and discourage board and staff from considering all available approaches ... To this end , it is important for charter school boards and staff to work together to develop mutual understandings about roles and responsibilities, as well as to recognize that changing circumstances might call for future reassessments. (p.328 - 330)

Sparks found a lack of educators on charter school boards, although the work of charter schools involves a ‘great amount of industry-specific knowledge, including federal, state and local education regulations, curricula, pedagogical methods, child social and emotional development’, and other

complex educational issues (p. 335). He posited a number of reasons for this lack of educational expertise, although maintaining it was logical and necessary for charter school boards to have educational expertise.

Sparks identified some positive board attributes which he found to be characteristics that improved board functioning in the charter school context and created an atmosphere for productive governance activity. These attributes were,

- boards that continually considered their roles, their value and their priorities and who were willing to make changes in structure, policy and approach appeared better equipped to meet the challenges of the dynamic and complex charter school environment,
- boards that made time and space for board members to discuss on their own and with staff members strategic issues seem to foster more open, positive and sophisticated dialogues,
- boards with members skilled with educational experience and access to quality information, particularly upward flow information from the principal enabled quality oversight of the school's academic professionals, and
- boards with an atmosphere of trust and respect share information more freely and work together to address challenges.

(4) United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, boards of governors, comprised of parents, staff, educational authority officers and other stakeholders, have had the responsibility for the conduct of public schools since the 1980s. The underlying principle for a stakeholder governance model was that 'schools would only work well when the different constituencies were provided with a space to express their voice and reach agreement about the purpose and development of a school' (Ranson, 2012, p. 30). Today these bodies are expressly charged with the responsibility to 'conduct the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement' (section 21 *Education Act* 2002). Reports by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) show that school governing is good or better in most schools and satisfactory in all but a small minority (Balarin *et al.*, 2008).

Accountability pressures on governing bodies have accumulated since their creation in the 1980s and have become 'thorough, demanding and intense' (Balarin *et al.*, 2008, p. 31). Ranson (2008) traces the accumulation of accountability demands upon school governing bodies since the 1980s, with schools now dealing with market based accountability (recruitment and retention of students), contractual and legal regulation accountability (to ensure specific standards are met) and the more recent performance and audit based accountability.

There has been a series of recent research projects on the contribution of governance to school improvement as part of the government's policy agenda to prescribe a new system for education leading to fundamental changes in the governance of schools (Ranson, 2012). A review by the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) (2008) of recent research concluded that overall, the evidence suggests 'that there is a relationship between good governance and pupils' achievements, the quality of teaching, as well as the quality of leadership and management' (p. 1). A further review by the Ministerial Working Group on School Governance (2010) reported that school governors provided a 'vital link between the school and the local community and their collective experience provides a wider perspective for the management of the school' (p. 2). The review found that the majority of governing bodies 'do a good job'; however, there was need for further clarity around the role of the governing bodies vis-à-vis the role of management, training for governors and ensuring that the governing body has an appropriate mix of skills and experience to fulfill its role. The Working Group enunciated a set of principles for good governance in schools which set out the purpose and role of governing bodies and describe the way governing bodies should go about their work. School governing bodies need to be clear about their purpose and equipped with knowledge and skills to ensure –

- clear strategic direction,
- the establishment, protection and promotion of the school's ethos and values,
- high standards of education and well-being for all children,
- probity and value for public money,
- effective scrutiny of plans, policy and performance,
- robust challenge and support in holding the head teacher to account,
- that decisions are taken based on good quality relevant information and advice,
- effective mechanisms to engage with and take into account the needs of pupils, parents and other stakeholders within the community,
- the development of effective partnerships with other schools and community services, as well as employers, to enhance the school's capacity to deliver the best possible service,
- accountability to parents, other stakeholders and the community for decisions taken about the school,
- high standards of governance through the evaluation and continual improvement of their collective capabilities, and
- that all dealings are consistent with the values of public service.

A further project funded by CfBT Education Trust³⁵ also released a report in 2010 on school governing bodies in England (James *et al.*, 2010; James *et al.*, 2011). That project drew on data from a national survey of school governors³⁶ and 30 case studies of school governing in a range of settings. The report noted that the context for governing is typically in a state of flux which adds to the already considerable degree of difficulty in governing. The project confirmed the substantial contribution made by school governors and found that a lack of a capable governing body is a substantial disadvantage for a school. The role of the Chair was identified as a significant educational and community leadership responsibility and the quality of the relationship between the chair and the principal is significant in enabling high quality governance.

A concern with performance conditioned school governing, particularly in recruitment and the capabilities required to form a sophisticated view of performance. The study showed a link between student performance and the strength of a school's 'governance capital', the network of individuals (including governors) and their capabilities, relationships and motivations that are available for the governance of the school. The Chair, head teacher and other members of the governing body have a significant role in building governance capital. Governance capital was likely to be greater for schools that are well regarded compared with those that are not, are in higher socio-economic status settings, and have higher student attainment. High levels of commitment, proactivity and drive from governors is highly significant for all aspects of governing and can offset a lack of 'governance capital'. The research identified significant differences in the recruitment, governing task and governing body functioning and processes between high and low socio-economic status schools. High socio-economic status schools had more potential governors, governors were more likely to see the governing task as medium to long term planning, representing stakeholders and financial management, and were more likely to work well together, with high attendance and the confidence to express views and make contributions. Overall, school governance is under greater pressure in low socio-economic settings.

The report confirmed earlier research by Balarin *et al.*, (2008) that governors consider the most important attribute of a governor to be alignment with and support of the ethos of the school. Effective governing bodies looked for a range of functional and strategic capabilities and other skills, including an ability to learn about the institution and the world of education, and readiness to ask questions. Earlier research by Deem *et al.*, (1995) argues that differential participation by governors is a more significant issue for governing bodies than a governor's knowledge and capability.

³⁵ Founded in 1968 as the Centre for British Teachers.

³⁶ The study included non government schools

Recruitment of governors remains difficult for many schools due to the fixed four year term of office and barriers to volunteering, including a lack of time, reimbursement for the cost of taking part and the publicity given to school governing (James *et al.*, 2011; Ellis, 2003). Governors from the business sector are valued by head teachers, as they saw them as ‘objective outsiders without a vested interest in the schools they governed so able to engage in unemotional, non-partisan debate about sensitive matters concerning school pupils, staff, politics or parents’ (Thody & Punter, 2000, p. 189).

There is an ongoing debate in the UK on the community governance model and concern that a business model approach may emerge as the preferred model. Ranson (2012) argues that the trend to corporatising of school governance, replicating that of wider civil society, ‘can only limit the potential for governance to enhance school improvement and student achievement ... because schools can only succeed, particularly in contexts of disadvantage, when schools are able to mediate the journey young people make between worlds, connecting the language of home and community with the language of the public space’ (p. 29). The responsiveness of a governing body to its community is therefore critical and the emerging discourse on ‘new learning’, which emphasizes the significance for learning beyond an isolated classroom, requires a governance model that ‘constitutes the spaces and processes that enable the relevant interests and voices to deliberate the purpose of learning and capability formation’ (p. 39).

Conclusion

School based management with a board responsible and accountable for the governance of the school is now common across all sectors of schooling. This model is driven by respective governments’ goal to improve student academic and social outcomes. The normative literature advocates governance approaches based on the corporate governance model. Issues faced by governing boards, such as clarity of roles of governors and management, the effective functioning of the board and its contribution to organizational performance, reflect the discourse in the corporate sector. There is an emerging body of research on the role and functioning of school boards in government owned schools. Although this literature is informative, there is a lack of and therefore a need for substantive research on the role and functioning of boards in a private school context. Such research would inform the discourse and understanding of governance of new and existing independent schools and could contribute to the discourse on government schools, particularly in light of the trend to increased autonomy in public schools. The research questions were framed in response to the gap in the literature on the role and functioning of boards in private school contexts and the aim of the research has been to illuminate the governance tasks and processes in this context.

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Chapter 5

Significance of the Governance Literature for the Study

School governing has, to date, not been a substantive focus for researchers in educational leadership and management (James *et al.*, 2010, p. 94), although a link has been drawn between governance and students' achievements (DCSF, 2008). Governance of schools, and in particular the practices of school governing bodies requires a research focus so that governance as an element of effective schooling can be better understood and governance models designed to support schools as institutions of learning and capability development. Whilst the literature review identified normative prescriptions for the role and responsibilities of the governing bodies of independent schools and practices that are 'good governance', there is a paucity of empirical research to support these prescriptions and little empirical research which explores how governing bodies perceive their work or how they actually function.

The literature on school councils of government schools in the Australian context is primarily government policy statements and government initiated reviews which conclude that school based management is effective and school councils an important part of the governance framework. The literature highlights an increasingly corporatized approach to school governance, particularly the role of school councils. However, this literature offers little to inform the governance of independent schools where school governing bodies have been operating with high levels of autonomy since the early days of Australian schooling. The literature on school governing bodies in other jurisdictions is principally concerned with government schools where school boards have been a feature of school governance for several decades. The founding principle for school based governance of government schools in the United Kingdom was to provide stakeholders with a voice on the purpose and development of their school. More recent research in the United Kingdom has identified a link between good governance and students' achievements thus bringing renewed focus on the role of governing bodies as contributors to effective schooling (Ranson *et al.*, 2005a; Balarin *et al.*, 2008; DCSF, 2008). The UK literature also revealed a trend to corporatization of school governance as accountability pressures on schools increase, thus raising questions about the governance model, such as the democratizing rationale for representation of school community members on school councils (Ranson, 2012). The most recent research in the United Kingdom on school governance (Balarin *et al.*, 2008; James *et al.*, 2010) provided the most useful reference for extrapolation to independent school governance in an Australian context. The researchers, through surveys, interviews and case studies of government and independent schools, presented findings which confirmed the complex and

demanding nature of school governing and the significant contribution governing bodies make to the school as an institution and its performance and identified the need for new models of school governance to respond to the changing nature of schools.

Notwithstanding this research and the limited research in the United States on independent and charter school governance, there remains a gap in the literature for empirical research that explores how in an Australian context an independent school is governed by its school council. That this gap exists is not surprising given the work of an independent school council occurs primarily in a confidential and private social context and access to this environment is problematic. Governing is a complex and difficult task and understanding the way a school council perceives and actually responds to the governance task can inform important policy and practical matters, ranging from strengthening the school as an institution to improving student achievement to new conceptions of governance and practices that enhance the quality and effectiveness of school governing and support the recruitment, retention and succession of capable school council members. This study presents empirical findings illuminating the practice of governance in an independent school and is an important contribution to building understanding of governance in practice. The findings also provide empirical support for the normative literature prescriptions on the role and responsibilities of the governing body of an independent school. This is a significant contribution to the literature as there has not to date been any Australian empirical research to support these prescriptions.

The review of the literature on governing in the non-education sectors (corporate governance and nonprofit governance) revealed a number of significant considerations for this research. Firstly, the normative prescriptions of governance in the corporate and nonprofit literature are exerting considerable influence on the conception and practice of governance. These prescriptions are influencing policy makers and being adopted by governing bodies for the governance of their organizations in a race to be seen as having ‘best practice’ governance. This trend is evidence of the influence of the economic field on the field of school education and the pervasiveness of neo-classical economic approaches to all aspects of civil society, including our schools as public institutions (Ranson, 2012). Secondly, as for school governance, there is a relative lack of empirical investigation into the practice of governance in the corporate and nonprofit sectors which could inform governance discourse and the development or refinement of governance models. Thirdly, ‘best practice’ corporate governance principles and practices are setting a standard for governance practices in the nonprofit sector and independent schools. This is not surprising, given that independent schools and many nonprofit organizations are incorporated entities with a board as the governing body holding ultimate

authority and accountability for the organization. Governing bodies across the sectors also share similar legal obligations and all face an increasing regulatory burden ranging from employee safety to corporate social responsibility. Further, School Councils of independent schools are populated with many people with corporate backgrounds steeped in the corporate governance model. Whilst these council members bring important dimensions of social capital to the school, they also bring the generic corporate governance model, thus influencing governance practices for the school.

Critically, what is missing in this generic approach is a recognition that corporate governance mechanisms have not been developed to respond to the distinctive characteristics of independent schools. Further, corporate governance models differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction reflecting domestic economic and social conditions (Branson, 2001; Rhodes & van Apeldoorn, 1998). A governance framework for an independent school must be informed by its organizational characteristics, such as the complex and interrelated factors of mission, context, achievement and stakeholders, in the same way that mechanisms of corporate governance evolved over time to respond to the purpose and nature of for profit corporations. For example, the dominance of agency theory and thus the preeminence of shareholders over all other stakeholders of a corporation. The literature from the nonprofit sector offers some guidance for the governance of independent schools as it recognizes the factors that differentiate nonprofit organizations from for profit corporations; however, the convergence of governance principles and practices in the sectors has the potential to diminish the importance of organizational characteristics in nonprofit governance discourse and frameworks. The nonprofit sector, including independent schools, can learn from many corporate governance practices to enhance oversight of the 'business' aspects of the organization; for example, corporate approaches to board oversight of financial controls and risk management. However, nonprofit organizations, including schools, in adopting corporate governance practices, must maintain their focus on mission and connection and accountability to their stakeholders. A counter influence needs to be exerted; the distinctive characteristics of schools as educational institutions that are expected to 'assist young people to contribute to Australia's social, cultural and economic development' (MCEETYA, 2008).

The nonprofit sector also needs to recognize its strengths and appreciate that it can bring its understanding of mission, context and stakeholders to corporate governance discourse at a time when corporate governing bodies are coming to terms with an emerging broader conception of 'acting in the interests of the corporation'. Corporations today are expected to account to a broader group of stakeholders, such as employees, suppliers and customers. The interests of shareholders are now mediated by the interests of these other stakeholders and governing bodies are increasingly balancing

competing interests to deliver sustainable and longer term growth in their business. Boards of directors are not well versed in communicating their 'mission', that is, how the organization's strategy and operating model will provide 'outcomes' for the stakeholders as opposed to just the shareholders. Empirical research on governance of independent schools in Australia can identify and describe effective governance practices. Research in the United Kingdom has already identified that superior governance of schools will strengthen the trust and authority of the school as an institution, enhance the practice of management, support and ensure accountability and make more effective the environment of learning thus leading to higher educational attainment (Ranson, 2012). The practices and challenges of governance revealed through this case study can inform governance discourse for independent schools and all school based management so effective governance practices can be identified and supported, thus contributing to the achievement of the national goals for schooling. Effective governance practices in our schools can also inform governance principles and practice in a broader context, such as for other nonprofit organizations. Discourse on governance practices of public institutions, such as schools, which reflect the nature of their public service and resulting distinctive organizational characteristics, needs to be part of the wider governance discourse.

This study grew out of the gaps in the governance literature; most notably a lack of empirical research into governing bodies of schools in Australia and particularly independent schools. Given the proposition that governing bodies can be contributors to effective schooling, empirical research on governance practices is needed and the reality of governance in practice needs to be understood. This is the rationale for the research undertaken and the research questions framed for this research. I had my own experience as a governor in an independent school; however I wondered whether governance practice and the experience of governing in other independent schools reflected this experience. The peak body for independent schools offered governance guidelines mirroring the prescriptive literature and held governance seminars where generic governance concepts and principles were advocated. However, there appeared to be little sharing of 'real' information about the challenges and experiences of the governing task between the 'top' schools who saw each other as competitors. Although information sharing is desirable from an 'in principle' perspective, it is problematic when schools are actually in competition with each other. Information is important 'capital' and can buy positioning in the field of school education; positioning on which a school will ultimately be evaluated.

Chapter 6

Theoretical Framework

Introduction

The conventional governance literature offers few tools with which to study governance in an independent school. While offering some theories to explain the purpose of boards as governing bodies, economic and organizational theories are one-dimensional and inadequate to explain the complex and dynamic governance environment of an independent school (refer Chapter 5). The governance literature identifies several key features for effective governing, including role, structure and board member attributes; although there are few empirical studies to support the central importance of these features. Even fewer studies have attempted to present or explain governance as it is practised by governing bodies responding to the complex interplay of external and internal factors. To enter and make sense of the private social space that is a School Council requires methodological approaches that will facilitate access to observational and interview data and will provide a framework within which to interpret and present the multiple facets of the governance task. These facets range from how the governing body is constituted, through to how individual members view their role and connect with their colleagues.

In this study I therefore looked beyond the governance literature for an appropriate theoretical approach to provide a framework in which to interpret, structure and present the research findings from the case study research method. I chose Bourdieu's thinking tools of *habitus*, *capitals* and *field* together with the complementary conception of organizational culture of Schein, to illuminate and explain the different facets of the complex integrated social processes of governance of a School by a School Council.

These conceptions facilitate an analysis of the School Council on three levels. On the first level, the School Council may be understood as a structured social space that is located within a broader context; namely, the field of school education and subject to influences from this field and other fields, such as the economic field. Bourdieu's concept of *field* helps locate the School in relation to other schools and understand how government as a policy maker, regulator and funder in the field of school education impacts the School. Even though the School is located within the field of school education, it is also influenced by forces from the economic field and the fields of religion and nonprofit organizations. Schein's conception of organizational culture illuminates how culture has shaped the school's adaptation to these external forces and the relationships the School and its Council has with the external environment.

At the second level of analysis, these conceptions facilitate an analysis of the School Council as a structured social space with its own history, beliefs, rules and practices. Bourdieu calls these 'logics of practice' and Schein 'dimensions of internal integration'. Within the School Council there will be shared understanding of what things mean, how to respond and what actions to take.

The third level of analysis takes place at the individual level. Bourdieu's thinking tools includes an understanding of the *habitus* of the members of the School Council and how their dispositions shape the practice of governance by the School Council. Schein's conception of organizational culture complements this level of analysis as it recognizes the critical role that people in leadership positions play in creating and embedding culture. Members of the School Council hold leadership positions in the School, as the School Council sits at the apex of authority and accountability within the School.

Given the focus of this research Bourdieu and Schein's conceptions complement each other and, when taken together, allow for the provision of a productive analysis of the data. They both offer a practical set of analytic tools to account for the relations that were found in the rich data provided by the case study research method. Both conceptions aim to identify hidden generating structures within a social system (a School Council), critically examine these structures, and offer a clearer view that goes beyond accepting things at face value. Drawing on these conceptions provides a deeper functional understanding of the way governance practices are constituted in an independent school and their social and cultural effects. Bourdieu and Schein both recognize the need for researcher reflexivity in the research process so that the effects and influence of the researcher could be identified and 'controlled' through articulation. For this researcher, developing awareness of my dispositions, my use of and access to certain intellectual and cultural capitals, and my cultural prejudices, was a continual and demanding discipline during the study. Schein's practical methods for collecting and analyzing data on complex social systems were invaluable and complemented the literature on case study methodology.

Bourdieu's Theory of *Practice*

Bourdieu developed his theoretical conception over forty years of anthropological and sociological research, taking account of many and varied organizational contexts, as he endeavored to explain the social, political and cultural practices of the world around him (Grenfell, 2008b, p. 15). Bourdieu's sociologically based tools of *habitus*, *capitals* and *field* 'embody a dynamic and epistemology that make them active tools' for use in educational research (Grenfell, 2008a, p. 3), and

will enable an illumination and explanation of the different facets of the complex integrated social processes of governance of a school by a board (Grenfell, 2008d).

Bourdieu's 'theory of practice' recognizes the structural relationship between individual perception and social conditions, that is, "the ontological complicity between objective structures and internalized structures" (Grenfell, 2008, p. 44; Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu, 1992), between *field* and *habitus*. Each of these concepts is expressed in a philosophical language, recognizing language as a fundamental tool for explaining social processes, so as to 'act as an antidote to everyday language and thus the way it occulted the social process that had produced it' (Grenfell, 2008b, p. 24).

Practice, in its broadest sense, is about human action, 'activities that have a social character and meaning, the specific details, structure and effects of which emerge in research' (Rawolle & Lingard, 2008, p. 730). Practice encompasses the carrying out of an activity and the nominalization of the activity and is differentiated from theories about practice (Rawolle & Lingard, 2008). Practical conduct does not require or exhibit 'the level of conscious reflexive thought characteristic of theoretical reason' (Warde, 2004, p. 6). Bourdieu developed a framework through which to explore practice that would 'make explicit the truth of the primary experience of the social world' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 3). The concept of *practice* as developed by Bourdieu seeks to describe the performances of agents and understand their social origin. These performances are temporal in nature and produced by the *habitus* within the limits set by the historical and social conditions of its production (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu, 1990). Practices can be institutionalized, becoming identifiable, co-ordinated entities (Bourdieu, 1990; Warde, 2004). Other academics, have built on Bourdieu's notion of practice, including Schatzki (1996), who describes practice as a coordinated entity, a temporally evolving open-ended set of doings and sayings. Patterns of practice can be further explained through the concepts of *habitus* and *field*.

Concept of *Habitus*

Habitus is an embodied property of social agents (encompassing individuals, groups and institutions). *Habitus* refers to 'systems of durable, transposable dispositions ... which generate and organize practices', 'perception and appreciation' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53 / 54). *Habitus* captures the generative principles and strategies of consciousness and practice – 'the internationalization of the principles of cultural arbitrary capable of perpetuating itself' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 31; Bourdieu, 1990). *Habitus* was further described by Bourdieu as 'a product of conditionings which tend to reproduce the objective logic of those conditionings while transforming it' (Bourdieu, 1993, p 87). Dispositions were elaborated by Bourdieu as being –

- ‘the result of an organizing action ... a structure’ (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 214);
- ‘a way of being, a habitual state ... a predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination’ (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 214);
- durable - lasting over time (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 87; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 133);
- transposable – ‘capable of becoming active in a wide variety of theatres of social action’ (Maton, 2008, p. 51);
- generative – ‘generating products – thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions’ (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 55);
- historically constituted (through our personal history) yet not mechanistic, rather unpredictable (Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu, 1992; Bourdieu, 1993);
- embodied, through implicit or explicit learning, an internalized structure, although not innate or conscious (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 86); and
- permanent yet adaptive through an ongoing and active process (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 86).

In summary *habitus* is ‘structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures’ (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53). Predispositions are structures in that they are systemically ordered, rather than random or unpatterned (Maton, 2008, p. 51). They are structured by one’s past and present circumstances and structuring because they are generative, shaping present and future practices (Maton, 2008).

Habitus is a relational structure and its significance lies in its relationship with relational fields (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Maton, 2008). ‘It is only in relation to certain structures that *habitus* produces given discourses or practices’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 135).

Concept of *Field*

The social world is a *field* of power comprising a number of fields and subfields each having a hierarchical position in the social world. Each field is a dynamic structured social space shaped by the power relations among social agents who occupy positions in the field (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 73). Fields may appear in many manifestations and each field has its own history, beliefs, rules and patterned, regular and predictable practices (‘logics of practice’). Each subfield has its own internal logic – rules and practices (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Thomson, 2008). As there are no ‘transhistoric laws of relations between fields ... we must investigate each historical case separately’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 109). The economic field is the dominant social field within the social world and has ‘especially powerful determinations’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 109; Bourdieu, 1990). Bourdieu positioned social fields as complete although the practices of social agents in the field are

subject to internal tensions and external pressures. However there are interrelations between fields which generate ‘cross-field’ effects (Rawolle, 2005). Exchanges between social agents in different fields make them interdependent creating a mutual process of influence and ongoing co-construction (Thomson, 2008, p. 71). The boundaries of fields are dynamic and often blurred and contested and can only be ascertained by empirical investigation (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Thomson, 2008).

Each field is competitive and hierarchical with the positions of social agents being either dominant or dominated (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu, 1983; Thomson, 2008). The competitive and strategic mechanics of the concept of *field* do not easily accommodate non-strategic and non-competitive yet purposeful action by agents (Warde, 2004). Some practices will be orientated toward ‘field-like behaviour’ (for example production of external goods through strategic and competitive behaviour, such as technical skills), while other practices will be orientated towards internal goods, such as self-esteem and personal development (Warde, 2004; MacIntyre, 1985; Wilkinson, 2010). These ‘non-strategic’ practices may have little or no impact on the position of a social agent within a field, although they may ‘nonetheless reveal a location and hierarchy between those engaged’ (Wilkinson, 2010, p. 48).

The hierarchy within a field is established and maintained by the value of the *capitals* produced and accumulated by social agents within the field (Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Capitals are specific to a process within and a product of a field; they do not exist and function except in relation to a field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2002; Thomson, 2008, p. 69). Distribution of capitals amongst social agents and exchange of capitals between social agents is regulated by the field (Moore, 2008).

Bourdieu identified three forms of capital –

- *economic capital* (money and assets);
- *cultural capital* (knowledge, taste, language, aesthetic, attributes derived from education, family background etc); and
- *social capital* (networks, family, religion, heritage) (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1990, p. 119; Bourdieu, 2006, p. 106)

Capitals are currency to be used by social agents in a field (Grenfell, 2008, p. 85). They have value because of the social recognition and attribution given to each type of capital due to scarcity (Bourdieu, 2006, p. 108; Crossley, 2008; Grenfell, 2008). All forms of capital, insofar as they have social recognition, can be described as *symbolic capital* (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 34; Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 127; Bourdieu, 2006, p. 115).

Capitals can be exchanged between social agents and converted from one form to another (Bourdieu, 2006). The homology of different fields means that capitals and strategies may be able to be used by social agents in several fields at the one time (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 271). Cultural and social capitals are ‘transubstantiated’ forms of economic capital – ‘economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital’ (Bourdieu, 2006, p. 113). The instrumental and self interested nature of the exchange is always transparent with economic capital (Moore, 2008, p. 103). Bourdieu posits that the same instrumentalism and self interest exists in the other forms of capital because they are transubstantiated forms of economic capital and therefore homologous, however it is usually not acknowledged (Bourdieu, 2006, p. 105 and 113). This ‘misrecognition’ is a failure to see the social origin of these types of capital.

Capitals can be objectified, institutionalized or embodied (Bourdieu, 2006, p. 109). For example, cultural capital can be objectified in a material object such as an essay, institutionalized as an educational qualification in essay writing from a prestigious institution, or embodied in the social agent as the skill to write. Embodied cultural capital is acquired over time through ‘work on oneself’, consciously and unconsciously (Bourdieu, 2006, p. 107; Moore, 2008). Such embodied capital is evident in the *habitus*.

Cultural capital has its highest value when it is most highly formed and the *habitus* of the social agent is ‘well-formed’ and it has optimal transposability (Moore, 2008, p. 114). Capitals are therefore closely linked to *habitus* as embodied capital will impress upon the *habitus* over time and be mediated by it (Moore, 2008, p. 109).

Some forms of cultural capital bring ‘distinction’ and are seen as ‘legitimate culture’ (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu, 2006). In the words of Bourdieu it is the ‘transmission of an arbitrary way of living into a legitimate way of life which casts every other way of life into arbitrariness’ (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 57). This misrecognition of the arbitrary for the legitimate creates unseen violence, symbolic violence that causes social suffering and reproduces a system of unequal social relations between social agents (Bourdieu, 1977; Moore, 2008).

Bourdieu posited that economic capital and cultural capital operated as two hierarchized poles in a social field (Thomson, 2008). At one pole are the economically dominant (and culturally dominated) positions, and at the other pole are the culturally dominant (and economically dominated) positions. The field can therefore be expressed diagrammatically and positions of social agents in the field plotted by reference to the portfolio of capitals (types and volumes) held.

The beliefs of each field are a ‘doxa, a set of fundamental beliefs which does not even need to be asserted in the form of an explicit, self-conscious dogma’ (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 15). These arbitrary beliefs are given legitimacy, become embedded in the field as a ‘symbolic form of power’ and ‘natural order’ and legitimize arbitrary systems of classification and categorization thereby defining and characterizing the field. Over time the social origin of the arbitrary is rendered invisible. ‘The adherence expressed in the doxic relation to the social world is the absolute form of recognition of legitimacy through misrecognition of arbitrariness, since it is unaware of the very question of legitimacy, which arises from competition for legitimacy and hence from conflict between groups claiming to possess it’ (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 168). *Doxa* is produced and reproduced in the habitus. ‘The mutual reinforcement between field and *habitus* strengthens the prevailing power of the *doxa*’ (Deer, 2008, p. 121; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Bourdieu saw *doxa* as an effective form of domination by one group within a field over another, another form of ‘symbolic violence’ which causes social suffering (Bourdieu, 1977). *Doxa* is produced and reproduced within the field by the dominant and the dominated further entrenching a system of social inequity.

Bourdieu wanted to make explicit the forms of misrecognition of *doxa* that underpin the logic of practice in fields. He acknowledged the difficulty in doing this because any discussion on established rules of a field is mediated by the *doxa*. Bourdieu concluded that ‘crisis is a necessary condition for a questioning of *doxa* but is not in itself a sufficient condition for the production of a critical discourse’ (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 169). Rigorous, scientific analysis is needed to identify the implicit in social relations and structures and a universe of discourse. ‘The social scientist should therefore work at universalizing and democratizing the economic and cultural conditions of access to social scientific knowledge so as to universalize access to the universal, which is the only way to achieve a lasting undermining of *doxa*’ (Deer, 2008, p. 129).

Fields are value laden and create the need for investment and involvement by the social agent and therefore self interest. This self interest may appear as ‘natural’ behaviour according to the social agent’s “socially constituted habitus” (Grenfell, 2008c, p. 161). However, all actions by social agents are invested with interest, even if acted with the appearance of ‘disinterest’ (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 290). Thus all social practice is essentially ‘economic’ – ‘practice never ceases to conform to economic calculation even when it gives the appearance of disinterestedness by departing from the logic of interested calculation (in the narrow sense) and playing for stakes that are non-material and not easily quantified’ (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 177). The field regulates conflicts of interest between social agents so

as to ensure the interest of the individual or group is adjusted to the collective interest (Grenfell, 2008c, p. 157).

Some social agents form a ‘social class’ within a field, that is when they act and identify collectively (Bourdieu, 1992). Social classes are an expression of field systems and identify, advocate and protect the interests of the class (Grenfell, 2008, p. 214). Classes come into being through a process of mobilization and political struggle and, although these periods are rare and short lived, ‘their effect may be more enduring in so far as they sediment in the forms of *habitus*, ethos and *doxa* which continue to shape action outside of contention’ (Crossley, 2008, p. 99). Many social agents, although not members of a class, share similar positions in the social space due to similarities in their portfolios of capitals. This social proximity creates an environment conducive for them to meet, interact and form relationships thereby contributing to ongoing shaping of each individual’s *habitus*. This illustrates the interconnectedness and relationality between the subjective (*habitus*) and the objective (*field* - conditions of locations in social space) (Crossley, 2008, p. 93; Bourdieu, 1984).

Habitus and *field* are mutually constituted – an obscure, double and unconsciousness relationship (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 126; Bourdieu, 1993, p. 76). *Habitus* is the basis for the social agents understanding of the field, that is, ‘constructive cognition’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 127). As the ‘feel for the game’ it is the social game embodied and turned into second nature (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 62). *Field* structures and conditions the *habitus* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992 at 127). A field contains potentialities which *habitus* can anticipate and respond to with discourses and practices (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 135). *Habitus* and *field* are homologous although each has its own history and logics of practice.

The relationship between the relational structures of *habitus* and *field* can be seen in the correspondence between a social agents aspirations (mental structures) and the objective chances for achievement of those aspirations provided by the field (social structures) creating a ‘sense of reality’ which produces and reproduces unconscious adherence to the established social order (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 164). In this correspondence *habitus* is assisted by *conatus* in making ongoing adjustments to subjective expectations so as to match the objective systems. *Conatus* was defined by Bourdieu as being the ‘combination of dispositions and interests associated with a particular class of social position which inclines social agents to strive to reproduce *at a constant or an increasing rate* the properties constituting their social identity, *without even needing to do this deliberately or consciously*’ (Bourdieu, 1988, p. 176, emphasis added).

Habitus and *field* are dynamic and evolving and as a result can become ‘out of synch’ with each other. If change takes place gradually and along anticipated directions then balance between *habitus* and *field* is maintained (Hardy, 2008, p. 132). The concept of *hysteresis* describes the effects of a disruption in the relationship between *habitus* and *field* so they no longer match. The disruption is usually caused by a rapid change in the field and a slower response by social agents through adjustments in their *habitus*. Those social agents with a ‘well formed’ *habitus* or who occupy the most dominant positions in the field are usually the first to occupy new field positions. ‘Habitue is not necessarily adapted to its situation ... it has degrees of integration – which correspond in particular to degrees of ‘crystallization’ of the status occupied’ (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 160). In this way *hysteresis* provides opportunities for the already successful to succeed further (Hardy, 2008 at 135). As further explained by Bourdieu,

The hysteresis of habitue, which is inherent in the social conditions of the reproduction of the structures in habitue, is doubtless one of the foundations of the structural lag between opportunities and dispositions to grasp them which is the cause of missed opportunities and, in particular, of the frequently observed incapacity to think historical crises in categories of perception and thought other than those of the past, albeit a revolutionary past. (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 83)

The relational concepts of *habitus*, *field* and *capitals* are presented diagrammatically in Figure 6.1 to show the relationship between individual agency and social conditions. As indicated in Figure 6.1, these concepts are not stand alone and can only be understood in terms of their relationship to other concepts.

(Relationship between individual agency and social conditions)

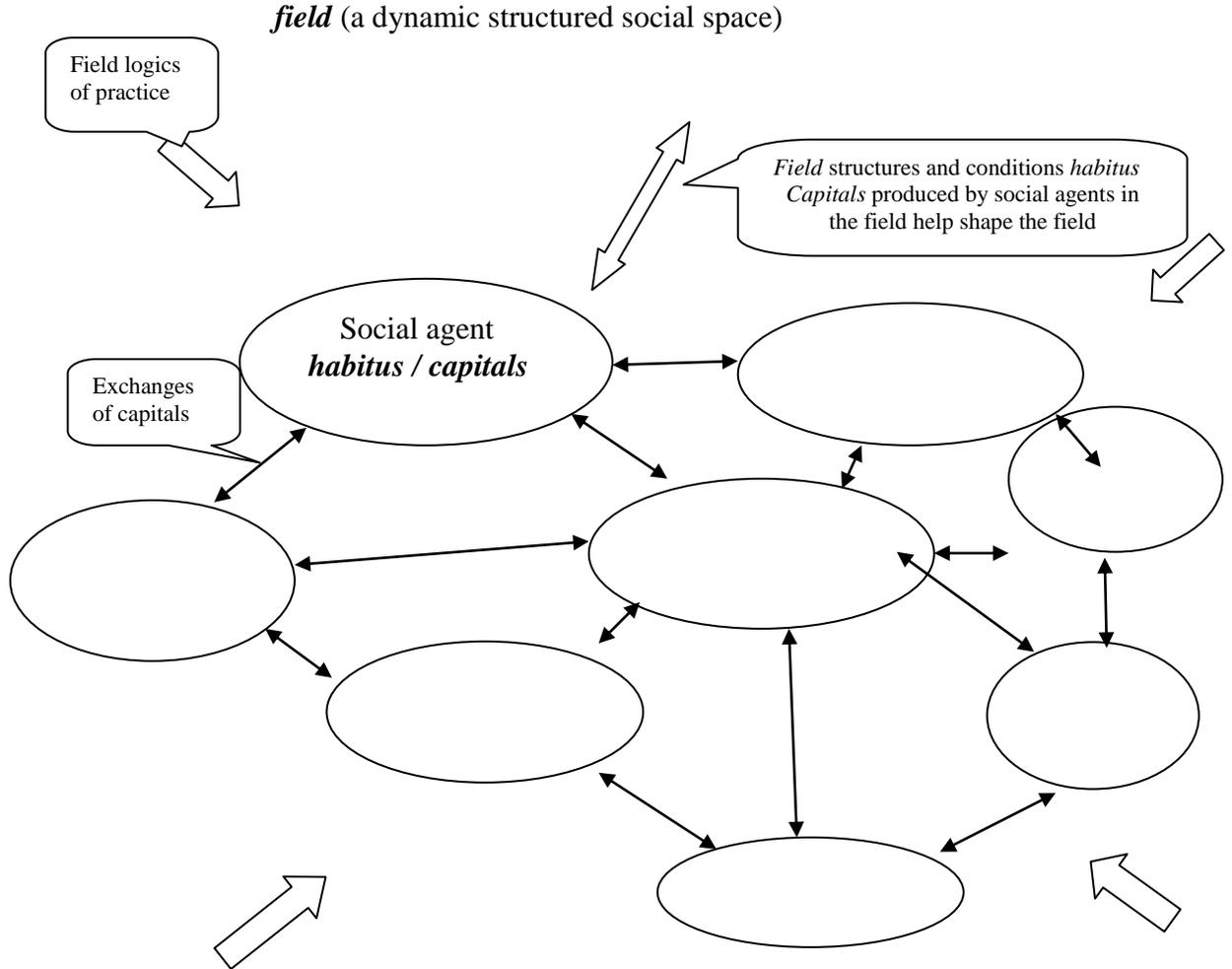


Figure 6.1. Diagram on Relationship between *Habitus*, *Field* and *Capitals*.

Note: Field logics of practice - histories, doxa, rules, patterned regular and predictable practices

In this study the governance practices of the case study School Council are examined in the context of the multiple *fields* and subfields that the School Council is located within and the *habitus* and *capitals* of the members of Council as social agents. My *habitus* and *capitals* as researcher, and changes to the relational structures of my position in the field of the School Council over the course of

the study, are also identified and explored so as to recognize and control the effects and influence of my relationship to the object of the research.

Schein's Conception of Organizational Culture

In addition to Bourdieu's theory of *practice*, Schein's conception of organizational culture has been drawn upon to perceive and decipher the cultural forces that operate within the school council (Schein, 2004; Schein, 2010). The concept of organizational culture is a prism through which to 'perceive and decipher the cultural forces that operate' (Schein, 2004, p. 7). Culture guides and constrains the behaviours of the school council as a group through shared norms. Schein has developed and refined a conceptual model to analyze cultural phenomena in organizations through the use of observations and interviews and focused enquiry, on the basis that culture is best revealed through observing interaction. The data collection method for this case study of a School Council provided me with an opportunity to explore these complex phenomena through Schein's conception.

Defining 'Culture'

Schein (2004) defines organizational culture as a –

... pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 17)

Culture formation is a result of a complex group learning process that is 'deep, pervasive, complex, patterned and morally neutral' (Schein, 2004, p. 60). Because culture is a pattern of shared assumptions, it is a stable, rigid and invisible phenomenon that is powerful in its impact (Schein, 2004). In this regard culture is like Bourdieu's concept of *doxa*. Schein (2004) identified three levels of culture,

1. Basic underlying assumptions – these are the deepest and most fundamental elements of culture; a consensus 'resulting from repeated success in implementing certain beliefs and values' (p. 31). For group members they define 'what to pay attention to, what things mean, how to react emotionally to what is going on and what actions to take in various kinds of situations ... psychological cognitive defense mechanisms that permit the group to continue to function' (p. 32).
2. Espoused beliefs and values – these are the articulated sets of beliefs, norms and operational rules of behaviour of the group. Halstead and Taylor (2000) defined the term 'values' as referring to the 'principles and fundamental convictions which act as general guides to

behaviour, the standards by which particular actions are judged to be good or desirable' (p. 169).

If espoused beliefs and values are reasonably congruent with the basic underlying assumptions they can act as a useful guide to the group and help them to work more effectively together; and

3. Artifacts – these are the visible products of the group such as language, rituals and ceremonies. Although they are visible they are not easy to decipher as we often interpret them through our own feelings and experiences. An understanding of the basic underlying assumptions is required to interpret artifacts.

Although Schein acknowledges that culture can be studied at any of these levels, he argues that an understanding of the basic underlying assumptions is required before the researcher can correctly interpret the artifacts and know whether the espoused beliefs and values are an accurate reflection of culture.

Any group whose members have a shared history will have evolved a culture. The strength of the group's culture will depend on how long the group has existed, the stability of the group's membership and the emotional intensity of the shared historical experiences (Schein, 2004).

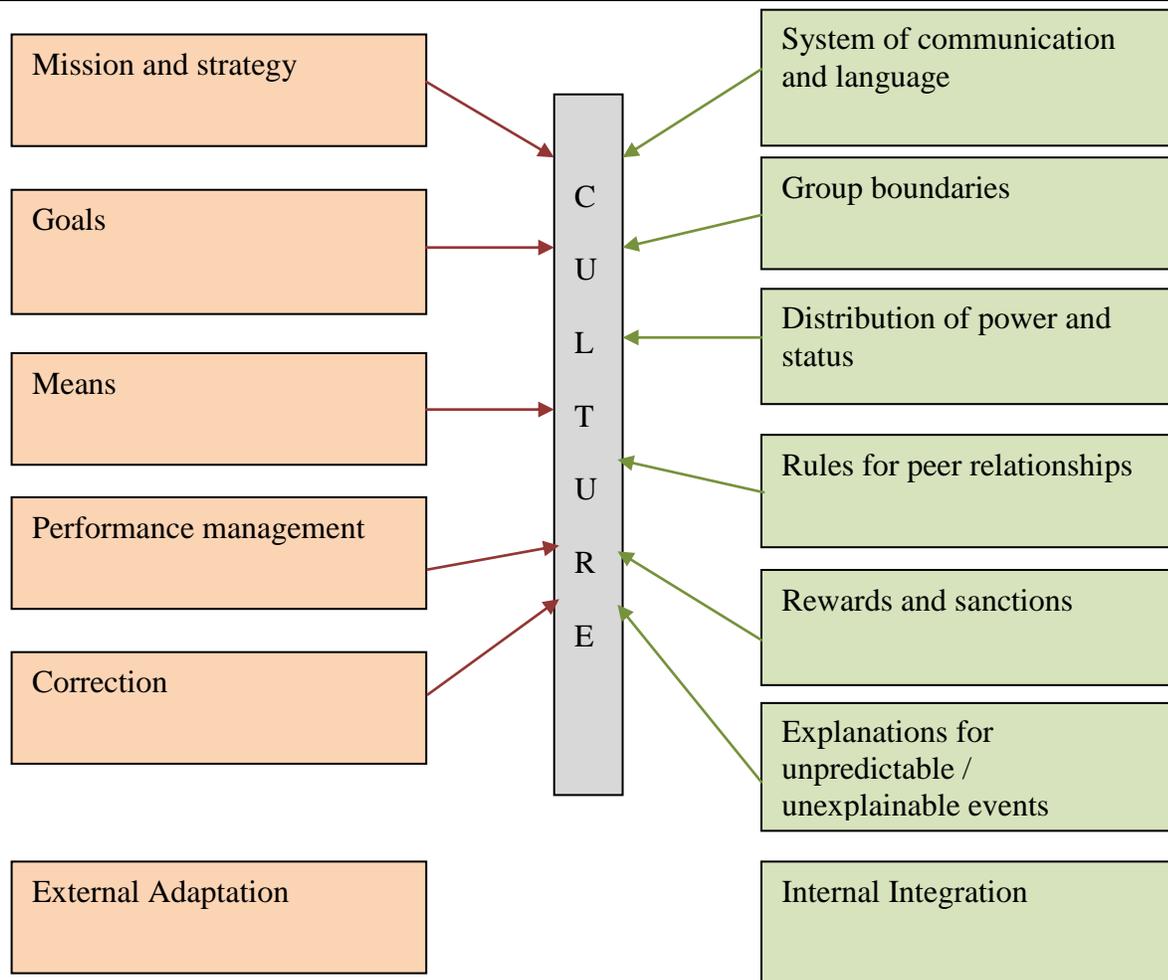
New members to a group are socialised into the culture of the group; new members learn to conform, namely, behave in accordance with the basic underlying assumptions, or they leave the group (Robbins & Barnwell, 2006; Schein, 2004). Although basic underlying assumptions are tacit and may not be articulated to a new member, that person will observe the behaviours of the group and be subject to a variety of cues and re-enforcing mechanisms to facilitate his or her learning of the culture. In addition to helping a group survive in an environment, culture provides a sense of meaning and belonging to group members (Robbins & Barnwell, 2006).

The nature of culture explains why changes to it are problematic. To change basic underlying assumptions requires us to 'resurrect, reexamine and possibly change some of the more stable portions of our cognitive structure' (Schein, 2004, p. 31; Argyris, 1997). Managing cultural change therefore requires managing new learning and managing significant anxiety until new basic underlying assumptions are embraced by the group. Cultural change can be facilitated by factors such as a crisis within the group, leadership turnover and changes in the lifecycle of the group (Robbins & Barnwell, 2006).

Conceptual Grid

Schein identified the dimensions of 'external adaptation' and 'internal integration' as a conceptual grid to assist researchers identify and characterize a group's relationships with the external environment and with each other; their culture. These dimensions are interdependent and intertwined

and as processes occur simultaneously. Figure 6.2 presents these dimensions and their elements diagrammatically.



Adapted from Schein (2010)

Figure 6.2. Culture Identification and Description Dimensions

According to Schein, the 'external adaptation' dimension comprises the fundamental tools an organization uses to survive in and be successful in the external environment. Groups form a shared understanding of their reason for being and develop long range plans and concrete goals which operationalize the 'mission'. Groups also develop consensus on the organizational structures, systems, processes and resources required to accomplish their goals. They reach consensus on what to measure and how to measure it so they can see how they are performing and also identify what remedial action (if any) is to be taken. The 'internal integration' dimension comprises elements to illuminate the

management of the internal relationships of the organization required for effective functioning. Groups develop a system for communicating and a common language to clearly define what things mean. They reach consensus on who is in and who is not in the group so members feel secure. Groups determine how power and influence will be distributed and develop rules to guide peer working relationships. Groups also develop a system of rewards and sanctions for obeying or disobeying norms and rules, so group members can understand how they are performing. Finally, groups develop reasons for unpredictable or unexplainable events to help group members' deal with uncertainty.

Collecting Data

Schein noted that collecting valid data on culture from complex human systems is intrinsically difficult as it is an intervention into the life of the organization. Schein advocated a 'clinical research model' where the researcher acknowledges they are also a consultant; approaching the research with a view to contributing positively to the organization in exchange for voluntarily supplied data. He observed,

What makes this data gathering method more powerful than the other methods ... is that if the researcher/consultant is *helping* the organization, he or she is thereby licensed to ask all kinds of questions that can lead directly into cultural analysis. (p. 208)

Schein also noted that researchers first have to be aware of and overcome their own cultural prejudices (for example, about the right and wrong way to do things) so as to observe and present valid data on culture. Similarly, Bourdieu advocates the methodological concept of *reflexivity* to respond to researcher positionality so as to 'control the pre-reflexive elements of their method, classifications and observations' (Deer, 2008, p. 200), thus avoiding 'epistemological innocence' (Bourdieu, 2000).

In this study I developed a non linear and iterative process using Schein's three levels of culture and recognized the two dimensions of external adaptation and internal integration, for use throughout the data collection in order to decipher important elements of culture of the school council and the School. This process is summarized in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1

Iterative Process to Decipher Culture

1.	Visit the school repeatedly and observe key elements of the school community in formal and informal interactions
2.	Share observations of the school community with Councillors and listen to their response
3.	Identify artifacts and observe Councillors' interactions with and reactions to them and ask Councillors about them
4.	Identify espoused values and observe how they are interpreted, discussed or applied by council in council meetings or in their interactions with the school community
5.	Identify processes for external adaptation (e.g. performance measures) and internal integration (e.g. modes of communication) and ask Councillors why things are done in that way
6.	Look for inconsistencies between espoused values and ways of doing things and ask Councillors about them
7.	Look for inconsistencies between espoused values and personal behaviours and ask Councillors about them
8.	Share my understanding of cultural norms with Councillors and Council to 'test' validity

Process adapted from Schein (2010) p. 178

Conclusion

A School Council is a significant determinative body in a School. The Council's deliberations, decisions and actions, and relations with each other, with the School and the broader community have far reaching and important impacts. A School Council is a social unit requiring complex integrated actions, collectively and individually, in private and public settings. Its work is fundamentally a set of social and cultural practices; it is not just a process of rational decision making by the council being translated into actions (Ouroussoff, 2001). A School Council's work is mediated by numerous social and cultural elements, including the School's context and complex dynamic social interactions. To understand the governance practices of a School Council therefore requires an understanding of the perspectives of the members of Council and how they construct meanings as they engage with their social world. Bourdieu's theory of *practice* and Schein's conception of organizational culture provided complementary frameworks within which to examine and interpret the social and cultural practices of a School Council and present the governing task in a way that illuminated the complex, multi faceted and social nature of governance. Bourdieu and Schein offered practical analytic tools that assist an analysis of the relational and generating structures of the School Council which influenced

the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of the governing task. As discussed in the following chapter, the case study method facilitated access to rich data for this educational research. These data required analysis on several levels to develop a deeper functional understanding of the way governance practices are constituted in an independent school, and their social and cultural effects.

SECTION TWO

Research Chapters

The set of chapters which follow provides an account of the research undertaken and an analysis of the findings, utilizing Bourdieu's sociologically based thinking tools, *habitus*, *capitals* and *field*, together with Schein's complementary conceptual framework of organizational culture, and with reference to the theories, research and normative literature on board governance from the corporate, nonprofit and school sectors. The review of the governance literature revealed a lack of empirical research into board governance, and specifically the governance of independent schools. Whilst the prescriptive literature offered some guidance for school governing bodies, governance discourse was not appropriately informed by the experiences of school governing bodies in their governance tasks or the specificities of school governance. This absence was a significant motivation to this research. A case study of the council of an independent school provided rich data which, when subjected to the analytic tools provided by Bourdieu and Schein, revealed the complex dynamics of independent school governing. It is argued here that conceptualization of governance of an independent school will benefit from an understanding of the social and cultural aspects of governing and the complex multiplicity of forces influencing those aspects.

Chapter 7 examines the methodological issues supporting the research and in particular the choice of case study as the primary research method to address the research questions. A case study offered an opportunity to get inside the 'black box' of a School Council and was an effective method for providing access to observational, interview and documentary data. Chapter 8 positions the School in the field of school education and examines cross field effects from the fields of religion and nonprofit organizations and the State field. Chapters 9 and 10 explore the School Council as a structured social space, interconnected with, yet separate from, the School and reveal the *habitus* and *capitals* of Councillors and their positioning within the different *fields*. Chapter 11 identifies the School's stakeholders and reveals those who have a determinative influence on the School Council and how the School Council, collectively, and as individual Councillors, responds to and interacts with them. Chapter 12 identifies strong cultural norms about the School that guide the School Council in all of their work. Cultural norms were also evident within the School Council and these norms shaped the mode of decision making and communication and defined acceptable behaviours for Councillors. Chapter 13 critically analyses the School Council at work, in the private social setting of the council room and how it evaluates its performance as a governing body. Chapter 14 draws together the key

themes that emerged from the analysis of the data and discusses how the research questions were addressed through the data and findings. Implications for theory and practice are also discussed.

Chapter 7

Research Method

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design that supported the study of governance of an independent school by its School Council as educational research. The choice of a qualitative research method, a case study, as the primary research method is explained and supported by the work of Stake (1978), Mirriam (2009) and Yin (2008) and was the most appropriate method to illuminate the ‘black box’ of a School Council. In what follows, issues associated with the data collection and analyses and my position in the study are discussed in order to foreground the data for the following chapters in which the data are interpreted and presented. The rationale for the use of selective further interviews as an ancillary qualitative research method and approach to data collection, so as to frame the emergent themes in the context of other leading independent schools is also explained.

Research Methodologies for Educational Research

The work of a School Council is a key form of educational practice. It is effortful and conscious and involves the establishment and/or implementation of educational philosophies, goals, policies and processes for the delivery of ‘education’, and structures for the school as an educational institution, such as financial resources, infrastructure and staffing, that enable and support the delivery of education. The findings from this study will be disseminated to inform future ‘educational practice’ of governing bodies of independent schools (Lingard & Gale, 2009). Analysis of the application of the research method in this study may also contribute to the ongoing development of qualitative methodological approaches to educational research.

Educational practices are fundamentally social and cultural practices (Freebody, 2003). The work of a School Council is a social and cultural practice; a School Council is a complex social unit comprising a localized group of unpaid and part time social actors who stand in a fiduciary relationship with the School, and who, collectively, hold authority, and individually and collectively are accountable for their decisions, actions and omissions. A significant proportion of a School Council’s work occurs in private social contexts; in confidential council meetings and discussions. Governance of a School by its Council is mediated by the School’s context and the complex dynamic social interactions between Councillors, between the School Council and Council members, and with key stakeholders. To understand the governance practices of a School Council therefore requires an understanding of the perspectives of the members of council and how they construct meanings as they engage with their social world.

I therefore chose a qualitative research design, a case study, as the most appropriate primary research method for this study. A case study would provide rich data on all aspects of governance by a School Council, including social and cultural practices, and offered an opportunity to get inside the 'black box' of a School Council and obtain detailed insights of the participants' experiences in governing an independent school through observational, interview and documentary data. A qualitative research method also allows the participants to construct a range of reasoned or considered opinions on the many complex and interrelating issues associated with governance in a dynamic environment (Addison, 2007). The participants' experiences can be considered by readers in the context of their own experiences, thereby facilitating meaning making for the reader (Stake, 1978; Hoepfl, 2005). Case study research is epistemologically positioned within an interpretative / constructivist frame, which assumes that reality is socially constructed, and knowledge is not found, rather co-constructed between participants and researcher (Merriam, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

The themes that emerged from the data sets were framed in the context of several 'like' independent schools, through a series of subsequent one off interviews with a member of the school councils of each of these schools, to understand areas of uniqueness and commonality.

Qualitative Research Methods

There remains considerable contestation between qualitative and quantitative research methods. Each represents a fundamentally different inquiry paradigm framed by different epistemologies and ontologies (Hoepfl, 1997). More recently there is recognition that 'the intellectual resources of education research are those of contemporary social science ... cutting across the obsolete binary of qualitative and quantitative methodologies' (Lingard & Gale, 2009, p. 2). This research recognized this; however, determined that qualitative case study was the best way to answer the research questions that framed the research.

The research design for this study comprises the following key characteristics -

- Placement of the participants at the forefront of the phenomenon of interest, so that understanding is developed from the participants' perspectives, not the researcher's (Freebody, 2003; Patton, 1990; Merriam, 2009; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984);
- Recognition of the relationship between the sites of the School Council's work and the ways in which the work is conducted and therefore the significance of 'collecting' data in the natural setting of the work (for example, the council room at the school) (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984; Silverman, 1993; Hirsch & Gellner, 2001; Freebody, 2003; Patton, 1990; Merriam, 2009);

- ‘Collecting’ data over an extended period of time so as to connect with participants over a cycle of their work (Hirsch and Gellner, 2001);
- The researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984; Patton, 1990; Merriam, 2009);
- A deductive research process (where I co-construct data to elicit themes and concepts for consideration against existing theoretical frameworks (Merriam, 2009)) and an inductive research process (where the data may generate theory);
- The research design will be emergent and flexible so as to respond to the conditions of the project in progress (Merriam, 2009); and
- The data will be developed into descriptions of the school council’s work (Eisner, 1991; Freebody, 2003) and research findings will be presented as a richly descriptive narrative (Merriam, 2009).

In selecting qualitative research methods I was conscious of the interpretative latitude it ascribed to me as a researcher. Bourdieu’s concept of reflexivity supports the identification and scrutiny of the researcher’s activity within the research project (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). During the study I therefore observed the ways in which my involvement influenced and informed the research (Patton, 2002; Merriam, 2009; Nightingale and Cromby, 1999; Sikes, 2006). I describe these researcher effects in this chapter. I also reflected upon the epistemological assumptions underpinning the research design and resulting implications for the research findings at points before, during and after the data collection and concluded that the research methods were appropriate to investigate the research questions.

The development of the research questions for this project has been an iterative process. The research topic was initially framed in a broad sense, that is, what is the work of a School Council. This broad subject was gradually refined to include the ‘why’ and ‘how’ as my understanding of the research methods deepened and as themes emerged from the data. The research methods allowed for refinement, rather than restriction, of the research topic and facilitated the development of the specific research questions.

I was aware that the choice of qualitative research instruments and the collection and interpretation of the data needed to be credible and presented in such a way as to afford scrutiny and challenge (Rosenblatt, 2002; Freebody, 2003). In this chapter I discuss the processes used to enhance the quality of the data collection and analysis and my preparation as a researcher to undertake qualitative research.

Case Study

The primary research method was a case study of the work of the governing body, the School Council ('Council') of a large independent boys' school with religious affiliation to a mainstream Christian church ('the School'). Case study is a particularly useful data collection tool for complex and private social units as it allows the capture of 'complex action, perception and interpretation' (Merriam, 2009, p. 44). As explained by Stake (1976), 'most case studies feature: descriptions that are complex, holistic, and involving a myriad of not highly isolated variables; data that are likely to be gathered at least partly by personalistic observation; and a writing style that is informal, perhaps narrative, possibly with verbatim quotation, illustration, and even allusion and metaphor' (p. 7). My goal was to deepen my understanding of Council's work and functioning, including the key factors that influence what members of Council work on and how they work; to develop descriptions and interpretations of the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants. The case study immersed me in the context of the Councillors' work and provided an extraordinary breadth and depth of data (Flyvberg, 2006; Yin, 2008). It allowed for the development of context-dependent knowledge; an understanding of the reality for members of Council as they governed the School. The context-dependent knowledge that emerged from the data and the experience of immersion in the phenomena provided me with significant learnings about research (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Some of my preconceived notions about the research process were challenged during the study, resulting in changes to my viewpoints and behaviour as discussed later in this chapter.

The Council was a bounded system ('a single entity around which there are boundaries' (Merriam, 2009, p. 40) and thus suitable for a case study. The case was bounded by the membership of Council. I was able to confirm the boundaries of the case early in the data collection and specifically that the boundary of the case did not extend past the Councillors to include senior executives of the School or other key stakeholders. This is because Council was clearly defined in constitutive documents as the governing body of the School with the ultimate accountability and authority for the School. Council had the authority to delegate the day to day management of the School to the Headmaster, who was also a non-voting member of Council.

The issue of the typicality of a case study and therefore its generalizability is sometimes cited as a weakness of the case study approach; however significant vicarious learnings are available to the reader through the narrative presentation of the research (Merriam, 2009). Stake (1976) argues that 'case studies will often be the preferred method of research because they may be epistemologically in harmony with the reader's experience and thus to that person a natural basis for generalization' (p. 5).

Further, the knowledge revealed from the case study does not need to be formally generalized in order to make an important contribution to the field (Flyvberg, 2006). The structure of governance is common across independent schools and this case study offers knowledge that will be relevant to other independent schools. Further, School Councils are now a common feature in public school governance. Although they have less autonomy than school councils of independent schools, elements of their role and accountability and the influence of context, culture and stakeholders on their functioning can also be informed by this case study.

A case study can involve data collection from multiple sources of information (Cresswell, 2007) and I used observations, interviews and documents as data sources. Each of these methods reveals different aspects of empirical reality and was a methods' triangulation so as to understand consistencies and differences in the data (Patton, 1999). Each data collection method is discussed in detail in a following section headed Data Collection.

Selection of School Council for Case Study

My initial thinking was that I could be a participant observer in a case study of the School Council of the large independent secondary single sex school where I was a member of the School Council. I had been a member for two years, having been elected to the role by the school community. I was also a current parent and donor to the school and I had connections outside the school with some of the council members through professional circles. I thought the overt emphasis placed by the Chair of the School Council on 'good governance' and governance systems, and the participation of the school in a number of educational research projects, would equate to interest by the School Council in a case study on governance. I sought, on a confidential basis, preliminary feedback on the concept from the former Chair of this School Council, who was enthusiastic about the contribution a study of this nature could make to school governance. However, my subsequent verbal approach to the current Chair was met with an unenthusiastic and non-committal response. A follow up discussion with the Chair indicated a level of disquiet with the concept, although it was difficult to elucidate from the discussion specific concerns which could then have been considered. After reflecting on the discussion, I concluded that I should find another School Council to be the case study.

I thought I should first identify well established schools with history and experience in being governed by a School Council and a reputation for good educational outcomes. This type of school was more likely to have a well developed and thoughtful approach to governance, with established processes and systems, and deep experience contributed by successive school councils. In the process of compiling a list I mentioned to a board colleague that I was about to embark on a search for a school

for my research project and he offered to introduce me to the Chair ('the Chairman') of a leading independent school. He told me he was a director with the Chairman on another board and knew him to be a person of high integrity and committed to good governance. A coffee meeting followed in early November 2008 with the Chairman. We realized we had met a number of years ago at a business function and a free flowing and wide ranging conversation ensued during which the Chairman shared with me his thoughts on the key features for good governance of an independent school. I shared with him information about my current board roles, including my role as a member of a School Council. He asked me for a brief written proposal of my research project for his further consideration and consultation with his council colleagues. This required me to progress quite quickly the research design and I forwarded a draft proposal for the Chairman's consideration over the Christmas vacation period. I was quietly hopeful.

My enquiries confirmed the School met my selection criteria; a pre-eminent independent metropolitan single sex school, catering for boarding and day students from years P to 12, with religious affiliation to a mainstream Christian church ('the Church') and established for nearly one hundred years. It was also a School for the opposite gender to the school at which I was a Council member and therefore not seen to be a competitor to the School. The School had three sub-schools, catering for approximately 1700 students, including 150 boarders (in years 8 to 12) and strong forward enrolments. The School offered a comprehensive academic program to provide a broad liberal education based on the State's curriculum and new Australian curriculum, and performed comparably in the year 12 academic rankings published by the State education authority, against the other leading schools. Approximately 98% of the School's year 12 students progressed to tertiary studies. A range of scholarships was offered by the School for academic and co-curricular merit.

In terms of key organizational characteristics, the School was a nonprofit organization, governed by Council, generated revenues in excess of \$38 million from the provision of educational services, employed approximately 240 staff and, managed assets in excess of \$130 million and an ongoing capital expenditure and borrowing program for facilities expansion and refurbishment. The revenue number belied the financial complexity of the organization. A for-profit retail organization with equivalent revenue before margin would be almost a \$200 million enterprise, larger than many of the smaller capitalized companies listed on the Australian Stock Exchange. The School was funded through a combination of fees paid by students, government grants and donations. The annual tuition fees placed the School in the top band for tuition fees for independent schools in the State. A Foundation had been established in the late 1980s as the School's central fundraising body. Many

schools established foundations as separate legal entities at this time to quarantine donations from formulas then in use by governments to calculate funding for independent schools. The Foundation's aim was to provide financial support for building priorities and grow an endowment to provide ongoing funds. The Foundation had raised some \$20 million for the School, an indication of the affluence of the School community.

The School offered an extensive program of co-curricular activities and was a committed and successful participant in an elite schools sporting association which offered annual interschool competitions in over a dozen sports and other activities. Participation in this association influenced the importance of sport within the School community. Parents ranked sport in the top three factors of importance to them in their son's education (Documents, Parent Survey, 2010).

Complexity was inherent in the School as an organization due to the structure of sub-schools to cater for all years of primary and secondary education, the breadth of the academic and co-curricular offerings, the number and diversity of stakeholders and their level of engagement with the School, and the number and onerous nature of laws that impacted every aspect of the School's operation.

The School was owned by the Church. The Church was a diocese, a discrete unit of organization, representing a geographical area, within the Australian body of this religious denomination and had its own corporate status, constitution and governing body, called synod. Following the January meeting³⁷ of the 2010 school year of Council, the Chairman advised me by email that Council 'was happy to work with you on your project'. I was invited to a meeting with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman on 19 February 2010 at which time I was asked to sit in on a meeting reviewing the School's constitution, was introduced to the Council secretariat, had a tour of the School and received some background information on the School. At this time the Chairman reiterated that 'Council is happy to participate in this research project ... indeed we are enthusiastic as we see this as an opportunity for us to learn as well' (Field notes, 19 February 2012).

Data Collection

Data for the case study were collected from February 2010 to February 2011 through semi-structured interviews, observations of the work of Council, at all full Council meetings and numerous council committee meetings for a whole year and at formal School events, and review of documents, comprising confidential Council papers, confidential School policies and charters, and publicly available information on the School. Attending all Council meetings for one year provided

³⁷ This was a preliminary meeting of the Council to confirm the Council calendar for 2010 and attend to some administrative tasks

observational data over a complete cycle of Council's governing work, including preparations for a new School year, review of the previous year's academic performance, visits to Council by key stakeholders, financial budgeting, auditing and reporting, strategic planning, Headmaster's performance review, Council's self evaluation, and review of key operational initiatives.

Council's consent to my access to the data through each of the three methods was achieved in two steps. The initial step was my explanation to the Chairman about data collection, that is, that I was hoping to attend Council meetings, interview Councillors and review board and other governance documents and his subsequent discussion with Council to seek their approval to the research project. The second phase was my presentation to Council to outline the research project and providing Councillors the project information sheet and obtaining their formal consent to participate.

I was aware that members of Council could be categorized as 'elite'; people who in Bourdieuan terms possess multiple capitals and who generally 'have more knowledge, money, and status and assume a higher position than others in the population' (Odendahl & Shaw, 2002, p. 299). Certainly they were 'important' people in terms of the School community and several participants held high profile positions in business and other sections of the broader community. These Councillors were also used to conducting the majority of their work in a confidential setting. I therefore required a level of credibility to gain entry to the private world of Council. I did not have a reputation as a researcher or an academic; however I brought cultural and social capitals in the form of my knowledge about governance in both a technical and applied sense from my corporate legal work, my significant directorships with profit and nonprofit organizations, and a reputation as a lawyer and a company director with networks in the business community. The currency of those roles was also significant as I was immersed in current governance issues and had 'up to date' networks. I was also someone who understood schools from my experience as a member of the School Council of another school and this made me a 'peer', as I brought cultural capitals in the form of knowledge of and support for the independent school sector. I believe it was these capitals that provided me the initial access to Council. I was usually introduced by the Chairman at School events or to School stakeholders as 'a prominent company director and lawyer around town'. I was conscious that my professional reputation was linked to this research project and that I needed to ensure the project was conducted with integrity and as much intellectual rigour as I could provide (Patton, 1999). Several of the Councillors were known to me from the corporate world and I would continue to meet them in business forums once the research project had finished. In relation to the interviews I would conduct, I

was also conscious of Warren's (2002) counsel that 'the perspectives of, and information conveyed in, interviews echo in the ongoing relations of research participants' (p. 97).

On a number of occasions during the data collection Councillors were interested to learn about my family, religious beliefs and other aspects of my social capital, which they considered important in the context of the School and Council. My ability to quickly adapt to the environment of this School's council room and formal occasions was also an important factor in Councillors' initial and ongoing acceptance of me into their world. Twenty years in a professional services firm responding to clients and fifteen years in board rooms of diverse organizations had shaped my *habitus* to be responsive to a wide variety of 'theatres of social action' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 214). That the research was seen as applied and relevant to the 'real world' of governing a school also assisted me in establishing my credentials to carry out the research project. There was no sense of competition or concern about me gaining school knowledge that could be used to competitively advantage the school of which I was a member of the School Council.

Although my reputation facilitated the initial access, my *habitus*, the manner in which I conducted myself, my approach to the research and the relationships I developed with Councillors were crucial to continued access. I did not take continued access for granted and would confirm with the Chairman and Chairs of Council Committees that they were comfortable with me returning for the next meeting. I also confirmed with each Councillor prior to the second interview that they were happy to be interviewed for the second time. In this way I continually refreshed my mandate for access throughout the data collection process (Burgess, 1991). My access to formal School events was through the issue of a formal written invitation at the direction of the Chairman, to which I formally replied.

I took care to ensure that Councillors had clear information about me and the research project by providing them with an explanatory document. I provided opportunities for participants to explore the nature of the research and their role in it with me and I was open to questions about the research project. Each Councillor, the Council Secretary and the Executive Director of the Schools Commission signed a consent form. Councillors' were not informed of the theoretical lens of Bourdieu and Schein that framed this study.

Observations

For this study I observed the Councillors performing their governance work over a period of twelve months from February 2010 to February 2011, at all full Council meetings and numerous Council Committee meetings, the Council's strategic planning day and at formal School events, and

recorded my observations by way of field notes. Attending Council meetings and Council Committee meetings and observing members of Council in this context was a key element in understanding the dynamics of Council as a group. This understanding was important as formal authority for decision making vested in Council as a whole and critical decisions were made collectively by consensus. I did not record, by audio or video, any of these meetings or School events.

Observation is a firsthand, careful and systematic encounter with the phenomenon of interest and takes place in the setting where the phenomenon of interest naturally occurs (Merriam, 2009).

Observation is a narration of what the researcher sees, hears and experiences about particular social action – an ‘event’ which is able to be differentiated from the surrounding stream of activities and described (Atkinson & Coffey, 2002). Observation differs from interviewing as each incorporates social actions of different kinds and yields data of different forms (Atkinson & Coffey, 2002).

Therefore it is not necessary or appropriate to assert primacy of one form of data or one form of action over the other; rather to understand the reasons for differences in what the data have yielded (Patton, 1999).

Observation can provide knowledge of perspectives, context and events and is particularly useful when participants may be unaware or not able or unwilling to discuss the topic under study (Merriam, 2009). Observation of physical setting, the participants, activities, conversation, nonverbal communication and the researcher’s behaviour is valuable data for the researcher. However, the researcher must recognize that observed actions or events ‘are not inherently endowed with meaning, nor is their meaning unequivocally available for inspection’ (Atkinson & Coffey, 2002, p. 813).

After reviewing articles on the training required if researchers are to use observational methods, I took stock of my basket of skills. As noted by Patton (1999), ‘the simple fact that a person is equipped with functioning senses does not make that person a skilled observer’ (p. 1200). My fifteen years as a company director of more than twenty organizations, across the private and public sectors, had equipped me with a number of skills, including an understanding of commonalities and differences in how boards exercised authority, related to each other, executives and key stakeholders, conducted meetings, managed issues and communication outside the boardroom, leveraged networks and maintained their value to the organization. I had learned skills of observation which enabled me to adapt quickly to new boardrooms with unwritten, subtle and dynamic rules about the way the board worked and the nuances in communication. I was familiar with lengthy board meetings; the seemingly endless hours sitting in the one spot, whilst maintaining concentration on the issue being considered, continually demonstrating engagement with the person speaking and managing bodily functions so as

to not be out of the room at important times. My training as a lawyer equipped me with note taking and writing skills for recording observations.

I considered how best to prepare myself for observing at Council meetings. I had been warned by the Chairman that their evening Council meetings were lengthy, often not finishing until 11 pm. I knew I would require considerable energy for long meetings in unfamiliar territory and I endeavored to have a lighter workload on the day of the meeting. I was familiar with the council room from an earlier meeting with the Chairman and I thought through what would be the likely protocols for seating, arrival conversation and other courtesies.

Attending Council and Committee meetings

I arrived early at my first Council meeting and had some time to take in the ambience of the room before Councillors arrived. The room was an unusual juxtaposition of the past, with antique sideboards and leadlight windows, and modern functionality with 1980s boardroom furnishings and a bar at one end. Photographs of past Chairman and Councils hung on the walls. I introduced myself to each Councillor and meeting attendee as they arrived. I waited until all had selected a seat before taking a vacant seat at the far end of the table, ensuring that I was not between any Councillor and the Chairman. It was my experience from attending numerous board meetings over many years that the Chairman usually sits at the end of the table (although sometimes in the middle depending on the shape of the table) so as to observe all seated and conduct the meeting. The Chief Executive sits beside the Chairman, non-executive members occupy the other seats closest to the Chairman and executive members and those attending only part of the meeting occupy the seats furthest from the Chairman. This was to be the seating format for each Council meeting I attended. Committee meetings were arranged somewhat differently to accommodate the preference of the person chairing the meeting; however, I followed the same protocol in selecting a seat for these meetings.

There was a settled format for Council meetings; commencing with a presentation from a senior member of staff or other guest for approximately one hour. The formal part of the meeting commenced at 6 pm and continued until dinner was served at 7 pm. Papers were pushed to one side and a meal enjoyed before recommencing the meeting at 8 pm.

My role at Council meetings was as a non-participant observer, akin to a spectator. I did not participate in the activities of Council other than through my attendance at meetings and events to observe, with several exceptions. During a Council meeting late in 2010 the Chairman asked me for comments on an issue concerning independent school governance, on the basis that I may have insights from my role as a member of the School Council of an independent school. During another

Council meeting, the Chairman asked me to provide comments, along with other Councillors, on a proposed new constitution for the School because of my legal background. On a couple of other occasions the Chairman, in a Council meeting, would draw attention to me, for example with a quip like 'I wonder what Sally would say about that'. My interaction with Council members, the Council Secretary and other senior staff (such as the Deputy Headmasters who attended Council meetings) during events was otherwise informal and to the extent required to explain the purpose of my presence, establish and maintain rapport and observe courtesies, and to minimize any disruption to the natural activity of the participants and the event. For example, my 'participation' in Council meetings was informal social interaction at the start and conclusion of the meeting and during dinner. I was expected to participate in the dinner conversation, which ranged from School matters to broader issues. In these conversations I was careful with expressing any views about School specific issues. As the year went on Councillors, when speaking, included me in their eye contact and I found myself nodding to indicate I was listening and understanding their view. Although I did not have a 'speaking part', I felt on many occasions that I was a participant in the meeting. This sense of participation was enhanced by the discussions over dinner, at which times I was expected to be an active participant. These factors indicated to me that my presence must have had some influence on Council dynamics and that this influence, although subtle, grew over time as Councillors gained more insights of me and my experiences and we shared knowledge through our conversations. In Bourdieuan terms an understanding of our respective capitals deepened over the year long period and this facilitated my data collection.

I was always made very welcome at Council and Committee meetings and observed open, frank and robust discussion. Councillors were familiar with the rhythm of the meetings and each other's personalities and 'hobby horses'. The Chairman encouraged views to be put on the table and expressed opinions were listened to respectfully. I do not think my presence curtailed the expression of views or the manner of expression by Council members or other attendees at the meetings. Where a view was expressed in cautionary language, I observed it to be because of personal style or the sensitivity of the issue (for example, from its significance or the outcomes of past discussions), rather than my presence. I did observe slight changes in behaviour and meeting dynamics when several 'important' visitors attended Council meetings during the year. For example, the October Council meeting was attended by the Headmaster of a prestigious interstate school. My impression was that this was seen by some as an opportunity to demonstrate intellect and wit in front of the visiting Headmaster, who had clearly impressed Council with his presentation and contributions to the

meeting. This was not unnoticed by the Chairman who quipped to the meeting ‘I don’t know what happens to Council when we have guests – it’s like Halloween’. The visiting Headmaster was someone whom Council could learn from as information could be shared openly given the interstate school was not in competition with the Case Study School.

On only one occasion during the year was I not present for all Council meeting discussions. This occasion was at my first Council meeting (February 2010) when an issue concerning a complaint against the School was dealt with as part of the Chairman’s report at the end of the meeting. The Deputy Headmasters and I were advised at the start of the meeting that we would not be present for this item and the Chairman commented to me that he would ‘brief’ me ‘on how the matter was dealt with after the meeting’. The Chairman’s handling of the complaint issue at the first meeting meant a difficult issue was dealt with ‘in camera’ to minimize any possible adverse impact on the discussion because of my presence. The fact that many difficult issues were discussed in my presence at subsequent meetings and that I was present for all subsequent ‘in camera’ sessions was an indication that I was observing Councillors ‘usual’ behaviours on these occasions.

I took extensive handwritten notes at each Council and Committee meeting of the tone and content of the conversations, the material covered and decisions made, the contributions to the discussions of Councillors and how the meeting was conducted by the Councillor chairing the meeting. My same position at the table for each meeting held in the Council room meant that I could more closely observe those seated on the opposite side of table. Observation of Councillors on the same side of the table was assisted by a large mirror on the opposite wall. I was conscious not to be obvious in taking notes when a sensitive issue was being discussed. On some occasions I deliberately put down my pen and gave my full attention to the conversation. When the discussion moved onto more mundane topics I would make notes on the issue and flow of conversation. When the meeting recommenced after dinner I would quickly record observations on the dinner conversation before continuing with the meeting notes.

Details of the Council and Council Committee meetings I attended are set out in Appendix A.

Attending School events

In relation to attending formal School events where Council had a formal role, the Chairman ensured I received a formal invitation to each event and was seated with the School Council. These events were shown in the calendar of Council’s work prepared at the beginning of the school year. There were three formal occasions during the year that each Councillor agreed were the key events in the life of the School and at which the culture and history of the School were showcased. These were

the Leadership Induction Ceremony in February at the beginning of the School year, the ANZAC Day service in April and Speech Night in November. I also attended an 'at home' rugby match between the School and their strongest competitor and the opening ceremonies of new School facilities. I was not invited to the 'staff drinks' with Council held on three occasions during the School year; however I was invited to attend the end of year Council dinner because 'you are one of us'.

Summary on observation as a method of data collection

Observation provided a rich description of the settings, activities, people and the meanings of what was observed from the perspective of the participants (Hoepfl, 2005). Observation also provided contextual knowledge of the environment in which the Council worked and supplemented what Councillors told me of their work. This was useful, as the role of a Council member is many faceted and not all Councillors were able to fully describe in interviews what they 'did' as members of Council (Macdonald, 2001). Further, '*action or practice* is not necessarily easily translatable into words for participants. The participants may not readily be able to articulate their 'feel for the game', generated by their *habitus* and we cannot assume that all actions are preceded by clear cognitive 'decisions'' (Macdonald, 2001, p. 87).

Observations at Council meetings and School events did not provide access to Council interactions in between Council meetings. Most boards are required to manage issues outside the board room, for example urgent issues that arise in between board meetings. Often these matters are referred to in the next Council meeting and decisions taken confirmed. Given the number of conversations I was having with Councillors outside the formal board meetings I was able to keep abreast of any 'between Council meeting' issues and mechanisms for dealing with them.

Qualitative Interviews

The interview is a potential window on the full range of individual experiences and perspectives (Weiss, 1994) and today is an integral part of our everyday lives, a 'commonplace means for constructing individualized experience' (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002, p. 29). Silverman (1997) calls this the 'interview society' in 'which interviews seem central to making sense of our lives' (p. 243). The ubiquity and significance of the interview has been facilitated by the growing discourse of individuality, democratization of opinion (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002) and availability of technology (Silverman, 1997). 'The interview society not only reflexively constructs a compatible subject, but fully rounds this out ontologically by taking us to the proverbial heart of the subject in question' (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002, p. 11).

Interviewing is a credible qualitative research instrument and is among the most widespread of methods of collecting data in social science (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997). 'Education has utilized the interview as a central tool in its research efforts for more than a century' (Tierney & Dilley, 2002, p. 454). Interviews in the field of education are being reformulated by rapid technological changes and theoretical advances and interview practices are not set in 'methodological stone' (Tierney & Dilley, 2002).

Qualitative interviewing is 'a site for the production of meaning ... it is an occasion for purposefully animated participants to construct versions of reality interactionally' (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002, p.14). The participant is continually 'making meaning' of the social world and their experiences within it. In the process of the interview, the participant continues this meaning making by constructively shaping the information offered to the researcher (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). The researcher, as interviewer, is part of this 'production of knowledge', co-constructing with the participant. As described by Mishler (1986):

The discourse of the interview is jointly constructed by interviewer and respondent ... Both questions and responses are formulated in, developed through, and shaped by the discourse between interviewers and respondents. (p. 52)

Qualitative interviewing has been described by Kvale (1996), Warren (2002) and Freebody (2003) as being based in conversation, a social interaction, aimed at understanding the meaning of the participants' experiences and life worlds. Participants and researcher speak to each other in a guided conversation (Kvale, 1996; Warren, 2002; Baker, 2002) from their varied perspectives informed by their respective *habitus* and *capitals* and position within socially constructed spaces (*fields*) (Grenfell, 2008). A qualitative interview 'unfolds reflexively as each participant looks at the world through the other's eyes, incorporating both self and other into the process of interpretation' (Warren, 2002, p. 98).

The narrative offered by the participant, the perspectives of the participant and researcher, the social context of the interview and the flow of the interview (for example, how the researcher reformulates questions as meanings emerge) all need to be considered by the researcher to discern the meanings made during the interview (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002; Warren, 2002; Mishler, 1986). The value of interview data lies in the meanings generated and how the meanings are constructed (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002).

This approach to qualitative interviewing differs from the 'standardized' approach to interviewing being an asymmetrical encounter between a passive participant who is a 'vessel for answers' and a researcher who objectively extracts the information from the vessel (Gubrium &

Holstein, 2002; Warren, 2002). Under this approach a simple demarcation of roles is attempted with knowledge lying with the participant and control with the researcher (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002).

I conducted repeated reflexive semi structured dyadic interviews over a period of twelve months between February 2010 and February 2011 with each member of the Council (including the Headmaster). I chose repeated interviews to provide multiple accounts and multiple perspectives (Chapman, 2001). Repeated interviews allowed for focus on successive states and on successive recollections of the past and provide comparisons across interviews. This is important because ‘it is typically present understanding ... which indicates the structure of recollection, and this present understanding changes over time’ (Chapman, 2001, p. 27). The time period was selected to coincide with the annual calendar of the Council’s work so as to include the commencement of a school year, any strategic or operational planning and setting of budgets, board review and other key aspects of Council’s work and significant formal School events. The second round of interviews also provided me with an opportunity to ‘test’ my interpretation of the cultural norms of the School and Council. Appendix B is a table showing the interviews conducted with Councillors. For ease of recognition each Councillor was given a descriptor as shown in the table.

I interviewed on a semi-structured basis on a single occasion the Council Secretary early in the data collection period. This interview was an opportunity to gather information and documents relating to the formal governance structures of the School, such as the constitution, charters and Church canons. I also interviewed on a semi-structured basis, on a single occasion in November 2010, the Executive Director of the Schools Commission, a coordinating body providing governance oversight of schools within the diocese. The Chairman facilitated access for this interview. The Chairman was held in high regard within the diocese and the Schools Commission for his work at the School and other diocesan schools and it was his standing (strength of his cultural capital) that ensured access. Even with this entrée, I was pleasantly surprised at the openness of the interview and I was provided valuable insights on the working of the diocese and the relationship with the School and Council.

I considered carefully whether any other key person should be interviewed, as I was conscious that the exclusion of a key person raises the possibility of bias in the data (Tierney & Dilley, 2002), however, did not identify any other participants for interview. I had the opportunity for a number of informal discussions with people who interacted with the Council, such as the Deputy Headmasters, the Headmaster’s secretary and Heads of School, who were aware of the research project and my role as researcher. I made field notes as soon as practicable of these conversations, which, although not

interviews, provided perspectives on the role and functioning of the Council. Nothing arose in these conversations that indicated that I should interview more widely.

In approaching interviewing as co-constructed meaning making required me as the researcher to deal with a number of layers of complication to the interviewing processes which are considered below:

Establishing the right environment for a productive exchange in the interviews

By the time of the first interviews I had met all Councillors and had preliminary background information on them and the School. At the start of each first round interview there was general discussion which provided an opportunity for some sharing of our backgrounds. By the time of the second round interviews I had attended a number of Council meetings and School events and had the benefit of many informal discussions with the Councillors. In these ways Councillors had an opportunity to learn about me and develop a 'more precise sense' of who I was (Rosenblatt, 2002).

I needed to establish an open and trusting environment for the interviews and build rapport with the Councillors (Rosenblatt, 2002). As Beer (1997, p.126) notes, 'it is the sharing of experience through dialogue between interviewer and respondent that makes qualitative discovery possible'. This required me to listen emphatically (Warren, 2002), hear the meaning of what was being conveyed (Rubin & Rubin, 1995), identify with the participants, not be emotionally distant and be willing to self-disclose (Ellis & Berger, 2002). As researcher, I also needed to understand and reflect the normative expectations of conversation, namely, 'that the interlocutors take turns and match self-disclosure with self-disclosure ... there needs to be giving as well as receiving in these exchanges. Reciprocity is needed to maintain the relationship' (Wenger, 2002, p. 272; Gubrium & Holstein, 2002).

This required me to carefully site the interviews and respond to the different *habitus* and *capitals* of each Councillor. I ensured that the interviews were at a time and location suitable to the participants and which would be a private, comfortable and quiet environment and conducive to the interview being audio-recorded. This worked well for all interviews except for one - the second interview with Councillor D where he wanted to talk over breakfast in a very noisy coffee shop. I was also prepared to bring the interview to a close when the allotted time had lapsed. This approach to the interview time, place and length was in deference to their position as Councillors as well as accommodating the realities of busy schedules. Access to interview participants for interviews required negotiation and re-negotiation throughout the data collection process (Burgess, 1991). Access for each interview was requested by email and either email or telephone was used to agree the

time, place and duration. On a couple of occasions interviews had to be rescheduled to suit the participant.

I was also careful to maintain confidentiality of all conversations with participants and my sense was that each Councillor was respectful of the private nature of our conversations. I shared with the participants' information about myself and, as a peer, my experiences as a board member which also provided me with an opportunity to learn and reflect on my own role as a board member. I was fortunate in that my cultural and social capitals and the confirmation by the Chairman of my credibility enabled me to establish my own authority so as to facilitate a 'productive exchange' (Odendahl & Shaw, 2002, p. 311). I adjusted my personal communication style to accommodate the *habitus* of the participants and to recognize and acknowledge their considerable cultural and social capitals. For example, I presented 'corporately' and used the cues and norms of the corporate community when interviewing the participants who worked or had worked in the corporate sector. For one Councillor I presented more casually to attend at her home for morning tea and had a more informal, less 'business like' style which allowed the conversation to range more broadly. Prior to the first round of interviews, I built a preliminary 'picture' of each Councillor from information I had gathered from my observations at the February Council meeting and what was available publicly. I knew the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and two other Councillors to differing extents from the local business and legal communities.

There was a discernible difference in the level of openness between the first and second interviews for several Councillors, which I thought was a reflection of a growing level of trust with me and was conducive to a deeper conversation on more challenging areas of governance, for example succession planning. For two of the Councillors I had a sense that my background may lead them to view me as a 'governance expert' and that their views would therefore have limited value. I endeavored to demonstrate that I was a learner in the process and that their experiences and perspectives, their cultural and social capitals, were valued and valuable.

Making meaning in the interviews

In conducting interviews I needed to be aware that participants may have 'anticipatory notions of what an interview may entail' (Warren, 2002, p. 91). I outlined at the outset of the first round of interviews a format for the interview and checked with the participant that this approach was acceptable to them. I also needed to be aware that participants may shape what they say through their expectations of what I as the researcher want to hear ('right answers') or what they want us to hear (Macdonald, 2001; Warren, 2002). The participants may also act differently in different contexts. My

observation of participants during the interviews was valuable data and provided me a perspective on the participant in a different social context. Goffman (1971) talks about social life in terms of ‘impression management’ with a ‘front stage’ where impressions are managed and polished for an outside audience and a ‘back stage’ with more relaxed codes for insiders. This was evident, for example, in my interviews with Councillor C. In my first interview in discussing the role of the Council vis-à-vis the role of management, he used careful language referring to the ‘natural tensions between the executive management and the board’ (Interview #1, p. 9). In the second interview nine months later, Councillor C described the situation as one where the Headmaster ‘doesn’t trust the Council’ and the executive would ‘rather we not be around’ (Interview #2, p. 6).

As researcher I needed to be open to diverse realities because the narratives of the participants are socially constructed, and notwithstanding the context and language of our interaction, are based on an assumption of ‘truth’, and not a question of the participant telling the ‘truth’ (Rosenblatt, 2002). The ‘knowledge’ elicited from the interviews is ‘situational and conditional’ and is not a source of absolute truth (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). As researcher, I accepted the participant’s reality in their narration, however still tried to discover the hidden or withheld (Rosenblatt, 2002). I also had to appreciate that I may not agree with or feel comfortable with the participant’s narrative (Ellis & Berger, 2002). This was particularly the case with one member of Council whose positive account of the working of a council sub-committee was not congruent with any of the other data and I struggled to build understanding of this participant’s reality and had to work hard not to let this influence my perceptions of this participant’s contribution to Council and appropriateness for the role.

There are potential emotional costs for the participant and researcher in qualitative interviewing because of its open-ended, exploratory character (Warren, 2002) and the opportunity for self-conscious reflection by the participant and researcher (Ellis & Berger, 2002). Several participants spoke of the difficult loss of friendships from having to make difficult decisions as a Councillor concerning staff and students; however, they were reconciled to these events and also accepting that this remained a possibility going forward because of the nature of the role. I think our discussions concerning the governance issues associated with the Education Committee of Council contributed to a review of the framework for that Committee³⁸. On the whole I think I was more affected in this regard than the participants. My discussions with the participants were influential in my decision not to nominate for a further term with the School Council on which I was member following my first term

³⁸ A review of the Education Committee was carried out by the Chairman in 2011. This review is referred to in Chapter 13 (page 224) however the outcomes of the review are not considered further in this study as it occurred after the period of data collection.

of four years. I made comparisons between the culture of the two School Councils and concluded that I was not prepared to continue in an environment where my approach to accountability and stakeholder engagement were not aligned with the culture of the School Council.

Interview processes

For the first round of interviews with Councillors, each received an interview guide prior to the interview containing seven open ended questions (Appendix C). Open-ended questions were selected to allow the participants in the interview to raise questions related to the issues under consideration. Answers were not assumed to be conclusive and treated as a means to further discussion (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). The first interview with the Chairman ended up being a broader discussion on governance and the School and it was therefore the second interview where the interview questions were specifically covered. The interview with the Council Secretary was also guided by a set of seven questions covering the same areas as Council members adjusted for the differences in role (Appendix D). The same key questions were used for all Councillors and the Council Secretary to provide a consistent approach and in anticipation that Councillors' might 'compare notes' after interviews. The interview with the Executive Director of the Schools Commission was similarly guided by a series of open ended questions (Appendix E). Parts of each interview were informal and helped establish and maintain a relationship between the participant and me as the researcher. For the first round of interviews, I scheduled the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Council Secretary first so as to build a foundation of understanding of the formal governance structures and processes of the School before interviewing other members of Council.

For the second round of interviews with Council members (interview number three for the Chairman), I did not structure the interview around a set of questions, although I indicated to each Councillor at the start of the interview the three or four areas that I wanted to discuss and confirmed that I was happy to discuss any areas of interest they had. The nominated areas (Appendix F) were sufficiently broad so I could explore areas more deeply and with a slightly different emphasis where required with each Councillor, for example where the Councillor was the Chair of a Council Committee.

Each interview was recorded, as audiotape recording is considered an integral part of the interview process (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). During most interviews I made only headline written notes so I could focus fully on the conversation. I made more detailed notes immediately after the interview to record some of the nuances of the conversation, additional observations and my own

attitude and approach to the interview. I found these notes useful during data analysis as ‘partial interpretative accounts’ (Poland, 2002, p. 645). Although the consent forms specifically referred to recording and transcription of interviews, my awkward handling of the digital recorder created some hesitancy in participants for the first couple of interviews conducted. I changed my approach, turning the recorder on as we were settling for the interview and not in any way drawing attention to it as it sat with my blackberry, folder and papers. On some occasions my efforts at nonchalance meant I left the interview with the recorder still running. This more casual approach meant sub-optimal sound quality in a couple of interviews as the recorder was too far away, notwithstanding the recorder was of high quality. There were occasions when the participant would offer a valuable insight after the recorder was turned off and I would commit to memory their comments so as to record them after we parted, as this unrecorded data is as ‘important as those derived from tape recordings’ (Warren, 2002, p. 92). As noted by Warren (2002), these additional insights often related to participant specific matters rather than the broader research area of school governance.

The audio tape of each interview was transcribed in textual form to make the data more readily available for analysis (Poland, 2002). Two professional transcribers were engaged and transcribed all interviews, except the second interview with Councillor D because the background noise made transcription very difficult. I realized during this interview that the quality of the recording would be compromised so I took more extensive notes than usual during the interview and immediately following the interview I replayed the recording and completed my notes and added as many verbatim quotes from the participant as I could. In this way I was confident that my resulting notes captured the issues discussed and expressed views of the participant. The transcribers’ checked each other’s transcription against the audio tape. I provided the transcribers a summary of the nature and purpose of the project and their obligations of confidentiality. I also provided the transcribers with Poland’s (2002) abbreviated instructions to use to record pauses, interruptions etc (refer Annexure G) and a list of expected common terms and acronyms.

I did not provide the transcripts to interview participants for confirmation so as to avoid the potential for the participant to alter what was said during the interview and the discomfort of reviewing potentially less than well-crafted prose. However, at the second interview with Council members we revisited the most prominent themes that emerged during the first interview, my observations of Council meetings and review of documents. This provided an opportunity for participants to ‘reflect on, elaborate, and build on stories they have told before, as well as respond to and change what gets reported’ (Ellis & Berger, 2002, p. 852).

The transcripts were useful in analyzing what was said rather than how it was said (Poland, 2002). I found it useful to listen to the audio tape while reading through the transcript to correct any errors and make notes on the 'how'. A denaturalized transcription approach was used (Oliver, Serovich & Mason, 2005) with primary concern for the accuracy of the substance of the interview, 'the meanings and perceptions created and shared during a conversation' (p. 1277). Because verbal interactions follow a logic different from that of written prose, the interview transcripts provided some challenges in selecting verbatim quotes for the findings and some minor editing was required.

Documents

The term 'documents' refers to a wide range of written, visual, digital and physical material (Merriam, 2009). Documents are usually characterized as public documents or personal documents. I had access to a series of public documents about the School through formal publications, such as a history of the School, the School's website and other internet based sources. The Council Secretary was the gatekeeper for confidential Council and School documentation. She was asked by the Chairman in my presence to provide me with any documentation that I needed for the project. I was provided with all Council and committee meeting papers for 2010 progressively during the year (and received them at the same time as Council members). I was also provided copies of key governance documents and documents prepared by way of information for Council members.

I was mindful that the documents I had access to were produced for reasons other than my research project and did not therefore interact with the phenomenon of interest as interview and observation do (Merriam, 2009). I presumed that data found in documents could be used in the same way as data from the interviews and observations (Merriam, 2009). I am confident that all documents used as a source of data had been authenticated and confirmed for accuracy (Merriam, 2009). I was not able to establish the author for each paper contained in the Council papers; however I am confident these were prepared by a staff member delegated with the responsibility for its preparation. The documents that formed part of the data provided context and detail on formal structures and processes which support the School's governance.

My experience as a company director and School Council member of an independent school assisted me in reading and understanding the Council papers and governance documents and linking them to the data that was emerging from the observations and the interviews. I was familiar with the format and content of School Council papers and was familiar with the types of documents that usually form part of a governance framework.

Differences in Data from the Three Collection Methods

Interviews revealed areas of uniqueness and commonality in Councillors' perceptions and understanding of and attitudes towards their role, the School, stakeholders and each other.

Observations provided an opportunity to see the lived experience of the Councillors and develop an understanding of the Council as a social group and how their interactions influenced the way they carried out their work.

Documents were an important data source although on their own would have revealed only a superficial level of knowledge about Council's practices. Documents predominantly revealed information on the 'what' and 'how' of Council's practices with limited information on the 'why' and virtually nothing on the social aspects of Council's practices or the culture of Council.

Data from the three collection methods were complementary in that together they provided a holistic view of Council and its practices.

Auxiliary Qualitative Research Method - Interviews with Members of Other School Councils

I conducted one off interviews with six members of school governing boards of six different independent schools ('Stage 2 interviews'). The purpose of these interviews was to frame the themes that emerged from the initial data sets; to place the case study school in the context of other 'like' schools and to gain the perspectives from members of the School Councils of these schools on the themes. These interviews gave me a sense of areas where there were common experiences and conditions and those where there were unique elements which emerged from the constellation of particular circumstances and factors at the case study school. They were also a 'reality check' for me on my interpretation of the data.

To maximize the utility of these one off interviews I wanted to have conversations with people who I knew to be experienced, thoughtful School Council members and who would be prepared to speak to me very openly about the themes and issues I had identified through the case study data analysis.

From the data sets I had identified eleven contextual characteristics that would be possible indicators of 'like' schools. These are set out in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1

List of Key Contextual Characteristics of the School

- Independent school
 - P-12 education
 - Boys only
 - Owned by the Church
 - Metropolitan location in their capital city
 - Superior physical facilities
 - Established history i.e. approximately 100 years or more
 - Day and boarding students
 - Enrolments in excess of 1000
 - Superior academic performance balanced with espoused values of participation in co-curricular activities and community service
 - Active alumni and fund raising associations
-

I made a list of people I knew through business or social circles who held roles as board members of independent schools or who knew well people holding these roles. I ascertained from publicly available information which schools had characteristics from List A. I selected six schools. Two of these schools (Schools A and B) shared all the contextual characteristics of the School. One school (School C) shared all of the characteristics with one exception; namely, they were co-educational until year 9. One school (School D) is seen by the School as a competitor and it shared nine of the eleven contextual characteristics. The remaining two schools (Schools E and F) were chosen because they were girls only schools, but which otherwise shared most of the contextual characteristics. I had a professional connection with five of the six School Council members; through being a board colleague or a client of their professional services firm. The sixth person I introduced myself to by letter and was granted an interview by telephone. The naming convention for the School Council members participating in the Stage 2 interviews, identifiers for their schools and a summary of shared characteristics are contained in the table in Appendix H.

Access to the Stage 2 interview participants was facilitated by the same cultural and social capitals that assisted me with access to the case study school. Although this meant relative ease of access, these School Council members were spread across four Australian cities and I had to ‘fit’ the interviews in with their extraordinarily committed work schedules. This also meant I had to rethink how I would conduct the interviews. For example, one School Council member was able to give me three quarters of an hour while he drove between appointments in Sydney. While I could take notes,

this environment was not conducive to audio recording or considering questions on pieces of paper. Notwithstanding the informality of the interviews, they provided valuable insights as discussed in the following chapters. Areas nominated for discussion with the Stage 2 Interview Participants is contained in Appendix I.

Data Analysis

There is no standard approach to the analysis of qualitative data (Bryman & Burgess, 1994). In this study I progressively organized and analyzed data from the start of data collection using Bourdieu's thinking tools of *field*, *habitus* and *capitals* and Schein's theory of organizational culture as a framework in which to interpret, structure and present the case study. Both inductive and deductive reasoning were applied in the data analysis. I did not use any computer assisted analytical tools. Analysis of data from the first round of interviews, review of documents and observations from Council meetings informed the questions and themes for exploration in the next round of data production and collection. The data from the second round then informed the following round and so on (Rosenblatt, 2002). I mapped the field of the School Council and its position in the field of school education and identified the cross field effects on the school and school council from the fields of religion and nonprofits.

A 'content analysis approach' was used to identify themes that emerged from the raw data. As explained by Wilkinson (2003),

...content analysis involves coding participants' open-ended talk into closed categories, which summarize and systematize the data. These categories may be derived either from the data itself or from the prior theoretical framework of the researcher (known as a "top-down" approach), and requires prior familiarity with the literature on the topic under investigation in order to derive the categories. The end point of the analysis may be simply to illustrate each category by means of representative quotations from the data, presented either in a table or written up as consecutive prose. (p. 197)

I used an inductive approach to analyze the raw data from the first round of interviews, observations and documents; however, I also applied an emergent (deductive) methodology to ensure important themes or categories were not overlooked because they did not 'fit' an existing theoretical or normative approach to governance.

In analyzing the interviews, I needed to determine whose 'voice' came through what a participant said. A participant may speak from one or multiple perspectives informed by their roles and experiences (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). As researcher, I needed to be cognizant of these different voices, the possibility of changing subjectivities and voicing subjectivities not before contemplated by

the participant as well as unvoiced subjectivities of the participant (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). For example, in the interviews with the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman their views on governance were heavily influenced by their roles as directors of for-profit companies. This was a model they were experienced in and had confidence in. However, there was also a realization that the corporate governance model was not a neat fit for governing a school and different voices emerged at different times about what the governance model should be and what was happening in reality in governing the School. The data allowed me to provide an emic account of the meaning making of Councillors', as well as an etic account, where I provide a more 'objective' view of the operations of the Council.

A close examination of the descriptive, multi-dimensional categories identified during the content analysis allowed me to discover linkages and acquire new understanding of the governance practices of Council.

An 'audit trail' was established to ensure identification of data segments to the participant and context.

Researcher / Consultant Tension, Reflexivity and Ethical Issues

At my first Council meeting I was asked to speak to my research proposal and I provided Councillors with an information sheet. Although I was careful in framing the expected outcomes from the research project, it became clear from comments made by the Chairman at this meeting that there was an expectation that I would not only share the 'results' of my research with Council, but that I would also provide them with a form of 'report card' on how well they governed the School. Although I saw myself only as a researcher, I realized that I had to respond appropriately to the not unreasonable expectation of Council that I would also be a 'consultant'. On several occasions when the Chairman was introducing me at different School events he would emphasize the consultant nature of my involvement with the School by saying things such as 'this is Sally Pitkin, she is a well known company director around town who is having a look at how well we are operating as a Council'. I accepted the consultant role for a number of reasons. Firstly, because I realized Council wanted to improve the way they governed the School and that I should be prepared to give back in a 'useful' way to Council as part of the ethics of the research. Secondly, I had the skills and experience to offer observations on their governance practices. I also had the opportunity through my networks to access non-confidential information on the issues and challenges 'like' schools were facing in governing their schools which I could share with Council. Finally, I thought it was an appropriate role, given I was expecting Councillors to allow me to be part of their private world for a whole year and share with me in an open and complete way their practices for governing the School. As Schein (2010) explains, 'the

important point is to approach the organization with the intention of helping, not just gathering data' (p. 184). Schein describes this approach as a 'clinical research process' and advocates this model for researching organizational culture. He explains further:

... the critical distinguishing feature of this inquiry model is that the data come voluntarily from the members of the organization because either they initiated the process and have something to gain by revealing themselves to you, the outsider, or, if you initiated the project, they feel they have something to gain from cooperating with you. In other words, no matter how the contact was initiated, the best cultural data will surface if the members of the organization feel they are getting some *help* from you. (p. 184)

I believe the rapport I developed with council members and their openness with me was facilitated by my willingness to accept the 'consultant' role, to help them, albeit in small ways. During the course of the year of data collection the Chairman asked me to 'run my eye' over a new constitution that was being developed for the School, which I happily did. I also prepared a draft charter for the Chairman for the Education Committee of Council to assist the Chairman initiate a review of the working of this Committee. I returned to the Council room in May 2011 and gave a presentation to Councillors on my observations of their governance practices. I presented around a number of themes in which I endeavored to show the dynamic and complex web of factors and relationships that influence how they, as a Council, worked. It was a difficult presentation to craft, particularly because I had some observations to share under one of the themes about some difficulties with the functioning of their Education Committee. I shared with Council my interpretation of the cultural norms of Council and the School and my interpretation was accepted as making sense to them and was seen as 'valid'. I also wove into the presentation some non-confidential insights into the governance challenges and issues being faced by School Councils of schools that the case study school considered to be 'like' schools, and hence worth learning from. These insights were 'useful' intelligence for Councillors. Following my presentation, the Director of the Schools Commission and the Bishop joined the meeting and the Chairman referred to my presentation and commented that he thought Council had 'received a seven or eight out of ten' for their governance. Allowing for a degree of modesty, he may have seen the mark as closer to eight and my sense was Council was satisfied with the feedback I gave them. I do not think the additional role of 'consultant' adversely impacted the data collection or my ability to analyze the data and present the case study.

I have made every effort in collecting and analyzing the data to remain aware of my positioning and to apply Bourdieu's methodological concept of *reflexivity* to 'control the pre-reflexive elements of their method, classifications and observations' (Deer, 2008, p. 200). I am aware that my education in

the private sector, my support of independent school education (through my children's education and my role as a former School Council member of an independent school), and my familiarity with governance by boards, influenced my approach to this study. I do not believe any of these factors biased my choice of research methods for this project; although I acknowledge the congruence of my *habitus* benefited me in establishing a positive dynamic between myself and the participants, particularly in the interviews and informal discussions. I also do not believe that any of these factors biased the analysis of the data or 'constructed' the data or the findings. Every attempt has been made to treat the data ethically, vigilantly and systematically to ensure its validity. I believe I have become a more effective board member as a result of this project. When I mentioned this observation to one of the Council members, she replied,

I'm sure the opportunity to observe different boards has to make you a better board member for your own board. I mean, that's clearly self-evident isn't it because you see and learn so much on the way that you don't see when you're involved and engaged. (Councillor S, Interview #2, p. 14)

Ethical clearance for the collection of data for the case study was obtained on 8 February 2010 from the University of Queensland, School of Education Ethics Committee (Refer Appendix J). One ethical issue that I faced during the data collection was maintaining the non-identification of the School. I was careful not to name or in any other way identify the School in any communication I had concerning my research project; however, on several occasions Councillors identified Council and the School as participating in my research project. For example, at a business lunch I attended, one of the Councillors told several other attendees that I was undertaking research on Council's governance of the School. I do not think these Councillors were cognizant at the time that sharing this information may lead to the School, and therefore them as participants, being identifiable in the future through the publication of this thesis.

I have taken every care in the collection of the data and the writing of this thesis that the School and the participants are not identified. This is particularly critical, given the project is a case study of one organizational unit, Council, and the social and cultural elements of this group are an important part of the data. In presenting the case study I am presenting other's realities; the knowledge presented is 'situational and conditional' and is not a source of absolute truth (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). As researcher, I accepted the participant's reality in their narration (Rosenblatt, 2002) and have endeavored to present it on this basis and without 'sanitation'. As part of an ethical approach to this research, I endeavoured to 'give back' to the School Council for their significant contribution. I participated in a review of the School's constitution and gave a presentation to the School Council on

their governance in a format similar to a consultants review, which incorporated observations on the governance arrangements of 'like' independent schools.

Conclusion

A case study is an important method in qualitative research and in this research project has presented insightful sets of data for analysis so as to illuminate the way a School Council, as a complex and private social unit, functions. Case study was an appropriate research method to investigate the research questions because it allowed me to get inside the 'black box' of Council and collect data in an iterative process that refined and addressed the research questions in a deep and comprehensive way. Case study allowed the exploration of the contextual, social and cultural factors that influence the 'how' and 'why' of governance of an independent school by its School Council. The strategic election of the School with a highly developed governance framework yielded a wealth of information that allowed a deeper level of analysis of perceptions and issues in school governance beyond normative recommendations.

The use of further one off semi structured interviews with School Council members of other schools allowed a further exploration of the analysis and interpretation of the ethnographic data collected through the case study and placed the case study school on a continuum of 'like' schools.

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Chapter 8

The School as a Field

Introduction

Using Bourdieu's concept of *field* we can explore the School as a structured social space, not confined to the material, grounded space of the campus. The School is a *field* with its own logics of practice, which are shaped by the hierarchies and power relations among the social agents who occupy positions in the field. The field of the School comprises Council and the 'core' stakeholders identified in Chapter 11. The School exists as a subfield and occupies different hierarchical positions concurrently within other fields which comprise the social world; namely the fields of school education, religion, and nonprofit organizations. The School as a field and its hierarchical positions in wider fields is discussed below to provide context for the consideration of Council as a field and its existence as a subfield within the field of the School.

Positioning the School within the Field of School Education

The School occupies a hierarchical position within the wider field of school education in Australia and also within a subfield of the field of school education, namely independent schools, as diagrammatically represented in Figure 8.1.

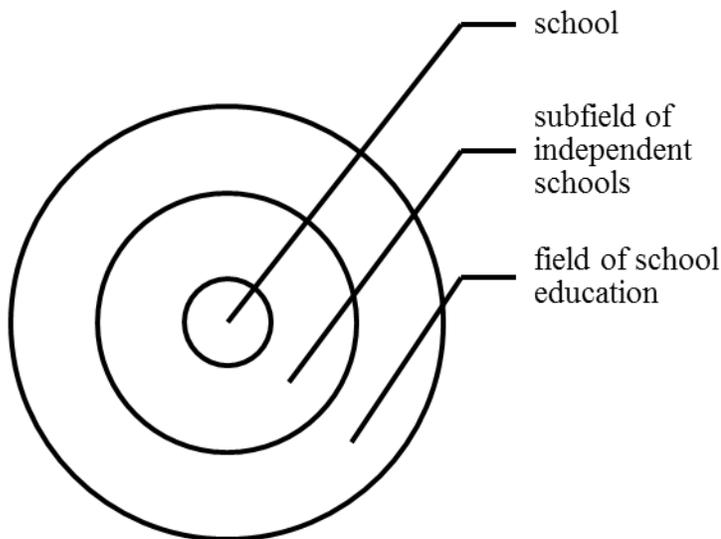


Figure 8.1. Diagram of the School in the Field of School Education

The subfield of independent schools sits within the broader field of school education in Australia, which encompasses all school based learning from early childhood learning in pre-schools

to the completion of secondary education. The restructuring of portfolio and policy responsibility in the Federal Ministry in 2010 under the Gillard Government has separated out school education from the broader area of education, including University education. The size of independent schools relative to other schools in the field of school education is growing, reflecting an increasing number of families choosing this sector for their child's education. Whether this growth or their 'success' in the education league tables improves their positioning within the field of school education is unclear at this time. Legislation provides the framework for independent schools as organizations; namely a body corporate which is nonprofit and self managed and subject to an ever increasing, complex and onerous legal framework. The autonomy at the school level in the governance model of independent schools is a structural element that distinguishes them from other schools; namely government schools and Catholic schools. Despite their function being similar to all schools, independent schools are recognized by Federal and State educational authorities, parents, students and the broader community as being different from and separate from government schools and Catholic schools and hence are a distinct subfield within the field of school education.

The School occupied a dominant position within the subfield of independent schools and the field of school education. This dominant positioning was achieved through a dynamic interplay of School characteristics; namely its history, academic attainment and co-curricular successes (confirmed by benchmarking with other schools), financial strength, sound governance, leadership roles and recognition in educational forums and policy and representational bodies, and engaged alumni. The School was positioned higher in the hierarchy on a State basis than on an Australia wide basis, due to the high standing of a number of independent schools in other States. The same characteristics that enabled the School to enjoy a dominant position in the subfield of independent schools and the field of school education were present for other dominant schools. However, schools that are even more dominant than the School were considered to have superior academic credentials, greater financial resources and more notable alumni.

Dominant schools are increasingly looking to international benchmarks for their academic attainment and are seeking to position themselves in the global world of education, for example offering the International Baccalaureate qualification and supporting students to pursue supplementary courses of study at overseas universities and schools during school holiday periods. The relative positions of each of the dominant schools in the hierarchy are matters of fine judgement and 'distinction' made by social agents holding significant economic, social and cultural capital. The positioning in the hierarchy of these dominant schools is not readily apparent to those social agents

without the requisite symbolic capital. The ‘logics of practice’ of the School, and other ‘elite’ schools, are to increase distinction which is viewed as critical to preserving and advancing the School’s success and field dominance. These logics of practice are based on a premise of leveraging the economic, social and cultural capitals of alumni, parents, students and staff to increase the School’s effectiveness and hence achievement. A more detailed description of some of these characteristics, namely, school location, history, record in attainment and alumni follows.

School location

The metropolitan location of the School in a premier residential area within two kilometers of the central business district, and its long occupation of the site, was a context that facilitated access to schooling for higher socio economic families and access to centres of government and commerce, several leading tertiary educational institutions and a broad range of community, cultural and sporting events, for the benefit of its students. The primary catchment area, representing approximately 75% of students attending the School, was within a ten kilometre radius of the School. The location was well supported by public transport, although a significant proportion of students were driven to and from the School by their parents.

The campus was secured by the School’s founder in the early years of its history and, with subsequent acquisitions, comprised approximately 22 hectares. Its size and facilities provided the opportunity for all of the School’s curricular and co-curricular activities to be conducted on site; the only boys’ school in the metropolitan area with this capacity. The older buildings on campus were Gothic in style with newer buildings complementing rather than replicating this earlier architectural approach. There was a sense of space and the significant size meant the campus provided a tranquil oasis in what was otherwise a city environment. Despite the size of the campus, its metropolitan location created the need for strategic and careful management of the local community as a stakeholder. The western boundary placed the central hub of the School in close connection with residential neighbours. A natural watercourse and the open space of further sporting fields provided a buffer along the eastern boundary of the School to the adjoining residential area.

History

Established for one hundred years, the School had a rich history and traditions which brought distinction and exerted a strong influence on the culture and governance of the School. Characteristics of this tradition were academic strength, expertise in single sex education, hard work, and character development through study, sport and service. Another feature of tradition was that the School was academically non-selective and followed tradition from its foundation in accepting students from

different socio-economic and religious backgrounds and with differing levels of scholastic and other abilities. Today however, the reality was that only parents with appropriate economic capital could 'afford' to send their sons to the School, as confirmed by the School community's 2011 socioeconomic score (SES) of 117 (DEEWR, 2011), which placed the School in the top quartile of SES for Australian independent schools (ISCA, 2012). These parents were also more likely to have higher levels of social and cultural capitals which they brought to bear in their school selection. Most of the 'top' schools in the metropolitan area were academically non-selective at entry level. They promoted this feature, together with scholarship programs, to demonstrate a degree of equity of access, as well as the value an education at their school provided, as they produced strong academic achievement regardless of the 'quality' of the intake. This equity was illusory as only those parents with sufficient capitals could select their school. Many parents valued the economic worth, the networks and the status that an education at the School could provide. Others also valued the Christian ethos, the culture of service and the membership of a community. These in turn reinforced and continued these capitals within the School. Boarding continued the School's strong historical connection with rural Australia and was only one of eight metropolitan independent schools to continue to offer boarding programs. The School also supported, through its boarding programs, Indigenous students and students from neighbouring Island nations.

The School had occasions of formal celebration at different times during the school year for the School community. Each occasion had a special link to the history and tradition of the School, for example the ANZAC Day Service which was attended by several thousand members of the School community. The School was also one of very few that continued to have a military cadet unit, reflecting the presence of a cadet program since the early days of the School's founding. On such occasions the School displayed their proud history of achievement in the development of the community and the nation. The history of the School was displayed in other artifacts such as its school uniforms (unchanged for over 60 years), gothic buildings, museum, motto and crest. The heritage generating traditions and artifacts symbolized what the School stood for in the wider community and was both informative and promotional.

Record in attainment

The School had a strong, although somewhat inconsistent, record in academic achievement, ranked in the top ten percent of the schools in the State based on the tertiary entrance scores (Better Education, 2011). The School was conscious that they had 'lost some ground' in academic performance compared to their peers in the last decade and were focused on continuous academic

improvement. The School highly valued participation and success in co-curricular activities, particularly sport. They had been a participant in an interschool sporting association since its inception over 90 years ago. Success in this competition was an important cultural element of the School as evidenced by the commitment of the School to support promising athletes through its scholarship program and the keen interest of old boys in the School's sporting success. It was the old boys that convinced the School to hire professional coaches for the major sports (including rugby and cricket) in the late 1980s after they held a meeting at the School to protest against the School's then poor performance in the competition. It was not unusual to have several thousand spectators at an important home game in the rugby. As noted earlier, sport was ranked by parents in the top three factors of importance to them in their son's education (Documents, Parent Survey, 2010).

Alumni

As a result of the School's long history there were over twenty thousand alumni and the School had a very active Old Boys' Association. This Association organized social events for old boys and provided an ongoing connection with the School community. The School proudly noted that enrolment of sons of old boys was one of the highest of any school in Australia and had fourth generation students attending the School. The old boys reinforced and continued the economic and social capital of the School. The School recognized the importance of its alumni and welcomed them as part of the school community and celebrated their achievements. There were a number of notable alumni, principally because of their achievements and success in commerce.

Influences from Other Fields

The School and other independent schools, although appropriately located within the field of school education, were influenced by other fields, such as the overarching economic field and the State field. The School was also influenced by the fields of nonprofit organizations and religion.

State field

The State field, encompassing Federal and State governments, exerts considerable power over the School and other independent schools through the funding mechanism and regulatory functions (Lingard, Rawolle & Taylor, 2005). Reliance in part on government for funding meant a requirement to comply with government regulations concerning the services the School offered, for example, implementation of a national curriculum. The introduction of mandatory reporting of school data, including academic performance and a focus on pedagogies that implicitly or explicitly reduce the professional autonomy of teachers were other examples of the leverage the State holds over independent schools.

The Gonski Review of School Funding (Gonski, *et al.*, 2011) recommended an increase in recurrent funding for all schools of approximately \$5 billion, with the largest part of this increase to flow to the government sector, due to the significant numbers and greater concentration of disadvantaged students attending government schools. However, the Federal government had not endorsed the recommendation, citing the need for further consultation. This had been interpreted as delaying action, as an increase in expenditure was in conflict with the Federal government's current fiscal policy to return the budget to surplus in financial year 2013. The independent school sector had broadly endorsed the recommendations of the Review, on the basis that funding to independent schools would be maintained, at least to current levels (ISCA, 2012). It was widely accepted that the recommended additional funding would help close the performance gap between schools and improve equity. Although the Australian educational system can be characterized as relatively equitable and effective with high levels of school choice, the socio-economic profile of a school matters substantially in terms of academic attainment. Recent research by Perry & McConney (2010) confirm that increases in a school's SES are consistently associated with increases in students' academic performance and that this relationship holds regardless of the individual students' SES.

Economic field

Influences from the economic field, such as globalization and neo-liberalism, have also significantly influenced the field of school education, reducing its autonomy as a field and diminishing its capacity to resist interference from the overarching field of power and other fields (Lingard, Rawolle & Taylor, 2005). Schools now find themselves part of the corporatist domain as they 'exemplify a wider transformation in the governance of civil society from a local, public to a corporate civil society' (Ranson, 2012, p. 36). The language, discourse and values of the corporate world influence school education even though schools are public institutions and provide a public service that is of value to all in society; namely enabling learning and expanding capability (Ranson, 2012). Neo-classical economic discourse pervades the governance and management of the field of school education imposing complexity and having the potential to diminish the importance of the core purpose of schooling (Lingard *et al.*, 2002; Lee & Caldwell, 2011). The field of school education is increasingly influenced by trends and performance in school education in other OECD countries. If Australia does not perform 'as well as it should' in international student tests, such as the OECD's PISA, it is interpreted as adversely impacting our productivity and international competitiveness (Donnelly, 2010). Australia is also subject to scrutiny through OECD's education indicators which

provide a broad array of comparable indicators on education systems of OECD countries, including educational outcomes (OECD, 2011).

Field of nonprofit organizations

The field of nonprofit organizations is also a significant field that exerts influence on the subfield of independent schools because of the requirement for independent schools to be nonprofit organizations. Independent schools are part of the discourse on nonprofit governance and included in research and benchmarking activities on the sector, for example, the recent Productivity Commission's study into the contributions of the sector (Productivity Commission, 2010). Schools, like hospitals, are however acknowledged as having additional unique aspects as nonprofit organizations which require special consideration. The State field which exerts influence over nonprofit organizations through regulatory and contractual mechanisms has committed to reforming the sector to reduce the regulatory burden. As for most nonprofit organizations, laws regulated every aspect of School operation. Increasingly, legislation is imposing personal liability on members of governing bodies which require sophisticated systems of risk management and compliance, often beyond the resources of nonprofit organizations. There were over sixty separate pieces of Federal and State legislation regulating independent schools, covering student care, educational outcomes, staff employment, use of assets and dealings with contractors and suppliers.

Field of religion

The subfield of independent schools is also influenced by the field of religion as many independent schools have a religious affiliation. The School, because it was owned by the Church and constituted as a school of education for the purpose of developing a community of faith, was not just subject to cross field effects from the field of religion; it occupied a position in the field of the Church concurrently with occupying a position in the field of school education. The School's constitution and Church policy required the School to promote the spiritual growth and moral understanding of the student through all aspects of School life. The School had adopted four tenets of scholastic attainment, personal development, spiritual awareness and community service, which were to inform all curricular and co-curricular activities. The School was recognized as a significant organizational unit of the Church by its membership of the Church's governing body, synod, as represented by the Chairman and the Headmaster. The School's operations and financial health were monitored and subject to direction by an organizational unit of the Church called the 'Schools Commission'. The School's religious education programs and professional development for the School's teachers and chaplains were provided by another commission of the Church focused on religious education. Many of the School's

service activities were orientated to priorities identified by the Church and the School was expected to participate in the broad community and work of the Church. Although the School was owned by the Church and was a 'religious' school, it was not a requirement for enrolment to be a communicant member of the Church or have a Christian religion. Only about 8% of students had a connection to the Church (Field notes, Council Meeting, July 2010).³⁹ As noted by one Councillor,

Our purpose for being is to develop a faith community, to educate our children in the faith but that's not the reason that the majority of kids come to the School. (Councillor S, Interview #1, p. 31)

The School catered for a predominantly secular clientele and parents were seeking a values based education, not a religious education, for their sons. Parent survey results in 2009 from the preparatory, middle and senior schools confirmed that a 'religious education' was not seen by most parents as an important beneficial aspect of an education at the School (Council papers, May 2010). The benefit of a religious education was rated more highly by preparatory school parents (13.7% rating it as either number one or two of most beneficial aspects) than senior school parents (only 1.7% rating it as number three of most beneficial aspects and no ratings for number one or two). The survey results also revealed that 'spiritual development' was not one of the most important aims for parents in sending their sons to the School. 'Reaching full potential', 'high academic results', 'achieving in co-curricular activities', 'establishing networks' and 'participating in community service' all ranked more highly than 'spiritual development' as an aim for middle school and senior school parents. Preparatory school parents ranked spiritual development slightly more highly (above 'establishing networks' and 'community service'), which was not surprising, given the young age of boys in the preparatory school. The Church was aware of the secular clientele of diocesan schools, noting that,

While there is a core of practising [church] families who choose [church schools] to support the religious values taught in the home, many other families choose [church] schools for other reasons. These may relate to a genuine belief that these schools offer high academic standards, greater opportunities for extra-curricular activities and an ethical (rather than denominationally defined) atmosphere of support and discipline (School Commission, 1996).

The Church saw itself as 'representing the views and interests of a wide range of people' and therefore able to 'accommodate different viewpoints' and hence a diverse student population (Schools Commission, 1996). One Councillor (Councillor S) thought the religious philosophy of the School may bring parents and students 'along the journey'. As she explained,

³⁹ In the School's one hundred years of operation, 55 boys have been ordained into the Ministry of the Church.

The School has a strong visibility on religious rituals, symbols and celebrations. Kids and parents may not have been into a cathedral before, but the ritual and symbolism and visible celebration of the religious underpinnings of the purpose of the School ... must have an impact ... I'm sure something special happens. (Interview #1, p. 31)

Education was one of five ministries of the Church and the Church owned and administered a number of schools across the diocese. The Schools Commission provided strategic direction and policy development to, and monitoring of, all of these schools.

The Church, through canons made by synod and policies issued by the Schools Commission, had issued a number of documents which impacted on the governance and operations of the School, for example, statements of ethos through to operational policies.

The School had clearly articulated and highly visible values, grounded in the field of education and the field of religion. These values were set in the context of the School's mission and aims. The values were expressed as learning values and behavioural values and are set out in Table 8.1 below.

Table 8.1

School Values

Behavioural Values	Learning Values
Humility	Imagination
Integrity	Discipline
Honesty	Diligence
Dignity	Preparation
Chivalry	Determination
Loyalty	

Source: School Website

The primary driver for the clear articulation of values was the ownership of the School by the Church. The School, as for many independent schools, had been advantaged in the past by their articulation and commitment to school values, as being a factor of influence for parents in school selection. Halstead and Taylor (2000) have noted that 'the growing diversity of values in society, combined with increasing demands for public accountability, has forced schools to articulate their underlying values more explicitly and to reflect on the way that the life of the school may contribute to the development of pupil's values and attitudes' (p. 176). The Ministerial Council on Education,

Training, Employment and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA, 2008) has acknowledged that education includes the development of personal values and attributes. To this end a values education framework has been endorsed which encourages schools to have articulated values in a school's mission and incorporate values into all school policies and practices. Nine core values for Australian schools have been proposed (refer Appendix K) and which are reflected in the School's articulated values.

Conclusion

The School as a social institution was not only influenced by internal forces. Significant external factors, from the fields of education, religion and nonprofit organizations and the State field, impact on the School. The School's dominant position in the field of independent schools provided it with opportunities to moderate these external influences; although the significance of these external forces was likely to increase over time, particularly in the area of external benchmarking and increasing competition between high performing schools. In the field of school education, the School relied heavily on the peak body for independent schools, the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA), to represent its interests and advocate for policy settings favourable to independent schools. The growing numbers of students attending independent schools was a positive factor, although the Federal Government's response to the Gonski report was an unknown. In the field of nonprofit organizations, the considerable human and financial resources of the School moderated the impacts of an increasingly complex operating environment. As will be discussed in the following chapter, in the field of religion, Council, and particularly the Chairman and the Headmaster, played critical roles in maintaining relations between the School and the Church, in an increasingly complex School context of secularization and corporatization.

Chapter 9

Council as a Field

Introduction

Council was a structured social space within the field of the School, occupied and bounded by the membership of Council. Whilst it was located in the field of the School, it was also a field operating with its own logics of practice. This chapter examines the structure of Council and processes for appointment and the positioning of Council within the fields of the School and the Church. The process for appointment to Council, including the ‘type’ of person selected and the resulting dynamic of the group were critical factors in how Council governed the School.

Composition of Council and the Appointment Process

The members of Council were appointed by the Church (as discussed below) and delegated the responsibility and authority to govern the School. The delegated authority was conferred through canons issued by the Church and a School constitution. The School had been governed by a School Council since the early days of its founding. Commenting on the governance structure, the Headmaster noted in 1915 that ‘it is of great advantage to place a private school under a governing council connected with such a public body as [the Church]. The continuity of the School is practically assured, while it still has the independence and freedom of a private school’ (School History, 1986, p. 50). That freedom was threatened in the early 1960s when the Church allowed the size of the School Council to fall to a small number by not replacing members who died or retired and the then Registrar of the Church attempted to treat the School Council as an ‘advisory body with no real powers or authorities’. The remaining School Council members wrote to the Archbishop raising their concerns noting that,

For many years throughout its early history [the School] functioned most successfully more or less independently of [the Church], relying on its policy and its administration upon its School Council ... In latter years as one Councillor died or resigned no replacement has been made. The last appointment to the School Council occurred in the year 1943. Since then there have been three deaths and one resignation. This situation occurred, despite serious endeavours on the part of the remaining councillors to have its Body strengthened numerically from among a suitable cross-section of citizens, including old boys of maturity and stature likely to remain interested in the School.

The remaining members of the School Council also pointed out to the Archbishop that ‘the flow of legacies and contributions could well dry up if the School were to lose a reasonable measure of autonomy’.

The Church consequently introduced a constitution for the School which defined the role of the School Council. The current constitution confirmed the role of Council was to ‘govern, manage, control and supervise the School’. The constitution also specifically confirmed the role of Council to determine strategy and policies, approve operational plans and budgets, authorize the School’s curriculum, deal with the assets of the School and provide oversight of the School’s operations. This issue of Council wanting autonomy to govern the School, and the Church seeking to use its ownership to influence governance has continued to the present day and was an important dynamic in the functioning of the Council, as discussed in this and subsequent chapters.

The constitution stated that a cardinal principle is that as far as practicable Councillors should have between them as broad a range of interests, talents and experiences as will assist them collectively meet their responsibilities. The constitution also required that a majority of Councillors be members of the Church, and that all Councillors support the expressed aims and vision of the Church.

Council was constituted by 10 Councillors comprising –

- The Archbishop as President
- The Chairman, appointed by the Archbishop;
- One Councillor as the Schools Commission nominee. This person is also the current Deputy Chairman by appointment by the School Council;
- One Councillor as the Old Boys’ Association nominee (Councillor C);
- One Councillor as the Parents’ and Friends’ Association nominee (Councillor Y);
- One Councillor as the Archbishop’s nominee (Councillor R);
- Three Councillors selected by the Council (Councillors D, F and S); and
- The Headmaster as a non-voting member.

Observations of Council discussions confirmed their view that the current size of ten Councillors was appropriate, noting that the Archbishop as a matter of practice does not attend Council meetings (Field notes, August Council meeting). The research does not offer any compelling evidence to advocate a minimum or maximum number for a governing body such as a School Council. The most useful guidance is provided by Cadbury (2002) when he says that a board needs a balance between sufficient members to bring in a breadth of knowledge and experience and small enough to facilitate discussion and debate.

The constitution mandated positions on Council for the Archbishop, the Archbishop’s nominee and the Schools Commission’s nominee. This resulted in three ‘Church’ positions. The Archbishop directly appointed the Archbishop’s nominee and the Chairman, and the Schools Commission

appointed its nominee. Councillors were firmly of the view that the appointment of the Chairman should only be made with their support. As the Chairman noted, ‘there is nothing worse, as the Archbishop has done a couple of times, in bringing someone in from outside as chairman of the Council. There is no relationship with the members of Council and it’s just a very bad model’ (Interview # 2, p. 6). The Chairman and Council did not have a formal role in the appointment of either the Archbishop’s nominee or the Schools Commission nominee. However, at appropriate times the Chairman initiated discussions with the Archbishop and the Schools Commission, so as to influence the type of person (skills set etc) who would be appointed. Recent history had shown the Chairman to be quite successful in this regard. For example, in relation to the appointment of a member of the clergy as the Archbishop’s nominee in 2010 the Chairman commented that,

I have conversations with the Archbishop about who I think might be suitable in terms of skill set and people ... I’ve said the balance is with the clergy at the moment and that is where he is looking. (Interview #1, p. 2; Interview #2, p. 6)

The Schools Commission appointed all remaining members of Council. The practice was for Council to nominate candidates for these positions. As explained by the Chairman,

Council recommends to the Schools Commission that XYZ be appointed to the Council. They will accept our recommendation, well they’d be fairly brave not to, but they will accept our recommendation, have done in the past, and then they make the appointment to the Council, not us. (Interview #1, p. 2)

The current Archbishop’s nominee, a recent appointment to Council, believed this practice to be ‘a bit of a loose cannon’ as the Church lacked ‘control over who’s going to be on the Council’ (Interview #1, p. 7 & 8). He was as concerned about the role of the Schools Commission in this process as he was about the role of Council, noting that ‘the Episcopal leadership of the Diocese ... may not always bear one line with the Schools Commission’ (Interview #1, p. 8). In his view the Episcopal leadership within the Church, because of its higher place in the Church’s hierarchy, should be the decision maker for appointments to Council, although with the benefit of consultation with Council.

Council constituted a Nominations Committee to identify and make recommendations of suitable candidates on an ‘as required’ basis, comprising the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman as Chair of the Finance Committee and Councillor F as Chair of the Education Committee. This Committee’s role was to identify and screen potential candidates and make recommendations for appointment to Council. The Chairman acknowledged this was a ‘sensitive role’ noting that he ‘set up the Committee not on individuals but on positions ... By putting it there in positions everybody knows how it is made up’ (Interview #3, p. 4). Nominations Committees are seen as powerful committees of boards in all

sectors because of the critical impact that new board members have on board dynamics and functioning. The Chairman was astute in linking committee composition to the role of the Chair of Council's two standing committees, as it lessened political manoeuvring by Councillors for entry to the Committee.

As part of the process, prospective Councillors were interviewed by the Nominations Committee at which time the Chairman explained what was expected of Councillors.

I lay it on pretty heavily and I tell people some fundamental things and one is that you will lose friends, and they will and they do. I spell out the time commitment, what is important and why they should be coming on Council [because] I want to give them a message that we are fairly serious about it, it's not just a roll up sort of thing. (Interview #1, p. 7).

Councillor D described the process as 'being picked ... by the Chairman' to meet the 'Chairman's strong subliminal agenda ... of ensuring an appropriate mix of experience, an appropriate mix of gender, and an appropriate mix of knowledge and no knowledge of the School – insiders and outsiders' (Interview #1, p. 2).

Nominees of groups, whose principal aim was to support the School, were permitted under the constitution and could be initiated by Council. The importance of the old boys and parents was recognized through one position on Council being held by a nominee of each of the associations representing these groups. There were other Councillors who had connections to the School; namely old boys and /or parents (past or current). Staff were recognized through the Headmaster's membership of Council (although this was a non-voting position) and attendance at Council meetings by the Deputy Headmasters. Other important stakeholder groups not specifically recognized through Council positions were students, the School's Foundation and donors, the government as funder (Federal and State) and the local community⁴⁰.

In interviewing prospective candidates, the Chairman would make it clear that being nominated by one of the stakeholder groups for a position on Council did not mean they were 'representative' positions.

We consistently use the word 'nominee' and avoid 'representative' [because] they are not representing the old boys, the old boys have nominated them to Council. Now clearly they will have the old boys in mind when we make decisions but they're not representing the group, but I have had people, in fact we had two Parents' and Friends' Association nominees withdraw after their interview. This is important because people can come onto Council for the wrong reasons. (Chairman, Interview #1, p. 5)

⁴⁰ The Chairman and the Headmaster live in the local community.

Corporate law does not distinguish between ‘nominee’ and ‘representative’ directors; being interchangeable terms referring to a person appointed to a board by a particular interest group. The basic rule at law is that a nominee director must act in the interests of the company (as a whole) not the interests of their nominators (Baxt, 2009).

The Chairman commented that the old boys on Council saw that old boys had a ‘special place on Council’ (Interview #3, p. 5). The Headmaster supported this view, noting that ‘it is important to have old boys on Council to preserve the history and culture of the School’ (Field notes, August Council meeting, p. 13). The School’s founder always envisaged that former boys of the School would be represented on Council. ‘This, he maintained, would ensure a sense of continuity within the school community and provide the old boys with a means of contributing to the spiritual and material improvement of the school’ (School History, 1986, p. 103). The first old boys joined the School Council in 1929 and four old boys were members of the current Council.

The Deputy Chairman, also an old boy, noted that there may have been too many old boys on Council; however, he says he asks himself ‘who else is going to serve on the board and put that amount of time in for nothing?’ (Interview #1, p. 15) Although there was no monetary reward, there were reasons other than philanthropy that motivated people to take on a role with Council. For example, the opportunity to develop or broaden networks that may be beneficial personally or professionally and the social and cultural capitals acquired from holding a governance role in an important educational institution.

Recruiting members for Council with significant positioning in other fields, such as the Church, can be beneficial for Council and the School; building and strengthening influence and mutual benefit across fields⁴¹. In considering the composition of Council the Chairman had regard to the positioning of the prospective candidates in the fields that were relevant for effective stakeholder relations. For example, in appointing Councillor C, the Chairman was mindful that he was appointing someone who was well regarded in the Church and the Old Boys’ Association. Councillors who occupy dominant positions within stakeholder groups should be able to use their influence in ways to assist the School. The Chairman also considered the nature of the candidate’s *habitus* and *capitals*, appreciating that effective functioning of Council required a collaborative working relationship between Council members and an understanding of the contextual and stakeholder factors that influenced the School’s governance. Several Councillors commented that the School’s long history

⁴¹ The positioning of members of Council in different fields is discussed in chapter 10.

provided a source of good quality candidates for Council from a large pool of parents (current and former) and old boys (Deputy Chairman, Interview #1, p. 19).

The Chairman had also developed the practice of meeting with the appointees prior to formal confirmation of their appointment to,

... spell out my expectations and how we operate and all the things that I would tell every other Council member about the possibility of losing friends, their role as a Council member [being different] to their role with the Church. (Interview #1, p. 7)

This illustrated the balancing act between the potential benefits of candidates for Council who occupy dominant positions in fields useful to or significant for Council and the School and an expectation that these candidates, in their use of *capitals* in other fields, would prioritize the interests of Council over other interests, including their own. Social actors holding dominant positions in fields are often accomplished at leveraging their capitals to access and improve their position in other fields, whilst providing benefit to other social agents and organizations in that field. For example, the Chairman related a situation which showed how he provided insight on the dynamics of another field and facilitated the introduction of the Headmaster to a key person in that field to the benefit of the School and an enhancement to his own capitals in the field of Council and the other field (Field notes).

The linkage of Councillors to key stakeholder groups is shown diagrammatically in Table 9.1 below and, drawing on elements of stakeholder theory, presupposes that stakeholders have a legitimate interest in the organization and should therefore have a place on the organization's governing body.

Table 9.1

Councillors by Key Stakeholder Groups

Name	Member of the Church*	Old Boy	Parent Current	Parent Past	Staff
Chairman	√	√		√	
Deputy Chairman	√	√		√	
Headmaster	√			√	√
Councillor Y			√	√	
Councillor D	√	√		√	
Councillor F	√		√	√	
Councillor S	√				
Councillor R	√				
Councillor C	√	√			

* as defined by the Church, i.e. christened and attending public worship

Induction to Council

All new Councillors received an induction manual containing information on the School and key governance documents. They were given a tour of the School and introduced to senior executives. They also met separately with the Chairman prior to their first Council meeting so he could,

... take them through the background that I think is relevant. I'll give a rundown on the other members of Council, go through all the documentation, the meeting processes and the board calendar for the year ... I'll try to talk to him about the way I think people conduct themselves in meetings, what to expect and what not to expect. (Chairman, Interview #1, p. 8)

The Chairman also created opportunities for new appointees to speak to him about their initial impressions and any concerns they might have about the way the Council functions or their role.

Councillor D commented on the importance of the induction process,

The meetings with the Chairman and the induction manual were very useful. Just because I'd had lots of association [with the School] still meant I needed to have the advice and read the book. (Interview #1, p. 4)

Term of Office

All Councillors were appointed for a three year term, and could be considered for further terms of three years at the expiration of their term. At the time of writing, the Church was considering

amendments to the constitution to limit tenure to twelve consecutive years. Council was supportive of this proposed change on the basis that it reflected a good governance practice that had developed in the corporate sector. The Chairman noted that he had been able to successfully transition Councillors off Council at the end of their term where there had been difficulties with their performance (Field notes).

The office of Councillor was vacated if the Councillor resigned, died, was mentally or physically impaired, bankrupt, convicted of a serious offence or removed by the Schools Commission. In the case of the Headmaster, membership of Council was linked to his executive position and a vacancy would occur when he ceased to be Headmaster.

Council's Position in the Field of the School

Council occupied a dominant, although somewhat hidden, position in the field of the School. The dominance of this position was determined by the authority and responsibility for the governance of the School held and exercised by Council. Council was at the apex of the School's organizational hierarchy. The other dominant position was occupied by the Headmaster, who was highly visible as the School's leader with operational control of the School. Not all stakeholders would have had an appreciation of Council's role; however this did not diminish Council's position in the field as Council actively and effectively exercised its power. As explained by Councillor Y,

If you have a well functioning board that is governing the School, the Headmaster's the person, the public face; it probably doesn't matter if the School community doesn't know what the Council is up to. (Interview #1, p. 18)

Council did, however, have a dynamic program of stakeholder engagement so as to inform their deliberations and decision making and provide visibility of it as the School's governing body. Some members of Council also occupied other positions in the field of the School through their role as a member of a stakeholder group, for example, as a parent or an old boy. The School's stakeholders and Council's relationships with them are discussed in Chapter 11.

Council's Position in the Field of the Church

Council occupied a position, separate to, yet associated with, the School, in the hierarchy of the field of the Church. The School, through the Chairman and the Headmaster, was represented at synod and participated in Church decision making. Council also closely interacted with and was influenced by several of the organizational units of the Church, particularly the Schools Commission, principally through reporting obligations and attendance by the Chairman and Councillors at governance and faith orientated forums. The Chairman of the Schools Commission and its Executive Director attended one Council meeting on an annual basis to discuss the Church's expectations of Council in governing the

School as a 'community of faith'. As owner, the Church had direct and indirect influence on how Council functioned. The most powerful and direct instrument of influence was the Church's control of appointments to Council. The Archbishop was also the President of Council and held a vote, although as a matter of practice he did not attend Council meetings. It was a constitutional requirement that a majority of members of the Council be members of the Church and a stated aim was to have each member of Council undertake postgraduate studies in theology 'as opportunity for theological studies will add to the culture of our schools' (Field notes, Chairman of the Schools Commission, May 2011). The composition of Council accommodated three 'Church' positions, with only one being a clergy, significantly less than the clerical⁴² membership of the School Councils of a number of 'like' schools owned by other dioceses of the Australian Church. Although the positioning of Council was closely aligned to the School's position, it was also influenced by the positions held by individual Council members. Each member of Council occupied a position in the field of the Church which was determined by the cumulative effect of their role as a member of Council and their other participation in Church activities. Council members occupying dominant positions enhanced the position of Council in the field of the Church. The data did not provide sufficient information to permit an assessment of Council's position in the field of the Church, although positioning of Councillors relative to each other could be determined and will be discussed in Chapter 10.

Conclusion

As the governing body at the apex of the School's hierarchy, holding authority and accountability for the School's operations and resources, Council occupied a dominant position in the field of the School. Council also occupied a position in the field of the Church as an entity distinct, although related, to the School. The Church had the potential to exert significant influence on Council through the appointment process, although to this point the Chairman had moderated this influence through active and close liaison with the Archbishop and the Schools Commission, structured nomination processes, nomination of 'good quality' candidates, an expectation that incoming Council members are committed to a 'corporate' approach to governance and high governance standards. In more recent times the Church, primarily through the Schools Commission, had shown signs that it was seeking to increase its influence over the School, which will exacerbate existing tensions in the relationship. Council's approach was to govern the School as an entity separate to, although owned by the Church, with its primary aim to strengthen and develop the School, not the Church. The Church,

⁴² The term 'clerical' was used within the School community to refer to those members of the Church who were ordained.

however, saw the School as an integrated part of a system⁴³. The relationship between Council and the Church will be explored further in the following chapters.

⁴³ Data on the views of the Church was gathered through an interview with the Executive Director of the Church's Schools Commission (refer page 84) and Councillor R as the Archbishop's nominee, and through observations of discussions between Councillors and Church representatives at a Council meeting.

Chapter 10

Habitus and Capitals of Council Members

Introduction

The *habitus* and *capitals* of each member of Council determined their positioning in the fields of Council and the School and created a ‘logics of practice’ which determined the way each Councillor was able to act and approached their role as a Councillor, their interactions with other Council members and stakeholders, the resources and networks they brought to the role and how they approached the issues that Council dealt with. The composition of Council was therefore a critical part of the governance framework for the School. This chapter explores the *habitus* and *capitals* of each member of Council and their field positioning. Subsequent chapters explore how Council ‘works’ and the logics of practice of Councillors. The descriptive accounts of Councillors in this chapter were derived from data generated by interviews, during which Councillors offered descriptions of themselves and their Council colleagues, observations of Councillors in Council meetings and at School events, and documents which offered descriptions of Councillors, both public (such as the School website) and private (such as the Council evaluation questionnaire).

The Chairman

The Chairman was a retired senior executive in his mid 60s having spent his 40 year career in the resources sector in Australia and overseas. In addition to his position with the School, the Chairman held non-executive roles with other organizations, including several commercial ventures and as the chairman of another school of the same religious affiliation as the School. He held a Bachelor’s degree and professional qualifications in commerce and deep general management experience.

The Chairman developed significant cultural and social capital in the field of resources during his career and these were institutionalized through the seniority of his executive roles with significant Australian companies and in the leadership positions he held while an executive on the governing bodies of peak industry bodies. The Chairman noted however that unlike several of his executive colleagues, he did not become a Chief Executive Officer of an ASX 100 company,

You see a lot of successful people out there, but there are three things that are important in life - your family, your career and your finances. There aren’t all that many people who get all three right. I’m one who put family one hundred percent before career ... and you look back and you think well life would have been a lot different if I’d gone to London or Dusseldorf. (Interview # 2, p. 10, 13)

The Chairman also had economic capital, the product of many years of executive level remuneration. This economic capital provided the opportunity for retirement from full time paid roles and supported the Chairman so he could devote a significant proportion of his time to unpaid activities, such as the chairmanship of Council. All of these capitals were transposable to the fields of the School and Independent Schools because the Chairman was seen as a senior, respected and successful leader in business, the very product an elite school for boys would like to produce. Recent media articles have commented on boards of elite independent schools including high profile business people for the capitals they bring to the school (Urban, 2009). The Chairman commented that he thought this trend ‘reflected a growing expectation of the school community, particularly from parents who are today well educated and professional or business people’ (Field notes, meeting #1, p. 3).

The Chairman also held significant cultural and social capitals from being an old boy of the School, a parent of old boys and a past President of the Old Boys’ Association. He had been a member of School Council for just over 20 years and Chairman for seven years. Prior to being appointed Chairman, he held roles as Chair of Council’s Finance Committee for seven years and Deputy Chairman for nine years. He observed that ‘as a family we have had a commitment to this School since 1959’ (Interview #2, p. 13). He viewed himself as a guardian of the valuable symbolic capital that was associated with the School. This deep connection with the School and the Chairman’s well-formed *habitus* had created cultural and social capitals of the highest value within the field of the School and positioned the Chairman in a dominant position in the field. The Chairman had also institutionalized his social and cultural capitals in the position of Chairman of Council. There had been three Headmasters during his tenure as a member of Council, although only one Headmaster since being appointed Chairman. The Chairman had, through his social and cultural capitals, developed during his long tenure, further enhanced the role of Chairman of Council. The distinction that the role brought should benefit the next Chairman, for example by providing legitimacy to the appointee’s approach in the early stages of his tenure.

The Chairman presented as a measured, confident, articulate, genuine and quietly spoken man. A sense of humor and pragmatism underpinned his approach to the role and balanced his drive for continuous improvement in the way the School was governed and managed. He understood the culture of the School and was watchful of possible adverse impacts of decisions and new initiatives.

In his role he represented the School and Council at many formal and informal School occasions. His personally prepared speeches reflected the ethos of the School and were well delivered

with a good blend of warmth and formality. He was very visible in the School community and in interactions between the School and the broader community.

Whilst all members of Council agreed that the Chairman was an outstanding Chairman of Council, particular personal attributes were emphasized by different Councillors.

‘strong and collaborative leader’ (Councillor D, Interview #2, p. 7)

‘enormous ability to give so much of his time to make sure things are well managed’ (Councillor F, Interview #1, p. 25)

‘a good man, a hard worker, with the best interests of the School at heart’ (Councillor C, Interview #1, p. 12)

‘very insightful, very aware’ (Councillor S, Interview #1, p. 16)

‘leads in an ethical and responsible manner’ (Councillor S, Interview #1, p. 17)

‘a very good listener’ (Headmaster, Interview # 2, p. 11)

The Chairman’s cultural and social capitals, which he used in the field of the School, were also highly valued in the field of independent school governance, as demonstrated by the Archbishop asking him to Chair the School Council of another diocesan school, which was experiencing financial and governance difficulties. The Chairman was seen by senior Church clergy and executives and other senior people in the subfield of independent schools, for example by executives in the Independent Schools Association (Field notes) and Chairs of other independent schools, as an experienced and very capable Chairman and he was often consulted by other school governing bodies and the Church’s Schools Commission on governance matters (Interview #1, Executive Director Schools Commission).

The cultural and social capitals of the Chairman in the subfield of the School and the field of independent schools are simultaneously available to him in the field of business. Old boys and parents, many who are successful professionals or business people, valued the School and their connection with the School. They therefore recognized the role of Chairman as being one that occupied a dominant position in the subfield of the School. This recognized value, combined with the capitals held by the Chairman from his successful corporate career and continuing non-executive corporate roles, positioned the Chairman in a dominant position in the field of business.

The Deputy Chairman

Like the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman was a retired senior executive, although his executive career spanned several industry sectors. In addition to his role with the School, he also held non-executive roles in other organizations, including directorships and a senior role in a peak body for

governance. He held Bachelor's and Master's degrees in commerce and had deep general management experience.

The Deputy Chairman had a very long connection to the School. His family were primary producers and he and his father attended the School as boarders. His sons attended the School and he was hopeful that there would be a fourth generation of his family at the School in due course.

He was a similar age to the Chairman and was a considered, 'no nonsense', hard working and meticulous Councillor. As Chair of Council's Finance Committee he provided a level of oversight that Council relied heavily on. He identified governance and finance as areas of expertise and saw it as his role to take the lead on these matters in Council (Interview #1, p. 1). Councillor Y noted that the Deputy Chairman's 'serious unflappable style' contributed to his successful leadership of the Finance Committee (Field notes). All members of Council referenced the Deputy Chairman's deep expertise in finance and governance in their interviews.

The Deputy Chairman brought immense institutional knowledge of the School to Council ranging from matters of culture to School operations. He was modest about his skills and experience and his contributions to the School. He presented as someone with a deep commitment to and interest in the School. When asked to describe his role as Deputy Chairman of Council he said,

... the Deputy Chairman role is really not much at all ... the real thing is for me to take a lead on finance ... and governance, be part of the corporate knowledge and support the Chairman and the Headmaster. (Interview #1, p. 1)

He was also modest about the significance of other roles he held and did not self-promote, which was more likely a personal trait than a deliberate strategy.

Whilst he did not have the same gravitas as the Chairman, he was seen by many members of Council as a worthy and logical next Chairman of Council. However, he had steadfastly kept to his original intentions to retire from Council by the end of 2011. On his retirement he would have been a Council member for 11 years, the second longest serving member of the current Council.

A number of observations were made by Council members as to why the Deputy Chairman did not want to be the Chairman. These are well summed up in the words of the Chairman,

He is the right person to take over as Chairman, but he won't ... he doesn't want to do battle with the Church and I spend a lot of my role doing that. He won't do the things [with the Church] that you need to do ... he's just not in that space. (Interview #2, p.5; Interview #3, p.4)

Council would have embraced him as the next Chairman, there being an 'assumption that he would take over' (Councillor S, Interview #2, p. 1). He was seen as a safe pair of hands with the right

background (old boy, past parent, tenure on Council) and skill set (corporate executive and governance professional). However one Councillor, reflecting on the Deputy Chairman's decision to retire, described him as a 'solid and excellent deputy commander' (Field notes).

Councillor Y

Councillor Y had joined Council several years previously as the nominee of the Parents' and Friends' Association. He was also a past-president of the Parents' and Friends' Association and was a past and current parent of the School.

As the managing partner of a national professional services practice, Councillor Y was responsible for the performance, growth and well-being of an office in excess of 350 people. This position accorded him access to senior and influential leaders in business and government. He held tertiary qualifications in commerce and was a Fellow of several professional institutes.

He was not an old boy, however, chose to educate his sons at the School rather than his *alma mater* because it was a 'good all round school' that balanced the academic with personal development (Interview #1, p. 14). He observed that he was often asked to explain why his sons did not go to his old school because of a strong expectation that sons will be educated at their father's school.

Councillor Y was not a member of the Church, although a communicant member of another Christian faith. He readily acknowledged that not being an old boy and a member of the Church meant he could never be Chairman of Council. However, he thought this provided him with a level of independence to be a sounding board for the Chairman on succession planning.

He had extensive networks in the business and School community facilitated by his corporate role, former role with the Parents' and Friends' Association and his gregarious and confident manner. His strong finance skills and business acumen were seen as important attributes for Council.

Councillor D

Councillor D joined Council at the same time as Councillor Y. He was a medical practitioner and chief Executive Officer of a corporate health practice. He also had significant board experience in the nonprofit sector and described himself as being 'well connected' (Interview # 1, p. 2).

As an old boy, the brother of old boys', a boarder, a past parent, the son of an old boy who was a former member of Council, and a volunteer rowing coach, he had a close and deep connection with the School. These cultural capitals were what motivated the Chairman to approach Councillor D to join the Council. In the words of the Chairman,

When I asked [Councillor D] to come on I had really quite high expectations of his contribution and perhaps even his leadership going forward [a reference to the role of chairman] ... he has a very sharp mind, clear mind, clear thinking. He's passionate about the School; he's got a history

with his father being on School Council and he comes from a well known rural family.
(Interview #3, p. 5)

Because of these cultural capitals, Councillor D thought one of his roles on Council was to be a 'keeper ... to keep the code, the institutional fibre of the School' (Interview #1, p. 11 & 20).

However, the personal style of Councillor D, his *habitus*, had created some issues for the Chairman in the dynamics of the Council. Again in the words of the Chairman,

... you often get people who are significant contributors but in a way that doesn't sort of fit with the rest of the group and [Councillor D] has some off the wall suggestions at times when the rest of us aren't on that page ... he asks a question in three different sorts of formats as he's processing it and he talks too much about a subject. I like him but it's part of his make up, you can't change it. (Interview #3, p. 3, 4 & 13).

Another Councillor ascribed this 'difference' to Councillor D being a medical practitioner,

What I think about doctors is they operate quite differently from what you might say a business brain does and they have to, otherwise they wouldn't be very good doctors, plus he's generally a bit left field. (Interview #2, p. 10)

Councillor S described Councillor D as a 'good devil's advocate to make people think ... he thinks outside the box and asks uncomfortable questions and you need someone who asks uncomfortable questions' (Interview #2, p. 6).

The issue was exacerbated by a perception that Councillor D could not fully meet the time commitment of being a Councillor. He missed some Council and Committee meetings due to his executive commitments. Councillor D was aware of the views of his Council colleagues on his fit and contributions to Council through the evaluation process Council employed to assess their performance as a governing body. Although he had endeavoured to moderate his interactions at Council meetings, confirmed by several Councillors in interviews, his *habitus* continued to exert a strong influence on his behaviour.

Councillor S

A member of Council for three years, Councillor S was a former secondary school principal having held the role of principal in a State secondary school and two P -12 independent schools with the same religious affiliation as the School. During her education career she held executive positions with key professional associations and was a member of two advisory boards of University education faculties. Councillor S held a Bachelor's degree with honours and a Diploma in education. She was

an active member of the Church and although officially retired was engaged as a consultant by the Schools Commission on assignments concerning schools in the diocese.

Councillor S noted that not all members of Council were aware of the depth of her education experience and expertise. There was not an overt deferral by Councillors to her expertise on education matters and the Headmaster did not see a strong link between her education knowledge and experience and the educational challenges of the School. In the words of the Headmaster,

Councillor S has a very real part to play, but boys' education is boys' education and what is appropriate for a co-educational environment or a girls' school is not necessarily appropriate for a boys' school. So I think on Council we are bereft of in-depth knowledge [about education].

(Interview #2, p. 13)

Yet Councillor S observed that 'I know schools, how they operate ... and that's why I'm on Council, although they have avoided having a former principal on Council until now' (Interview #1, p. 18).

Councillor S thought she had a particular role on Council to keep abreast of educational trends and pedagogy –

I think it's really important because of my background and skills that I keep up to date with the complex applied stuff that relates to schools and that I maintain my knowledge of what is happening in schools and in education. (Interview #1, p. 26)

She held significant cultural capital in the form of her qualifications and deep experience, yet she had had limited success in effectively using this capital in the context of Council. Similarly, she held significant social capital within the field of the Church (that is, its hierarchy and the Schools Commission), yet this social capital had limited recognition in Council. Councillor S's contributions at Council meetings were thoughtful and relevant, yet her voice was not seen as strong. This was more evident when comparing the strategic use of this type of social capital by Councillor C within the Council and the School. The lack of recognition of the social and cultural capitals of Councillor S was due to a combination of factors, including her quiet demeanor, lack of self-promotion, relative short tenure on Council, the Headmaster's wariness of her educational expertise, and her absences from some Council meetings and School events. She also did not enjoy the overt support of the Chairman; perhaps in deference to the Headmaster's disquiet with having an educational expert on Council. The Chairman noted that he thought the Headmaster was 'fearful of the fact that she's got more detailed knowledge on some of the things Council considers than others have' (Interview #3, p. 11).

Underlying a number of these factors however was her gendered *habitus* in a field dominated by men. She presented as a softly spoken, modest person, who expressed views quietly. Her style was open, collaborative and embracing. She did not 'promote herself' and did not seek to leverage her

capitals for a dominant position in the field hierarchy. By contrast, most of the men Council members effectively and continually used their *habitus* to voice opinions, whilst promoting their expertise, experience and connections. For example, in one Council meeting, Councillor Y shared, on a confidential basis, his conversation with a senior bureaucrat on a critical educational issue, demonstrating his connections to key people in the field of school education and his knowledge on a topic important to the School (Field notes, Council meeting, May 2010). At another Council meeting, Councillor C shared with his Council colleagues that he had spoken to the Chairman of Eton for his views on a matter (Councillor C, Interview # 1, p. 24). Councillor S was under significant pressure from her husband to engage more fully in retirement, including extended vacations, and had advised Council she would retire at the expiry of her first term in 2011. Only serving one term on Council was not the norm and was considered as ‘less than ideal’ by the Chairman.

Councillor F

Councillor F had been a member of Council for four years and was in her second term. She was the first woman to be appointed to Council in over a decade⁴⁴, following a decision by Council to recruit a woman with business and educational knowledge. She held a Bachelor’s degree and Diploma in education and was a former primary school teacher. Her business skills were developed through owning and operating early childhood centres.

Councillor F was the only person on Council from a non English speaking background; being the daughter of post war migrants. She chaired the Education Committee of Council. Councillor F was considered an experienced Councillor, and her tenure and role as a Chair of a Committee positioned her as a senior member of Council.

As a past and current parent of the School, she believed she had ‘insights’ into the School’s functioning and had a role to ‘provide feedback to Council on what I am hearing around the School’ (Interview #1, p. 18). This accorded with observations of Councillor F in Council meetings, as her contributions to discussion were primarily concerned with student welfare issues and parent feedback.

Councillor F thought she had benefited from the strong support of the Chairman in assisting her to settle into her role as a Councillor and in her ongoing role as Chair of the Education Committee. Again, in the words of Councillor F,

During my first year the Chairman kept giving me feedback and kept saying, ‘don’t be frightened, you have what we want ... we really value what you have to say. And to his credit he would say in a meeting, so what do you think [Councillor F], where are you feeling in all of

⁴⁴ Two women held positions on Council sequentially for a period of 10 years during the 1980s.

this? ... and even though [my views were different] they would listen and they didn't dismiss my ideas or my thoughts. (Interview #1, p. 7)

Observations and discussions with the Chairman confirmed this support.

Councillor F was outwardly confident with other Council members and in Council meetings and presented as a friendly, warm and family orientated person; almost a 'mother figure'. Councillor F was described by a Council colleague as an 'entrepreneur, mother and very competent woman' (Councillor D, Interview # 1, p. 6). The cultural capitals that would have initially supported her position as a Councillor would have included her gender. As explained by Councillor F,

I was at a meeting at the School as a mother and the Chairman came to the meeting and gave a brief report about Council ... and said 'we are looking for a person to join Council who is female, have some business knowledge and some educational or school knowledge ... and my girlfriend said to me 'that's you!' and I said 'oh no, that's not me' ... anyway unbeknownst to me she suggested my name to the Chairman and it sort of snowballed from there ... and when I met the Chairman I said 'look I don't have the skills you need. I'm a Mum, yes I've been a teacher, but I was just a Mum ...and [after an interview and some further discussions with the Chairman] he said to me 'you've got to come and join us because we really think that you can, you know, give us what we need, that extra balance. We're a bit out of balance and we feel you can do that for us. (Interview #1, p. 6)

Councillor F's gender continued to shape her role on Council and position in the field. An example of this was evident in her description of circumstances in which the male members of Council looked to her, as a woman, for guidance. In her words,

A couple of times on Council where we have been dealing with a really, you know, a terrible issue ... and I know that's when the gentlemen really look to me and I appreciate that because that's when they look to this dimension that they don't always have and I'll be the one who'll ring the Headmaster and say, are we ringing those [families] daily, are we visiting them in hospital and have we put in place Ministers to visit the families. (Interview 31, p. 15)

Councillor F saw herself as possessing a form of 'feminine' cultural capital which advantaged her in Council in certain situations. She valued this form of capital highly and believed it was also valued by her Council colleagues.

Councillor R

Councillor R was the most recent appointment to Council and was the Archbishop's nominee; however he made it clear that even though a nominee he "does not have riding instructions from the Church". His motivation to join Council was external, reflecting the Archbishop's wish for him to take on this role in his capacity as a clerical member of the Church. He had a Bachelor's degree in

arts and postgraduate qualifications in theology and had responsibility for a parish approximately sixty kilometres from the School. Prior to his role as a member of the clergy, Councillor R had a management career as a lay person over a number of years, preceded by a period as a member of the clergy of a different orthodox Christian church.

He was educated in a single sex Christian school and understood the environment of a 'boys' school'. He had a depth of life experience and a deep faith commitment that equipped him well for the broad pastoral work required in a parish. Councillor R described himself as a 'generalist' and said he found the members of Council a 'bit over awing ... so impressive in their own fields' (Interview #1, p. 2). Yet he was aware his position as the Archbishop's nominee carried significant weight at Council. He viewed the School foremost as a 'Church School ... synonymous with the Church' and therefore supported the spiritual aspect of the School's educational offering as a critical element. As he becomes more familiar with the School and Council meetings, he has the opportunity to be the gatekeeper for the religious ethos of the School and ensure a strong connection between the School and the Church is maintained.

His social and cultural capitals were embodied in his *habitus* and gave him the confidence to 'hold his own' at Council meetings, despite his deprecating reference to himself as not being as well qualified as other Councillors. His lack of economic capital was offset by the strength of his other capitals to position him well in the field of Council and the fields of the School and the Church.

Councillor C

Councillor C was appointed in 2009 and is the nominee of the Old Boys' Association. He had tertiary qualifications in education and law, although his primary career had been in the law. He held board or committee positions with several prominent legal bodies and also held roles as a board member with other nonprofit organizations.

He was passionate about the School, and as an old boy, saw that he had a special place on Council. In this words,

Council must protect the essence of the school and this is done on the Council by those who are old boys ... [we] have a more of a feel because we went there ... and we bring that perspective to Council. (Interview #1, p. 16)

He also valued the connections he had with old boys as a means of providing opportunities to develop cultural and social capitals. Councillor C shared examples of how his connections with old boys had provided him roles on the boards of influential organizations.

Councillor C valued high levels of cultural and social capitals. In conversations with him, he carefully positioned himself relative to the most significant people in the relevant field. For example, in our first interview, Councillor C endeavoured to position himself at the upper end of the hierarchy in the legal field by the people he named as his friends and colleagues.

He was an active member of the Church and indicated he was able to speak at any time with the Archbishop and other senior Church leaders. He also had a formal role with the promotion and preservation of the Church's cathedral.

As a member of a profession, an old boy and an active Church member, Councillor C was a contender to be the next Chairman of Council, succession being planned for commencement of 2013. The Chairman had indicated that Councillor C 'ticks the right boxes' for candidacy, that is, 'well credentialed [old boy and member of a profession], highly passionate about the School and strong connections with the Church' (Interview #2, p. 6). Councillor C had made it known he wanted the role, and had started work to build support for his candidacy within the Church and the Old Boys' Association. His ambition had been observed with some concern within Council and it was possible he would not have unanimous support. These concerns related principally to whether Councillor C could step up as a leader and 'statesman'.

Headmaster

Headmaster for seven years, he had had a career in education in the public and private sectors and in single sex and co-educational environments spanning 30 years. He held tertiary qualifications with honours in education and was recognized as an expert in his subject area. He was educated in a public school and his children were educated in both the public and private systems. His son was an old boy of the School.

He was extroverted, confident and charming with a clear set of beliefs and standards and a sense of tradition. He exuded athleticism and vitality and presented as an excellent role model for the School's aspiration for their students, namely academic achievement, spiritual and personal growth and community service. In other words, his social and cultural capitals were closely aligned with the School.

As Headmaster he was a non-voting member of Council, which he accepted 'as a cultural curiosity of the School' and not of any practical benefit to his role as Headmaster. My observations of Council meetings revealed the Headmaster had a reporting relationship with Council, rather than as a member. This relationship placed him behind other Councillors in the hierarchy of the subfield of

Council; although in the field of the School he would be placed above all other Councillors, with the possible exception of the Chairman.

His leadership of the School placed him in a dominant position in the field of independent schools and he would be part of a small group comprising the principals of the other leading metropolitan independent schools. He had been supported by Council to further develop his cultural capitals, particularly in the area of leadership, for example his participation in programs offered by prestigious institutions. The Headmaster also had ready access to many people occupying dominant positions in other fields through the old boys' network as his position as Headmaster commanded respect within the alumni. He was a regular attendee at business events and saw it as part of his role to promote the School in the city's boardrooms.

Summary of Councillors' Skills and Council Diversity

Councillors' core technical skills developed from their professional or executive roles as described above are presented diagrammatically in Table 10.1. Council was comfortable with the balance in the mix of skills and capabilities required for effective governance of the School. Council thought it important for Councillors to 'know' the School; its history, culture, context and stakeholders. It appeared on initial observation that Council saw it as less important to have, as part of its mix of skills, a sound level of understanding of the world of education, of which the School is a part. As will be discussed in the following chapter, this initial impression was subsequently confirmed by ongoing observational and interview data. Council's attitude stemmed from their inability to effectively utilize existing educational expertise on Council, past difficulties Council had experienced with the interactions of Councillors with educational expertise and the Headmaster, and valuing more highly other skill sets for the governing task.

Table 10.1

Councillors by Core Skills

Name*	Board / Governance	Education	Finance	Clergical	Management	Legal	Commerce	Medical
Chairman	√		√		√		√	
Deputy Chairman	√		√		√		√	
Headmaster		√			√			
Councillor Y			√		√		√	
Councillor D	√						√	√
Councillor F		√					√	
Councillor S		√			√			
Councillor R				√	√			
Councillor C	√					√		

*The President is not shown as he did not attend Council meetings nor participate in the usual work of Council

Councillors' family connections to the School are summarized in Table 10.2. This highlights the significant family connections of the Deputy Headmaster and Councillor D, who were also from rural families and who boarded at the School.

Table 10.2

Councillors by Family Connection to the School

Name*	Old boy	Parent	Father / Grandfather Old boy	Family as former Councillors
Chairman	√	√		
Deputy Chairman	√	√	√	
Headmaster		√		
Councillor Y		√		
Councillor D	√	√	√	√
Councillor F		√		
Councillor S				
Councillor R				
Councillor C	√			

Diversity factors, such as gender, age and ancestry are presented diagrammatically in Table 10.3.

Table 10.3

Councillors by Diversity (Gender, Age and Ethnicity)

Name*	Men	Women	Age (under 50 yrs)	Ancestry*
Chairman	√			Australian
Deputy Chairman	√			Australian
Headmaster	√			New Zealander
Councillor Y	√		√	Australian
Councillor D	√			Australian
Councillor F		√		Eastern European
Councillor S		√		Australian
Councillor R	√			Australian
Councillor C	√			Australian

* The President is not shown as he did not attend Council meetings nor participate in the usual work of Council,

* Applying the Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG) 2nd Ed.

There was gender diversity in the composition of Council as a result of a deliberate strategy led by the Chairman to address the homogeneity of the previous Council. The Chairman observed that the previous Council were ‘all mates and in the retired space ... we had a group of seven blokes, seven good men and true’ (Interview #1, p. 3, Interview #2, p. 11 and Interview #3, p. 8). This social similarity meant ease of communication and trusting relationships. The Chairman, whilst still committed to building diversity on Council, observed that ‘Council is not as unified as it used to be ... although most people are on the same page’ (Interview #3, p. 8). The Chairman acknowledged that a more diverse Council had meant different and more complex dynamics in the group. Yet he encouraged the different voice of Councillor F as the first woman on Council in nearly 20 years, telling her ‘we really value what you have to say’ (Councillor F, Interview #1, p.7). In contrast, the gender of Councillor S had, in part, been a barrier to her contributing effectively in Council. Diversity in Council composition provided the opportunity for broader perspectives and enhanced responsiveness to emerging educational and social challenges. As explained by Councillor D,

The Chairman’s agenda has been to ensure an appropriate mix of experience, appropriate mix of gender, and an appropriate mix of knowledge and no knowledge about the School ... insiders and outsiders because he knows that the insiders are going to be polarized and biased in many ways ... (Interview #1, p. 1)

The normative literature suggests that increased board member diversity relates to organizational performance by providing boards with new insights and perspectives (Brown, 2005). A study by Siciliano (1996) found that boards with greater diversity in member backgrounds and gender

were able to keep the social agency purpose of the organization in the forefront. The study also found that diversity had no impact on operating efficiency or the board's ability to perform its control functions.

Most of the old boys on Council had been or were parents of students and so had had interaction with the School in an additional role which could moderate against an only old boy perspective; yet my observations were that these old boy Councillors predominantly identified as old boys. Conversations frequently turned to reminiscing about the 'old times'.

Council was aware that there was little age diversity in the group. Whilst an older age can provide broader and deeper experience and more developed networks, the absence of younger Council members may be a missed opportunity in terms of the future challenges facing the School. Introducing younger Councillors would challenge the culture of the group, as did the appointment of the women to Council.

Relative Positioning of Councillors in the Field of Council

The *habitus* and *capitals* of each Councillor influenced their position in the field of Council and their position relative to each other. Their positioning is represented diagrammatically and shown in Figure 10.1 and was determined from observational and interview data.

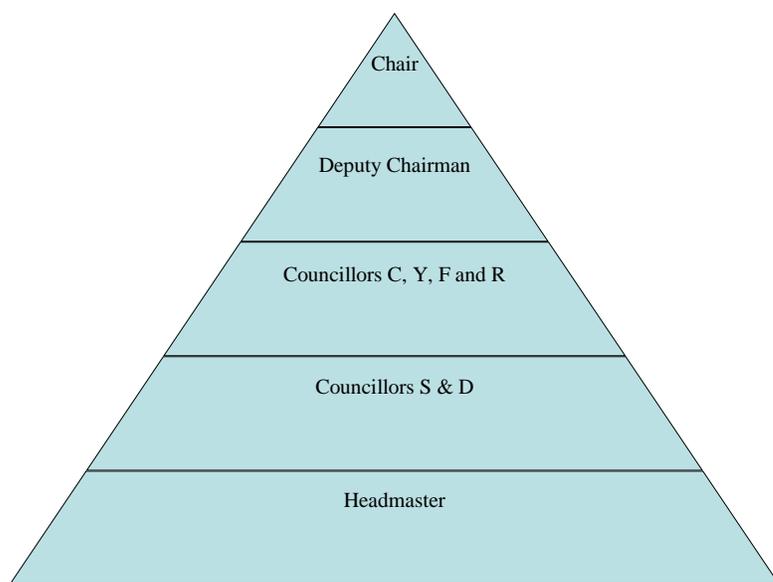


Figure 10.1. Diagram of Positioning of Councillors in the Field of Council

Not surprisingly the Chairman occupied the dominant position; however this was not just because he was the Chairman of Council. He was a former old boy and parent of the School and his

business skills, experience, manner and commitment to the School over many years ‘earned’ him this position which was readily accepted by other members of Council. The Deputy Chairman occupied the next most dominant position; the result of a combination of factors; namely his position, tenure on Council, his significant contributions to Council and his status as a member of a family with long and significant connections with the School. Councillor C had the opportunity to occupy a slightly more prominent position, primarily because he was emerging as a real contender for the role of Chairman, supported by his status as an old boy, support from the Old Boys’ Association and strong relationship with the Church. Councillors S and D were positioned a little behind Councillors R, Y and F. Being a Chair of a Council Committee offered improved positioning because of the responsibility of the role.

As is common with corporate boards, the Chairman determined who would be appointed to the different Committees and who would be the Chair. He also reviewed periodically the composition of the Committees to accommodate Council member retirements and appointments and provide an opportunity for all Councillors to participate in Committee work. It was usually a more ‘senior’ member of Council or those with particular functional expertise relevant to the work of the Committee who was chosen to be the Chair. The Committee Chair had an important leadership role that was highly valued by Council because the Committees were delegated responsibility by Council to carry out work that was critical to Council’s governance responsibilities. Committee Chairs were also recognized for their significantly higher workload in comparison to other Councillors. Councillor D’s capitals, principally his professional status and family connections with the School, could support a position in the hierarchy just below the Deputy Chairman; however his positioning was impacted by his *habitus*, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

The Headmaster was not seen by other Councillors as a ‘real’ member of Council; rather as the senior executive of the School who reported to Council and was therefore positioned at the lower end of the hierarchy. The formal structure of Council, discussed in Chapter 9, significantly contributed to this view, as the Headmaster was a non-voting member of Council. The Headmaster had a voice at Council meetings; however it was his role as Headmaster of the School that provided this, not his membership of Council. At formal School events the Headmaster was not acknowledged as a member of Council. For example, at the Cathedral service at the beginning of the School year, the Bishop called the members of Council forward to receive a blessing for their work on the governing body during the year. The Headmaster did not participate in this ritual, although he had a significant role in other aspects of the service. The Headmaster also did not participate in the annual performance review of Council. There was a formality and distance in the relationship between the voting members of

Council and the Headmaster. Notwithstanding the Headmaster's position on Council was *ex officio*, he could have leveraged his position as Headmaster and Chief Executive Officer to occupy a more dominant position in the field of Council. That he did not was principally a reflection of the strength of Council's view of its monitoring role. Council was there to hold the Headmaster to account. This perspective unified Council and they collectively 'pushed back' against any use by the Headmaster of his *habitus* and *capitals* to occupy a more dominant position in the field. This was reinforced by the experience of the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman in working with and 'managing' Chief Executive Officers in other organizational contexts. Council, through the leadership of the Chairman, was also involved to a greater level in areas that might otherwise be designated the province of the Headmaster, on the basis of supporting the Headmaster and managing risk. Although the Headmaster had expressed some frustration with Council's 'hands on' approach, he accepted the model and had modified his approach to Council to accommodate the way Council wished to function.

As discussed above, within the field of the School, the Headmaster and the Chairman occupied the dominant positions. Other members of Council ranked in the hierarchy differently for different stakeholder groups. For example, the nominee of the Old Boys' Association was viewed within the Association as a more important member of Council than some other Councillors. In the same way Councillors who were parents occupied a more dominant position than say Councillor S who had no connection to the School prior to joining Council. The Headmaster occupied the most dominant position with reference to students, parents and staff.

It could be expected that the positioning of Councillors would change in the field of the Church depending on whether they were a communicant member and the formal roles they held within the Church. For example, the Chairman and the Headmaster were members of the Church's governing body which would elevate them in the field.

Conclusion

The data from the interviews, observations and documents revealed each Councillor's *habitus* and *capitals* and their positioning in the field of Council. Family connections to the School, both current and historical, were a form of social capital highly valued in Council. Family connections included being an old boy (particularly a boarder), the son of an old boy and/or a parent of the School. Cultural capital in the form of recognized standing in business or a profession was also valued. Gendered dimensions of *capital*, *habitus* and *field* were evident from the data. The field was dominated by men and subtle rules in demeanour and communication applied. Councillor S was disadvantaged by her gendered *habitus* and lack of social capital in the form of a family connection to

the School. Her cultural capitals, particularly her educational expertise, were not valued as highly as the business expertise held by several Councillors, and were diminished in value by past tensions between the Headmaster and former Councillors, who were educators. In contrast, Councillor F had leveraged a form of feminine cultural capital to position herself on Council as someone Council needed, because as a woman she had a disposition and knowledge that was important to the governing task, particularly on issues concerning student, staff and parent wellbeing.

How each Councillor approached the governance task was influenced by their *habitus, capitals* and positioning in the field. There was a complementarity between position, positioning and disposition (*habitus*). The data also revealed that Councillors' *habitus* and the effect of field positioning was moderated during their interactions with each other in Council and with stakeholders by cultural norms and governance processes that informed and guided decision making, communication and behaviours. Councillors' logic of practice and the moderating influence of norms and protocols will be explored in following chapters.

interacted with Council in the field of the School. Some of these stakeholders also held positions in other fields which would bring them into contact with Councillors who also occupied positions in those fields. As Councillors (except the Headmaster) were unpaid and part time, their role in the field of the School was not their dominant role; although for the Chairman it comprised approximately fifty percent of his 'workload'. Councillors and stakeholders were socialized by their roles in other fields which influenced their interactions with each other in the field of the School. The overlapping circles of Council and the Headmaster represent the Headmaster in the dual roles as a member of Council and as the Headmaster reporting to Council.

Each of the stakeholder groups not only had a relationship with Council. They had connections with many of the other stakeholder groups and their interactions had the potential to impact the School and Council. For example, a parent could seek to involve the Archbishop, so as to influence a decision by the School concerning his or her son.

Within each stakeholder group there were sub-groups with nuanced differences in how they viewed their relationship with the School and each sub-group had the potential to view an issue differently. For example, within the Church there were relationships with the Archbishop, with diocesan Bishops, with the Church's governing body upon which the School is represented, with the Schools Commission, with the Church's financial services body, and with the parishes. A healthy relationship required a demonstrated understanding of the differences between the sub-groups. Several key stakeholder groups had a special connection with Council through nominee positions on Council, which is explored further in this chapter.

Management of Stakeholder Relations

Other nonprofit organizations have multiple stakeholders; however, management of stakeholder relationships for independent schools, such as the School, has significant complexity because these organizations are entrusted with the care and education of children of predominantly well educated parents paying significant fees and expecting high standards, not only in academic and co-curricular outcomes, but also in the way the school communicates with them. The School was also reliant on its brand and reputation to attract and retain students and staff and to attract and maintain the goodwill of donors and the community. In the words of the Headmaster,

This is a complex organization ... part of its complexity comes from its diversity of stakeholders and their involvement and their genuine interest and their constant critique on how the School's going. (Interview #1, p. 4)

On this issue of complexity the Council Secretary observed,

You are balancing relationships all the time, having to try to and negotiate acceptable outcomes to people. Nothing is simple. We can't just bounce in saying we're doing X and Y. Almost invariably there's some level of consultation that has got to go on all the time in negotiating acceptable outcomes. (Interview #1, p 1)

How well Council and the School's executive responded to and balanced these dynamic relationships was seen by Council as a critical success factor for the School. This approach is supported by contemporary theory and empirical studies that show that effective stakeholder management is critical to an organization's success (Clarke, 1998; Schein, 2010; Balser & McClusky, 2005). Effective stakeholder engagement is characterized by a consistent thematic approach. Understanding and responding to stakeholder expectations demonstrates an organization's responsiveness, a factor that has been identified for organizational effectiveness (Balser & McClusky, 2005).

Effective management required continuing thoughtful engagement by Council, and in particular by the Headmaster and the Chairman as they attended numerous formal and informal occasions with stakeholder groups. As noted by the Council Secretary,

What is reasonably successful here is that, although time consuming, most people do have a mindset that, no matter what they are doing, [they think] who is this going to impact on, who do I need to talk to, who do I need to make sure they know what's happening or they're on board or whatever, so that there is an automatic process and the Council has [this mindset] and consider this issues before taking decisions. (Interview #1, p. 1)

In the interviews with Councillors the importance of stakeholder relationships for the School was confirmed. In the words of one Councillor –

The views of key stakeholders, such as the Church, parents and staff, are important ... they are all determinative influences on the Council. (Councillor C, Interview #1, p. 23)

Council and the executives' perspective of stakeholders reflect elements of stakeholder theory, which posits that stakeholders have some legitimate interest in the organization, which should be considered in making decisions concerning the organization's direction and operations (Blair, 1995).

Council's commitment to meaningful engagement with all stakeholders was embedded in the culture of Council. Council recognized the legitimate role of stakeholders in the School and embraced them as an important part of School life. Council appreciated that drawing upon the social capital of the groups in their community strengthened the School as an institution as a learning environment. For example, the knowledge and influence of old boys could connect the School into key networks (institutional strengthening) and the support of the parents in co-curricular activities could build the

learning community (learning environment strengthening). Council had set itself a threefold role in stakeholder management. Firstly, Council had set the principles for stakeholder engagement.

Council's Code of Conduct and Ethics confirmed a standard for stakeholder relationships, namely:

- stakeholders were important;
- stakeholder interactions with the School were valued;
- the School would be open in their communications with stakeholders and transparent in their approach to issues with stakeholders; and
- stakeholder views and contributions were welcomed and would be heard.

I observed support for this standard in the conversations and decisions taken at Council meetings. For example, at Council's strategic planning day, although Council and senior executives thought the current strategic plan for the School was still 'right', there was consensus 'to test key aspects with stakeholders and keep an open mind as to what will come from that' (Field notes, August 2010). Another example was the manner in which Council dealt with stakeholder concerns. During the year of data collection, the Chairman received a written complaint from a parent about the awarding of 'colours'⁴⁵ for sporting achievement. The complaint was acknowledged as being an important issue; there was in-depth discussion with the Headmaster about the issue at a Council meeting with a view to addressing the parent's concerns, as well as ensuring the School's policy was both fair and clear in the criteria for the awarding of colours. A course of action was agreed and the Chairman undertook to respond directly to the parents.

The standard was operationalized by the Headmaster and staff members through policies and plans for communication and liaison with stakeholders and allocation of responsibilities to members of staff. There were several formal communication channels with key stakeholders, including the School's website with dedicated portals for students, staff, parents and old boys. The website clearly enunciated the tenets of the School and was supported by a message from the Headmaster, enrolment information, staff vacancies, photos of happy students and accompanying text, and a dedicated section on governance, which explained the role of Council, identified Councillors and published key policies. There was a quarterly School magazine, the aim of which was 'to connect with the [School] family as a whole, showcasing the School, its students, its alumni, parents and supporters' (Editor, 2011). All School communications were branded with the School name, logo and colours and formal invitations were professionally presented.

⁴⁵ A system of recognition of achievement for sporting excellence.

The second role of Council in stakeholder management was being visible to stakeholders and engaging with them as members of Council. I observed many examples of Councillors' engagement with stakeholders, from the formal participation by Council in key School events such as Speech Day, where Council sat on the stage and the Chairman addressed the School community, through to Councillors attending some staff social events and chatting with parents on the sideline of the First XV rugby match on a Saturday afternoon. As explained by Councillor S,

The Council is highly visible, they put themselves out there so that they are not some faceless group of people who are putting restrictions on what the parents want to do or P&F want to do, so they're accessible, they make themselves accessible. (Interview #1, p. 26)

It was expected that visibility and accessibility would not undermine the Headmaster's leadership of the School. Councillor D noted that being visible should not 'emasculate the Headmaster so that people would say, 'you don't know anything pal, we're going to go and tell the Chairman and he will sort it'' (Interview #1, p. 17).

All Councillors commented on the importance of being connected to the School community. The Deputy Chairman observed that,

It's a matter of being around the School. It's another reason to go to [School] events and listen to what people say ... and one of the reasons I feel my effectiveness is diminishing is that I know fewer and fewer parents now directly because all the ones I knew are gone. (Interview #1, p. 10)

This view was similarly expressed by Councillor Y,

As a Council member, if I was not a parent, I would not just be at official events where we are sitting on a stage ... I'd be at the rugby where parents come and talk to you generally, and where you see people who have a bit of a whinge about something or tell you how great something is ... and one of the great strengths about [the School] is that there are lots of those events, like ANZAC Day where after the ceremony you grab your morning tea and everybody's talking. In other words, for those Council members who don't have children at the School, which is most of them, there's plenty of events and activities where they get to interact. (Interview # 1, p. 7)

Councillor S referred to participating in School events as providing an opportunity for the 'intuitive collection of data' (Interview #1, p. 26).

The third role of Council in stakeholder management was the monitoring of the outcomes of stakeholder communication through formal and informal feedback mechanisms. This enabled Council to be responsive to stakeholders, although this required Council to interpret and, on occasion, moderate

the expectations of stakeholders so as to maintain the internal stability of the School. Formal mechanisms included actions such as the review at a Council meeting of the student and parent survey results and informal mechanisms such as comments made by Councillors during Council meetings on their observations from attending School or community related events and feedback from stakeholders. The Deputy Headmasters attended and participated in Council meetings, recognizing and valuing the staff perspective as well as providing the Deputy Headmasters a professional development opportunity. The School had a formal grievance policy published on the School's website to provide a process for the timely, transparent, fair and impartial resolution of grievances of staff, students and parents. Council had a role as a final appeals body and to monitor the effectiveness of the policy. The Headmaster and some members of Council had formal roles in external bodies, including school education and sporting associations, which provided another mechanism for feedback on the School and stakeholder engagement. Council was very aware of the role of the media as a disseminator of information about the School to key stakeholders and the broader community. The School had experienced negative media in the past, which had required intensive and strategic communication with stakeholders in response. The Headmaster thought that having Councillors who were well connected and respected in the broader community was an important way to manage the risk of the media presenting biased coverage on the School. He observed,

People need to hear a little bit more of the truth than what the media's got to say. Board members can do that somehow. (Interview #2, p. 4)

We need on Council people with credibility, who are networking, who are out there, people who talk about their experience on the School Council and give the School a profile. (Interview #1, p. 12)

Council's approach to stakeholder management appeared at first glance as an 'operational' type of involvement in the School's functioning; however, Council believed the conversations at Council meetings on stakeholder matters were critical, as it was through these discussions that principles and attitudes to stakeholders were articulated, refined and embedded into the culture of the School.

Councillor D explained it this way,

Sometimes the debating that we have [about stakeholder issues] is about the most finicky details ... but we've got to weigh up these things. (Interview #1, p. 10)

Council, with support from the executive, involved stakeholders, through the use of focus groups, in the ongoing development and review of the School's strategic plan. As noted by one of the Deputy Headmasters,

We try to serve our parents, we don't exclude them and we should therefore get parental input into the strategic planning process. (Field notes, July Council Meeting)

Councillor S explained the benefits,

It's the issue of how you do your strategic planning and it's the process which is just as important as the outcomes of the plan and the goals. It's the process of building community ... building togetherness and ownership and belonging. (Interview #1, p. 29)

In liaising with stakeholders the Chairman stressed to Councillors that they should be very careful in how they expressed opinions and views as stakeholders could assume that the opinion or view represented the School's view on the issue. In the words of Councillor D,

The Chairman made it clear when I was inducted that as a Council member I should never give advice to a stakeholder where the stakeholder will think you are representing the Council and therefore the School's governance. (Councillor D, Interview #1, p 4)

Council was also aware that stakeholders could present a view on an issue as a statement of fact and that other perspectives and sources of information were often required to provide a complete picture. Sophistication in communication between a Councillor and a stakeholder was required, so that the Councillor was able to listen and understand without being drawn into offering personal opinions or statements on school matters without 'all the facts'.

Several Councillors spoke of the recent loss of friendships with people who were parents of students expelled from the School (including a parent holding a significant role in the School community). The parents thought their 'friends on Council' should have supported them; however, Council supported the Headmaster's expulsion decision. The significant cultural and social capitals held by the parents did not moderate the decisions taken by the Headmaster and Council; the 'standards' and reputation of the School were dominant. The whole School would have observed Council's support for the action taken by the Headmaster. Council sanctioned the sanctions imposed to preserve expectations of student behaviour. The Chairman, aware that membership of Council could create a conflict with existing relationships, specifically dealt with this issue in new Council member inductions.

There was a sense within Council that some stakeholder groups, particularly the parents, did not fully understand the role of Council in the governance of the School, despite information on Council appearing on the website and in the School publications and visibility of Council at School events. In the words of Councillor C,

I think some of the stakeholders don't necessarily understand the purpose and the role of the Council, and I don't think some of them know we existed. The parents I don't think, to be honest, understand. (Interview #1 p.7)

The Deputy Chairman observed that parents knew Council was there if they had a complaint about the School. He commented,

When everything is going well, everyone's happy and everyone will give the credit to the Headmaster and probably the board [Council] is this amorphous thing and when things are not going so well the board will be the one in the firing line. (Interview #1, p. 6)

Councillors thought that this could have been a function of the level of interest in governance, rather than a reflection on Council's efforts to connect and communicate. They also thought that an understanding of the detail of Council's work may not be as important to parents as a sense that the School was running well.

In discussions on this issue, Council concluded that they should continue with their current approach; namely to set the principles for stakeholder engagement, be visible in the School and external community and monitor the effectiveness of communication channels and processes. Council's approach to stakeholder engagement is supported by research by Balsler and McCluskey (2005) which found that understanding and responding to stakeholder expectations demonstrated an organization's responsiveness, a factor that was identified for organizational effectiveness.

Each School Council member of the 'like' schools who participated in the Stage 2 interviews commented on the complexity of stakeholder relations and that this was the most difficult aspect of governing their school. Each of these participants identified effective communication with stakeholders as a continuing area of focus for their governing body.

Accountability to stakeholders

Accountability was a central feature of Council's governing role; Council viewed itself as 'accountable' for the authority it had been conferred to govern the School. Effective accountability, firstly, required Council to know to whom they were responsible and for what aspects of its work as a governing body (Farrell & Law, 1999). Secondly, there needed to be a clear understanding of what was required for the process of accountability; namely Council providing meaningful information and the evaluation of that information by the person or entity receiving it (Stewart, 1984). Complexity in accountability is increased when there are multiple actions and multiple parties involved, as in the case of the School. Council also saw itself as the entity to hold the Headmaster, who is delegated authority, under a constitution, to account for the day to day management of the School. Importantly, members of Council believed they were also accountable as individuals and did not hide behind the cultural

construct of Council. Council and Councillors had each developed a range of formal and informal mechanisms to provide and seek information from those to whom they perceived themselves accountable; namely, 'internal' stakeholders comprising the Church, students, parents, staff, and old boys. In the words of Councillor R,

We have got to be there for the Church as owner of the School, for the parents who've spent a lot of money to send their boys here and the boys themselves and the staff ... they need to know that things are in place to make sure the place runs properly and that there's accountability and transparency. (Interview #1, p. 3)

In the following sections, the internal stakeholder groups to whom Council sees itself as accountable and the process for that accountability will be explored in further detail. Some brief discussion on government, the Foundation and the media will follow.

The Church

The School's relationship with the Church was multi-faceted because of the many inter-related dimensions that constituted the assembly of the Church. The Church, as a body corporate, was the owner of the School and employer of the School's staff. The School participated in the governance of the Church, through membership of the Church's governing body, synod, represented by the Chairman and the Headmaster. Through synod, canons were issued that conferred on Council authority to govern the School. An organizational unit of the Church, established as a financial services provider, provided the finance for the School's capital works program and invested any surplus cash. A different organizational unit, a Ministry Commission, provided the religious education curriculum for the School. A separate Schools Commission oversaw all diocesan schools and was chaired by the diocesan Bishop. The Schools Commission, in particular its Executive Director, liaised with Council and the senior executive of the School in relation to monitoring of the School's activities and financial performance. The diocesan Bishop also had responsibility for the spiritual relationship between the School and its students and was instrumental in the appointment of the School's chaplains. As discussed in Chapter 9, the Archbishop, as the President of Council, had the opportunity to be an active participant in the School's governance through attendance at Council meetings and participation in all Council decisions and deliberations. The School was also active in the broader ministry and life of the Church through student and staff participation in service and fund raising activities for different ministries of the Church, through religious ceremonies held in the School's chapel and through activities with other Church schools and local parishes. The relationship with each sub-group required management almost as a separate relationship while recognizing the close connections between the

sub-groups. This was because each sub-group potentially could view a particular issue through a slightly different lens, for example appointments to Council where the Archbishop and the ASC both played important roles, but whose thinking might be informed by nuanced differences in their understanding of a Councillor's role.

Council had direct and close engagement with the Church at many levels of the School's relationship; all of which influenced the functioning of Council. Council had a clear understanding of its accountability to the Church as the owner of the School; although Council's preference was that accountability was outcomes focused rather than what Council perceived as a growing 'operational' approach from the Church. Council considered that its accountability to the Church, as the owner of the School, required continual demonstration that the School was committed to the principles of a Christian education, notwithstanding its increasingly secular student population, was financially sound, and well run with good systems and processes. This was particularly important for the School because within the Church the School was seen as synonymous with the Church. As explained by Councillor Y, 'the School is the Church's flagship school' (Interview #2, p. 7). Council provided requested and additional information on a continual basis to different administrative parts of the Church and had regular dialogue about the School and the Church's requirements in relation to the School.

Members of Council, and in particular the Chairman and the Headmaster, participated in key events and forums in the life of the Church. The Bishop and Executive Director of the Schools Commission attended part of one Council meeting per year to discuss the Church's ministry within the School and the relationship between the School and the Schools Commission. The School's Chaplain also attended this part of the meeting. A report, prepared by the School Chaplain on how the School was implementing the Church's mission, had been sent, prior to the meeting, to the Bishop. The Bishop asked questions of the School Chaplain and the Headmaster with the focus on the number of religious education classes, the qualifications of religious education staff and student opportunity to attend chapel services. The Bishop stressed it was important that students were learning the 'basics of the faith' as he was concerned with 'the decreasing faith literacy in the community (Field notes, Council meeting). He challenged the School to increase the number of formal religious education classes in the timetable. The Headmaster responded by saying that the School took a 'holistic approach, incorporating Christian values in all the School's activities which was true to the Church and to the mission', and that the timetable was already under significant pressure to accommodate the curriculum and co-curricular and pastoral care activities. He also said it was more important to 'live by example than have a qualification in theology'. There was also discussion on reporting requirements to

the Schools Commission and proposed Commission initiatives concerning diocesan schools. The Chairman described the sum of these initiatives as a 'one size fits all model' and expressed concern that this approach 'may not allow the School to apply the mission of the Church within its own culture, ethos and business model'. There was some considerable tension in the room during these discussions. The guests shared a meal with Council after the formal dialogue, during which the tension eased, and views and insights on the issues facing the Church and the School were shared in an easy manner. At the conclusion of the meal, the Bishop and Director of the Schools Commission left the meeting with the Bishop thanking Council for the 'robust discussion and honest sharing of views'.

Participation by Council members in the life of the Church and opportunities for discussion contributed to building and maintaining a sound relationship between the School and the Church as a key stakeholder. The current positive relationship between Council and the Church was the product of a deliberate and continued focus from Council, through the leadership of the Chairman, in participating in the life of the Church, educating the Church on the School's operations and responding comprehensively to numerous requests for information, explanations and adherence to Church policy. My observation of the dialogue at this meeting was an appreciation on the part of Council of what was expected of them from the Church; that is, they were responsible for ensuring the Church's mission was implemented in the School and the School was to be an active participant in the life of the Church, including its governance. Yet Council also considered that they, as the governing body, could and should interpret that mission so as to preserve and enhance the institution of the School and their understanding of its ethos.

The ethos of the School, although founded in Christian principles, was expressed in a contemporary sense as values rather than religiosity, as noted by the Headmaster in responding to the Bishop during the Council meeting discussions. Councillor D described it in this way,

All the kneeling and praying is not the heart and soul of the School. The heart and soul of the School is that we are fair minded people ... fairly and well and reasonably running the School and focused on turning out good boys and that stuff happens without someone in a cloak throwing holy water around you. (Interview #1, p. 16 / 17 and Interview #2, p.3)

In this respect Council saw their duty was to act in the best interests of the School, which incorporated many stakeholders, as distinct to only the interests of the Church, as owner. Council viewed itself as 'guardians' of the School, which incorporated a broader worldview than just the Church, as the School was positioned in several fields. Council's perspective was an important part of its culture and will be explored further in Chapter 12.

Most Councillors took a pragmatic view of the Church as the ‘owner’ of the School. As described by Councillor Y,

You know you might find the Church a pain but the fact is it’s a Church school, the Church owns the school, the Church started the school, the Church it is. You know it’s sort of like saying I don’t like my Mum, what can I do about it? So you live with it. (Interview # 1, p. 5)

There was, however, a level of frustration within Council about the Church’s methods for oversight of the School, principally because the Church was not seen as having the business or educational acumen to be ‘managing’ the School’s operations. The corporatist influence from secular society was strong within Council and was ‘at odds’ with the Church way of doing things.

As the Headmaster explained,

Churchmen do not understand schools ... or the world of business, they are almost unworldly. You can submit something for their action and you will not hear anything for months and months and months. Now in the corporate world, in schools, that is untenable. (Interview # 2, p. 9)

The Headmaster’s comment is insightful as it indicated he saw the School positioned in the field of commerce as well as the field of school education and field of religion. The School provided educational services for which parents paid and ‘if you don’t give them exactly what they want they’ll get it elsewhere ... because they’re not committed to the whole concept of [Name of Church] or Christian’ (Councillor F, Interview #1, p. 16). The demands of a secular clientele cannot be readily accommodated within the Church way of doing things. Discussions and decisions within Council were framed by several fields, not only the field of religion, where everything was ‘measured against the mission of the Church’ (Chairman, Interview #1, p. 7).

The Chairman observed that the Church, in seeking to advance its mission, endeavoured to fill all significant non-clerical roles with ‘Church people’. This often resulted in small candidate fields, significant delays in filling appointments and a less than optimal result in the quality of appointments. He noted that ‘the Church wants people in these roles to have the faith, but the candidates are just not there’. (Field notes). The Chairman argued there was benefit to the Church in having people within the organization with the skills and experience to operate across fields, given many arms of the Church are required to do so, as in the case of the diocesan schools.

In relation to the Schools Commission, which was the principal body within the Church for oversight of the School’s governance, the Chairman said he had worked hard,

... to try to find a mechanism where we can co-exist, but still maintain good governance, and I think we’ve won the battle that they now recognize that if they are going to appoint councils to

govern schools they've got to let them get on with it. What they've got to do is provide guidelines so that we know what it is they expect of us and how we can operate. That way we can make a decision whether we want to be here or not. (Interview #1, p. 7)

This view was supported by the Deputy Chairman who advocated an approach where 'we say to the Church, you set some parameters and leave us alone as long as we stay within those parameters' (Interview #1, p. 9). The Deputy Chairman believed the relationship between the School and the Schools Commission had improved because 'we've got a proven track record and they now look to us for guidance and assistance' (Interview #1 p. 11). The Headmaster thought that the Chairman had played a significant role, bringing his *habitus* and *capitals* to the solution of this dilemma. He noted,

The Chairman has been beavering away at the governance level ... and he has been very successful because of his style he has gained a lot of respect, he is not aggressive or confrontational ... and they have seen the wisdom of his ways and his ways are consistent with what you'd expect of a publicly listed company or a very notable nonprofit. (Interview #1, p. 5)

Attribution of value to the Chairman's capitals from the field of commerce, particularly corporate governance skills, within the field of the Church, and particularly within the Schools Commission, had taken time and had been aided by the growing influence of 'good governance' principles and practices from the corporate sphere upon the fields of nonprofit and school education. The Executive Director of the Schools Commission referred to the School as an exemplar school in terms of their governance standards and processes. He observed,

[The School] is easily our greatest asset ... big and independent and very much a business operation where the Council is in control ... and effectively exercising the authority delegated to them by the Church. (Interview #1, p. 2)

He noted that the Schools Commission had engaged the Chairman in a consulting capacity to assist several diocesan schools with their governance arrangements (Interview #1, p. 2). He also considered the relationship between the Schools Commission and the School had been strengthened because,

The Chairman has led the Council in a positional change into acknowledging the ownership of the School by the Church ... He has also been very involved in the Commission establishing and implementing monitoring systems for the schools. Some say that's because he wants to structure the outcomes, but at least we are now getting outcomes that have some meat and that can assess the right things from the Church's perspective. (Interview #1, p. 2 & 3)

These comments from the Schools Commission reflected the difficulties in achieving clarity of an evaluation framework which the Church could apply to hold Council to account. As observed

earlier, the Church's interface with the School was multi faceted and each element had a focus that created complexity in designing and applying an evaluation framework.

One aspect of the Church's relationship with the School that had created difficulties for Council had been the Archbishop's willingness to hear and investigate complaints about the School from stakeholders, particularly parents. The Executive Director of the Schools Commission explained that the Archbishop,

... will allow people that feel aggrieved by decisions of Church schools to take their grievance to him. He wants them to follow due process in that they must exhaust their opportunity at the school and at the governing body, but at the end of the day if they still feel aggrieved he allows them to come to him. (Interview #1, p. 5)

The Executive Director noted that although the schools had the Archbishop's support, he wanted to ensure they were administering a fair process. He also noted that the Archbishop had not, to date, overturned a decision of any of the schools. The Deputy Chairman pointed out that in the last two cases involving a complaint against the School a lengthy and costly investigation process was initiated by the Archbishop in response. He was however hopeful that with the School's clear and detailed grievance policy, a simpler and more timely process could be adopted by the Archbishop in the future. Councillor Y thought that,

In my view, not the official view, the Archbishop has caused the Schools cost, hassle, delay and frustration and in the end, yes he hasn't overturned the School and so on that basis ... why doesn't he just leave the School to do its thing. (Interview #2, p. 6)

Notwithstanding the points of tension in the School's relationship with the Church, Council was cognizant that they operated with a greater level of autonomy from the Church than other diocesan schools, because of their history, size, success, sound governance framework and the strategic management of the relationship by Council. Councillor F also thought a more positive relationship had evolved with the Church since the 'Archbishop's sons have attended the School as this gave him and his wife a real insight into what was going on at the School' (Interview # 1, p. 29).

Church schools may, in the future, have the opportunity to develop a greater prominence in the life of the Church. Participation in parishes is declining and the Church is faced with envisaging a different structural model for the future. The Headmaster strongly believed that the 'future of the Church lies with the schools because we have a captive mission; we've got a captive audience and a wonderful message' (Interview #2, p. 9). The Executive Director of the Schools Commission also saw a growing role for the schools within the Church,

I think the whole concept of ‘church’ needs to be explored by the schools collectively with the Church ... It’s only been in the last couple of years that I have heard people in powerful positions in the Church talk about allowing schools to mature and develop as faith communities, and faith communities are their traditional concept of the parish community. (Interview #1, p. 7)

Councillor Y saw the Church as having come to a realization that a principal mechanism for the Church to influence the community is through the Church schools (Interview #2, p. 7). Yet the School community is predominantly a secular one; a community which privileges academic attainment, quality of teaching staff, co-curricular opportunities, facilities and networks over religious education. A closer integration of schools within the Church community therefore has the potential to create further tensions. For example, the Church, in pursuit of its mission, could require the School to increase the time allocated to religious education and chapel activities, which would, unless the school day was extended, be at the expense of time for academic and co-curricular pursuits. Parents, as clients, may not support such an initiative. One could also envisage a situation where the Church, in the management of its community as a whole, looked to financially secure schools to cross subsidize other parts of the Church community. Given the small percentage of students attending the School that had an affiliation to the Church, the issue of whether parents, as fee payers for an educational service, should contribute financially to other Church activities is problematic.

Interestingly, many of the issues for Council in managing its relationship with the Church were the same as they were fifty years ago when the then Council wrote to the Archbishop in some frustration saying,

Much effort and service has been contributed in many ways by councillors over the years, their sole purpose being to strengthen and develop the school. This effort and service, it is strongly contended, were made because of the school’s purpose and character and not as an adjunct of [the Church]. At the same time it has always been recognized that the School and its property were vested in [the Church] and that in the ultimate the Council was responsible to [the Church]. This situation is largely analogous to that of a Board of Directors of a public company and its shareholders particularly as the aspect of religious teaching as against the administration can, we submit, safely be left in the hands of the Archbishop ...

Particularly pertinent is the view held by members of the School Council that the administration of the School is now in itself a task of no mean order and that apart from the academic and religious side it must be administered largely as a business. In this regard there are members of the Council who have had great experience in business administration and only through an appreciation of the desire for harmony in a body such as a School Council and out of respect for the late Archbishop has outright criticism of this internal development in the latter years been avoided ... If the School Council is to be but an advisory body with no real function

or authority then it is gravely unlikely that a Council comprised of members with a real and lasting stake in the School and its purpose and progress can be secured. (School History, 1986)

Students

Students were an obvious and critical stakeholder group (and linked closely as a stakeholder group to their parents). Council believed they were accountable to the students for their educational journey with the School. As explained by Councillor F,

We are there for the boys and to make the boys' journey the best, the safest, the most enjoyable. (Interview #1, p. 27)

Council entrusted the Headmaster and his staff with this journey on a day to day basis; however sought regular comprehensive information about students from the Headmaster and guided the School's approach to student achievement, development and well being through consideration and approval of policies and monitoring progress and issues across the School's academic, co-curricular, pastoral care and service programs.

There was a sophisticated communication program within the School supported by advanced technology to keep students apprised of their progress, offerings for their development within the School, and availability of facilities and support mechanisms. The School also surveyed students at different points in their time with the School about their experiences. Surveys of graduating students revealed high levels of satisfaction with the School's academic, co-curricular and pastoral care programs and facilities and low to moderate levels of satisfaction with the religious education program and emphasis on Christian faith (Documents).

Council had little direct communication with students; contact was primarily at a distance, such as when Council attended, in a formal role, School events. Communications from Council were primarily directed to the parents. Councillors had some contact with the senior student leadership group; again usually at formal School events. Those members of Council who were parents or who knew families of the School through friendship groups had the opportunity for some informal contact with students.

The School's emerging strategy to further develop the concept of individualized learning had significant implications for the School's interaction with students as a stakeholder group and would require thoughtful consideration by Council.

The Old Boys' Association reached out to students immediately following their graduation, to keep them close to the School so their future endeavours would be linked to and reinforce the 'success' of the School.

Parents

Council was acutely aware they were accountable to parents for their sons' education and well being. There had been an obvious shift in how parents were perceived by the School (and other schools) over the last decade or so. As explained by the Chairman,

Twenty years ago if anything was wrong my parents would have no thought of going to the school and complaining, they would accept the school's position one hundred percent. If you went home and said you got into trouble you'd get into more trouble at home because you got into trouble at school ... today a kid goes home and makes a complaint and the parents are straight on an email or into the school and complaining so I think what has happened is a changed level of parental involvement in [their child's education] and that requires a different way of dealing with parents. They are now customers, they're now clients and they weren't viewed that way 20 years ago. You know, then you sent your kids to school and the school picked up the kid and did what they did with the kid and they didn't see the parent as a customer at all. (Interview #2, p. 14)

Parents were making an investment by sending their son to the School and were interested in the quality of the return. They focused on the School's credentials; educational, financial and social, and held the School accountable for all that the promotional material promised to do. For example, parents of the School expected a comprehensive pastoral care program for their sons and the School promoted this program as part of their core educational offering. Parents questioned and challenged the authority of the School as part of holding the School accountable. Survey results confirmed the School was the 'school of first choice' for on average of 90% of parents (Documents).

Parents were now also recognized for the valuable cultural and social capitals they could bring to the learning community of the School and their wish to be included in the life and work of the School. Councillor S observed,

It used to be that schools excluded parents, parents were out there, 'you stay out there' this is our job, but parents aren't like that anymore, they want to be inside, they want to be part of the school and I think that's really great. (Interview #2, p. 10)

The School had become a hub for families and not just for students. It provided a sense of community to families, including those who have been impacted by the changing structure of families and the economic field on working hours, and family and social relationships (Pocock, 2003). The School specifically surveys parents on their satisfaction with their involvement in the broader School community (Documents, 2010).

Parents also provided support to the School's learning environment in numerous ways; for example, as an expert guest speaker in a subject area, as a sports coach, as a fund raiser for School

resources and in pastoral care with mothers providing lunch for the seniors during their State wide exams.

Council had also come to the recognition that as the School had grown ‘different’ families had been attracted to the School; parents with no historical connection or existing loyalty; with different social and cultural capitals. Approximately 30% of families had no prior family connection with the School (Survey documents). As Councillor F observed,

This new type of parent is something that the gentlemen on Council have very little knowledge about. They are not in their circle, they are not the friends they mix with and it’s not the people they have worked with. (Interview #1. p. 16)

These families were affluent and were buying a service; a sound education and connections for the future, not religiosity. A survey of parents across the preparatory, middle and senior schools identified the academic program, co-curricular opportunities, teachers and facilities as the aspects of education at the School that were of most benefit to their sons. Co-curricular opportunities were highly valued by Year 12 parents as they understood these were important in positioning their son for life after school. Participation and achievement in co-curricular activities builds networks, broadens and enhances employment opportunities and can be an important element of differentiation for a student in scholarship and tertiary study applications. Council recognized that these parents did not have the benefit of the explicit intergenerational transfer of the cultural capital of the ‘older’ families and that the School had to share its history and culture with these families to build the sense of community. Surveys administered by the School confirmed consistently strong ratings from parents on their satisfaction levels with their involvement in the wider School community (Council papers, May 2010). There was a sense of optimism within Council that the culture and ethos of the School would inculcate these new families over time and they would embrace the School community. This in turn would influence how parents reported on their experiences of the School in other fields, thus improving the potential for promotion of the School, as an institution, in those fields. Survey results revealed an affinity score in excess of 80%; an indicator of strong advocacy of the School by parents (Documents).

Members of Council interacted with parents at School events and through other networks. Councillors demonstrated their sense of individual accountability to parents through their willingness to engage informally with them and build relations at a personal level. Several Councillors spoke of being contacted directly by parents from time to time with comments or concerns about School matters. In these cases the protocol was for the Councillor to ensure the parent was aware of any process within the School appropriate to the issue and to advise the Chairman or the Headmaster about

the matter so the Headmaster could take any necessary action. As described by Councillor F (a parent of the School),

I listen to them and then I point them back in the direction that they should be going. I'd suggest 'you do this and yes there is a policy on that, and you can find it here and if you ring this number and ask to be put through to the secretary of this person and make an appointment so that they know where to go' ... [Also] if a parent gets in my ear about something I'll just ring the Headmaster and say I've had this parent ring me and this is what I've heard, and are you aware of it and are you dealing with it. (Interview 31, p. 18)

The Chairman was often contacted by parents with concerns and he would liaise with the Headmaster to resolve any issue (Interview Deputy Chairman #1, p. 2). With the encouragement of the Chairman, Councillors were able to raise, in a general way, things they were hearing from the School community. Again in the words of Councillor F,

The Chairman will seek feedback; and often around the table he will say, 'what are you hearing'. (Interview #1, p. 18)

I observed many discussions at Council meetings which were initiated by a comment on something that a Councillor had heard from a parent. The resulting discussion primarily focused on whether the School was meeting parental expectations and the cultural and reputational consequences of the feedback; rather than operational actions.

The School provided a wide range of information to parents to enable them to evaluate the School and hence hold Council to account. This included formal reports on their son's educational progress, weekly newsletters, magazines, annual reports, access to a dedicated portal on the School's website with School and student information and access to staff. Parents were invited to a wide range of School events and the School sought their views about their expectations of the School informally and formally (through tools such as surveys). Council formally reported to the parents at Speech Day and advised parents of results in NAPLAN testing and senior year scores. Some of the information provided was promotional, carefully presenting the School's strengths and self perceptions. However, parents were provided sufficient quality information to assess the School in relation to their sons' education.

At Council meetings there was a standing agenda item for the nominees of the stakeholder groups, which included the Parents' and Friends' Association, to raise any issues of importance to these groups and provide general feedback about issues and activities. This was another important mechanism for feedback to Council. However, members of Council, who were nominees of interest groups, did not see themselves as being only accountable to those groups. This is an important aspect

of the governance model, as these Councillors appreciated that they were nominees, not there to represent the interests of the group and as a consequence hold the governing body to account.

Council and the School's approach to accountability to parents was in stark contrast with my experience as a member of the governing body of an independent school. The only regular source of feedback from the parents and the wider school community to the School Council that was sanctioned by the Chair was through the filter of the Principal. Only one member of the School Council had any current connection with the School and members were discouraged from attending at the school, other than for a restricted number of formal school events. Most School Council members were not interested in having regular contact with parents and preferred 'contact' at a distance, such as attendance at the school's speech day, where they were seen by the school community but not otherwise engaged by it. The School Council members' understanding of the life of the School was through the filter of carefully crafted board papers, the occasional structured and rehearsed staff presentation and perfectly polished student performances. The School performed at an extraordinarily high level in academic and co-curricular endeavours and forward enrolments were assured for the next decade. This 'success', coupled with a change in leadership of the board (a long serving board member was finally 'rewarded' with the Chair's role), provided the opportunity for the Principal to reframe and narrow the governing task of the board, including a reductionist notion of accountability to parents, and stakeholders generally.

The importance of parents as a stakeholder group of the School was also recognized through Council actively seeking current parents for membership of Council. There were two current parents on Council and three other Council members were former parents (and old boys) of the School. In relation to parents being Councillors, the Headmaster observed that,

Parents are the clients and there is a conflict of interest in terms of governance but that gives you a lot more cultural capital because parents are the recipients of the service and they understand what's going on and they know how well you've done it or where the deficiencies are, where the strengths are and so on, so they've got a licence to comment more on that.
(Interview #2, p. 11)

These comments identify the potential benefits of a Councillor having a level of knowledge about the School and a stakeholder's perspective; however they also highlight the issue of the potential for a conflict of interest between their role as a parent and their role as a Councillor. This issue will be further explored in Chapter 13.

Staff

Council saw itself as accountable to the School's staff to provide a fulfilling and safe work environment. The School had over 200 staff with a ratio of approximately 2:1 teaching to non-teaching members. Council recognized that the teaching staff were the heart of the educational services that the School provided. Teachers interacting with students in stimulating and supportive environments were fundamental to the learning journey. Yet discussion at Council meetings on teaching staff, their development and engagement was limited, with the focus primarily on students and their engagement and performance.

The only member of staff to be a member of Council was the Headmaster. Council had regular interaction with the executive members of staff through their attendance at Council meetings and strategic planning reviews. The Deputy Headmasters and Business Manager attended each Council meeting and were active participants in the discussions of Council. The Business Manager was also the Council Secretary and was present for the whole meeting, other than 'in camera' sessions. The Deputy Headmasters did not receive all Council meeting papers, usually only the Headmaster's report, and left the meeting before the final session, which was just for Councillors and the Council secretary. The Deputy Headmasters' attendance at all Council meetings was championed by the Chairman who believed it was an important mechanism for enhancing communication between Council and the staff and for the professional development of the Deputies. As observed by Councillor S,

There are very few independent schools, particularly schools like this, where the deputies get the opportunity [to attend Council meetings]. It is excellent succession planning because the one thing when you go into the head's role that you don't have experience of usually is the financial side of things and governance. (Interview #2, p. 14)

Other members of the executive staff attended for portions of different Council meetings to present on a particular issue or provide a report on their area of responsibility. The Committees of Council also provided an opportunity for members of staff to interact with Councillors. My observations of Council's interaction with executive staff at Council meetings was one of mutual courtesy and professional engagement.

Council attended several staff focused social events during the School year which provided a more informal environment to meet and talk. Councillors also interacted with staff at other formal and informal School events and through other networks. One member of Council coached one of the sporting teams and had regular contact with staff members in this capacity.

Council had a critical governance role in the appointment of the Headmaster who was responsible for all staff matters. The Chairman or another Councillor also participated in the selection process for all members of executive staff. Council received reports on staff matters including the results of staff surveys. Staff employment conditions (other than for executive staff) were negotiated with staff under a Church led enterprise bargaining process, as the Church was the employer of all staff; although Council had input into this process. The Church, as the employer, emphasized the importance of staff members being either communicant members of the Church or supportive of the mission and ethos of the Church in providing educational services grounded in a “Christian belief in God”. Staff members were encouraged to undertake theological studies and participate in Schools Commission organized retreats for teaching staff.

Former staff were considered to be part of the School community, although to a lesser extent than old boys, as they had social and cultural capitals that could continue to support the School as an institution. Council’s formal interaction with former staff was through attendance at School functions held specifically for them.

Old Boys

Old boys were another critical stakeholder group for the School and for Council. Council considered it had accountability to the old boys to preserve the culture and ethos of the School as an institution, and ensure there was a continuing place for them in the life of the School. For this reason Council deemed old boys to have a special place on Council so that the work of Council would be influenced by this purpose. Four members of Council were old boys of the School. Two other old boys were also external members of Council’s Finance Committee bringing particular technical skills, in addition to being another means of connection with the old boys community.

The School was a repository of significant amounts of cultural and social capitals. As observed by an old boy (Senior 1987) in a speech at a School foundation event, ‘the network comes with the School’ (Field notes). Old boys were able to access this social capital through maintaining their connection to the School, principally through their participation in the Old Boys’ Association. Old boys were significant donors to the School, leveraging their economic capital to preserve the solid financial foundations of the School. Many old boys were past or current parents and some were involved in the School’s sporting program through coaching or support groups.

Including old boys in the School community strengthened the School as an institution, as old boys had knowledge and influence in fields important to the School. Like parents, their support of the

School provided a 'bridge' to the external world and strengthened the School as an institution deserving of the broader community's support and trust.

The Old Boys' Association had a nominee on Council and, as discussed above, Council used Council meetings to engage formally with the Old Boys' Association, the Parents' and Friends' Association and the Foundation. The Presidents of each group collectively attended one Council meeting per year to speak on their activities and the relationship with the School. My observation of this meeting was open discussion during which the Chairman was encouraging and appreciative of the work of the groups while affirming Council's expectations of the role and approach of each organization.

The opportunity to remain part of the School community may in the future be extended beyond old boys. At the Council meeting attended by the Associations, Councillor D, in commenting on the good connection between the School and the three organizations, asked whether there was 'an opportunity for families who are not old boys to stay in touch with the School once their son finishes his education?' (Field notes). This concept was embraced by the meeting as important in further developing the School as a community with the President of the Foundation commenting that 'anyone who has had something to do with the School has a sense of belonging and we should provide an opportunity for them to continue their association' (Field notes). What once was the preserve of the old boys may be expanded to others. This was a reflection of the powerful influence the School can have on those who interact with it and helps explain the passion of the old boys for their *alma mater*.

With significant old boy representation on Council, there is the possibility that old boys, as a stakeholder group, could be elevated to a position of primacy over other stakeholders. Councillors who are old boys are active in the Old Boys' Association, attending and enjoying social events. All except one have also been parents and I observed that this assisted them recognize that the Old Boys' Association was one of a number of important stakeholders. That the Old Boys' Association attended the Council meeting with the Parents' and Friends' Association and the Foundation reinforced this idea. A discussion at a Council meeting over the placement of honour boards in the School's refurbished assembly hall focused Council's attention on the relative status of the three groups. Councillor S reminded Council that each of the Associations had attended the Council meeting that evening 'as equals'. She observed, 'each Association is an important stakeholder and they should be treated equally in deciding the placement of honour boards' (Field notes, Council meeting). Council agreed with this rationale, yet there was a sense of tension in the meeting that indicated a level of disquiet amongst some Councillors that the Old Boys' Association may not have had a special or extra

recognition within Council. The issue of whether old boys should hold a pre-eminent position in the field of the School surfaced again during a discussion on proposed changes to the School's constitution. The Chairman advocated that only the Old Boys' Association needed to be specifically named in any new constitution as having the right to nominate a candidate for appointment to Council. He commented that,

The old boys are the backbone of the School, they uphold the ethos and the culture and they should hold a higher place than other groups, like the Parents' & Friends'. (Field notes)

The Old Boys' Association was acknowledged by Council as a stakeholder group that endeavoured to exert significant influence on the School, particularly in the area of the 'sporting reputation of the School' (Deputy Chairman, Interview #1, p. 13). The Deputy Chairman related a story going back twenty years when the old boys called a protest meeting at the School because 'at that point the School was one of the clear sporting failures, and after that the School started to hire external coaches with rugby and cricket and some of the bigger sports and we do that to this day. The reason is that the [interschool sporting competitions] are some of the fiercest school boy competitions in the world' (Interview #1, p.12). The Council Secretary observed that whilst the old boys 'love the School and are committed and provide a wonderful resource in the sporting area, they're got a vested interest in the School succeeding which brings a far more active day-to-day involvement in the life of the School' (Interview #1, p. 2). Old boys' achievements were celebrated by the School and used as a means to motivate current students; showing them success and linking the School to that success.

The relationship with the Old Boys' Association had been strained in recent times following the expulsion of the President's son from the School and his subsequent criticism of the School in the media in his representative capacity. The Headmaster would not make a concession because the person involved held an important role within a key stakeholder group. As the Chairman commented,

I think we get into some extra trouble because we will not turn a blind eye to these types of situations or just have a little chat on the side and say that wasn't appropriate ... [the Headmaster] says no you can't do that and they're the rules and the consequences are clear and he doesn't care who it is. (Interview #1, p. 6)

The Headmaster saw that he had an important role to fulfill in that situation, by setting and upholding the expectations for student behaviour at the School. Since that time the School and the Old Boys' Association have agreed a protocol for any external comment by the Association about the School. Councillor C is the Association's nominee on Council and thought he had an important role in the conduct of the School's relationship with the association. He attended all of the Association

meetings and provided feedback from Council. Councillor C stressed however, that ‘whilst I am the old boys’ nominee I am not their mouthpiece’ (Interview #1, p. 16). He commented that ‘the Headmaster and the executive think the old boys exert too much influence on the School’, although he noted that every head of the ‘old schools’⁴⁶ would probably have the same view as the Headmaster, because these schools all have large and active old boys associations (Interview #1, p. 17).

Government

Council acknowledged the significance of the Federal government as a funder and the State government as a funder and regulator of schools. At State government level the School provided information for periodic assessment of the School’s suitability for ongoing registration as a school. The Federal government, as the primary government funder of student places, is seeking to use the funding mechanism to impose accountability mechanisms on independent schools, such as all schools participating in NAPLAN and contributing data to the *My School* website, to facilitate public benchmarking of schools. The Federal government outsources the evaluation of the information provided by schools to the broader community to make judgments about the School’s performance. Council, although concerned with the quality of data on the *My School* website, was confident in the effectiveness of the School’s communication mechanisms to convey important information to prospective parents and stakeholders about the School and its performance. The School’s communications were also informed by a wide range of benchmarking data on ‘competitor’ schools, from academic scores to parent satisfaction levels. Council did not monitor the quality of reporting to Federal and State governments, although was advised that the School was compliant with its reporting and other regulatory obligations.

Council did not see itself as accountable to either level of government for the work and performance of the School or its place as an educational institution. Council did not refer to government, either as a funds provider or as a regulator, as a stakeholder to whom Council was accountable. Council was not governing for the government and they did not see the government as having an interest in the School, as do, say, parents. This may be a reflection of Council not seeing government as having given the School the responsibility to educate the students. That responsibility has been given by the Church, as owner, and the parents, in choosing the School for their sons’ education. Council saw the School as ‘independent’; an independent school with a well developed governance framework. Council’s conception of the role of the Federal government was as a passive provider of funds, even though the School, like most independent schools, could not operate should

⁴⁶ These are the older independent boys schools in Australia.

that source of funding be withdrawn. Council, although reliant on government financial support, had defined government out of a significant role relating to school education because they were not needed; the School was a successful independent school governed by a group of skilled and experienced people. Council appreciated the regulatory role of the State government, acknowledging the necessity to maintain a system of school accreditation for quality control; however viewed State government as almost irrelevant. For example, the State's statutory body, the Queensland Studies Authority, which provides syllabuses, guidelines, assessments, reporting, testing and accreditation services to schools in the State, was not on the 'radar' of Council, although the Headmaster was cognizant of this body. As a high performing school, regulatory standards were always met and the threat of sanctions was a very low risk. Similarly, none of the Stage 2 Participants identified government as a stakeholder to whom their governing body was accountable.

The School relied heavily on the federation of the independent schools' associations to liaise with and lobby government and provide the School with information on issues and emerging trends. The Executive Director of the relevant state based Association attended one Council meeting per year to provide an update on current issues and trends and have discussion with Councillors. The Executive Director also prepared a discussion paper for Council's strategic planning day. Councillors and members of the senior executive attended Association forums and events which provided an opportunity to be informed of issues and network with other member schools and policy makers. No member of Council was a member of the Association's governing body. Council did not have a formal strategy for direct communication with politicians or senior bureaucrats at Federal or State level; however, the positioning of several Councillors in the economic field could have provided access to this level of government if required. Access to senior members of the Church and old boys who held positions of influence in the private and public sectors was also available to Council to assist the School should circumstances require.

Foundation

As explained in Chapter 7, the Foundation was important to the School's financial welfare, raising funds principally for capital works projects. The Foundation was governed by a board of directors, all of whom, except one, were old boys of the School. Two of the directors also held other roles associated with the governance of the School. Council effectively controlled the appointment process for directors and the Council Secretary acted as secretary to the Foundation board. These were important mechanisms to manage the mandate of the Foundation as Council wanted to ensure that the Foundation was 'in synch' with and responsive to the strategic imperatives of the School and reflected

the cultural values of the School. Council was aware that for some independent schools their foundations had ‘developed their own agenda’ which caused difficulties for the school’s governing body (Field notes).

As noted earlier in this chapter, Council invited the President and the Manager of the Foundation to a meeting of Council once a year to discuss formally the relationship, the strategic direction of the School and the work of the Foundation. The Chairman and the Headmaster also met informally on a regular basis with the President and the Manager to keep up to date on Foundation activities and forward plans. Staff from the School and the Foundation liaised regularly to ensure consistency of message in communications and the School provided other support, such as access to the School for hosting School events and access to the marketing and communication expertise within the School’s staff. Councillors were expected to support Foundation events through their attendance. The Headmaster invested significant time in meeting with and fostering relationships between the School and prospective and existing donors as many donors only wanted to deal with the Headmaster (Field notes).

Conclusion

Organizational context and the nature and complexity of stakeholders were factors that differentiated nonprofit organizations, including schools, from for-profit organizations. The stakeholder map for the School identified sixteen stakeholder groups which interacted with the School and could exert influence on the way the School was governed by Council. The subsequent analysis identified the Church, students, parents, staff and old boys as parties who had determinative influence and to whom Council accepted accountability. The rationale for effective stakeholder engagement and management, as part of an effective governance framework for the School, and principal accountability mechanisms was explored in this chapter. How Council viewed Federal and State governments and the Foundation, as stakeholders, was also examined.

The data revealed a tension in the relationship between the Church, as owner of the School, and Council. This tension arose for a number of reasons; firstly, because Council, as the body conferred with the authority to govern the School, sought to preserve and enhance the School as an institution, separate from the Church. The Church’s mission to develop a faith community in the School was based on an assumption ‘that the School will be like the Church’ (Schools Commission, 1996). Yet Council interpreted the Church’s mission through fine filters, founded in the School’s culture as an institution, which flowed through to how that mission was operationalized within the School. Council saw it as their role to give effect to the mission in a form most appropriate to this School, ‘for its

purpose and character' (School History, 1996). When the Church, principally through the Schools Commission and the Archbishop, endeavoured to 'interfere' at the operational level, differences between the Church and the School become apparent. Exacerbating this issue was the view of Council that the Church did not have the required expertise to dictate to Council how to govern the School. Council saw that expertise as residing with Council; Council had the experience and skills, developed in the fields of commerce, school education and nonprofit organizations, to develop appropriate strategies and operational plans and processes for the School and respond to the complex demands of parents, students, staff and old boys. Council also did not see the Church as yet having the skills, framework or processes to effectively hold School Councils of diocesan schools to account for the authority conferred upon them; although through the efforts of the Chairman, the Schools Commission was developing an accountability framework.

Council, in managing its accountability to key stakeholders, was faced with the dichotomy between the Church's view of the School as a 'faith community' and the parents' view of the School as offering superior academic, co-curricular and pastoral care programs supported by quality teaching staff and physical facilities. Spiritual development was not why parents sent their sons to the School (Documents, parent survey). Council had, to date, through the filter of the School's cultural norms, managed to interpret and apply the Church's mission for the School in a way that kept both stakeholders reasonably satisfied. The challenge was not new to this Council or Councils past; however, in an environment of increasing competition between high performing schools and a renewed focus by the Church on its schools because of a declining parish base, Council will require valuable capitals in the fields of the Church and school education to successfully navigate the demands of these key stakeholders.

Chapter 12

Culture of Council

Introduction

Analysis of the data through Schein's conceptual model of organizational culture revealed key cultural dimensions of the School and Council that had a significant influence on how Council governed the School, and moderated Councillors' *habitus* and the effect of field positioning in their interactions with each other in Council, and with stakeholders, in the field of the School and in other fields. Cultural norms provided the lens through which Council interpreted and applied the Church's mission for the School and responded to and managed key stakeholder expectations. The cultural analysis identified a high level of congruence between espoused beliefs and values and the dominant cultural assumptions that informed Council's governing task and Councillors' interactions with each other and with stakeholders. This chapter explores the shared underlying assumptions of Council, supported by articulated statements about their role and conduct, and the way those assumptions shaped their decisions and interactions. In the process my own cultural beliefs about governance have been considered and documented, in recognition of my positionality in respect to the data collected.

Artifacts of Council

My first encounter with Council was attending the first full Council meeting for the School year. I was introduced to each Councillor and warmly welcomed by the Chairman at the commencement of the meeting. This was my first opportunity to observe Council as a group, in the setting where all significant governance matters were considered and decisions made. I was very conscious of the task ahead of me; to perceive and interpret the cultural forces that would guide and constrain this group. A number of artifacts of Council were apparent at this first meeting. The room was configured and reserved for Council meetings and business; the table easily seating twenty and the walls adorned with photographs of past and present Councils. Councillors and members of the executive were formally and conservatively dressed; men in suits and women in skirts and jackets and all wearing a badge with their name and designation. Two Councillors wore ties with the insignia of the Old Boys' Association. Greetings were warm and relaxed and there was an easy flow of conversation before the Chairman called the meeting to order. Men greeted each other with handshakes and greeted the women with a combined handshake and cheek kiss. Women did not greet other women with a handshake, rather with either a wave of the hand or a cheek kiss. The meeting was opened with a prayer, led by the Chairman in the absence of a clerical Council member, due to the retirement of the Archbishop's nominee on Council. The meeting was very structured, with orderly

contributions to discussion, and attendees conversant with and supportive of the meeting processes. Seating at the table was not designated; however, followed a familiar order with the Headmaster and Council Secretary on either side of the Chairman at the head of the table and Council members closest to this triangle. At the midpoint of the meeting, a meal was shared, served with wine by catering staff. The conversation over dinner was relaxed and wide ranging and provided a break from the formal meeting process, as well as an opportunity for informal interaction with guests to the meeting. My observations of these artifacts at this first meeting were confirmed in each subsequent Council meeting I attended during the year of data collection.

Espoused Beliefs and Values

Council had espoused beliefs and values in the form of their Code of Conduct and stated expectations for participation by Councillors in the life of the School, charters to describe and guide the work of Council and its Committees, and Council's stated support for the public statements on the ethos of the School. These espoused beliefs and values were evident from the confidential and public documents I gathered during the data collection. These articulated beliefs and norms are explored below under the themes: Council's role, and, Councillors' interactions with each other and the School community.

Council's role

As will be discussed in Chapter 13, documents provided clear statements that the role of Council was to govern the school. This responsibility was expressed as including the primary functions of setting the strategic direction of the School, appointing and monitoring the performance of the Headmaster and monitoring the operational performance of the School. These statements reflect the normative understanding of the role of the board of a nonprofit organization (Chait, Ryan & Taylor, 2005; Stone & Ostrower, 2007; Cornforth, 2003) and an independent school (ISQ, 2012). Two additional stated objectives for Council added an important cultural dimension. Firstly, Councillors agreed that they would 'act in accordance with the duties of directors pursuant to the Corporations Act at all times' (School Council, 2007a). Councillors sought to act like directors, even though Council operated under a delegated authority from the Church, and Councillors were not office holders of the incorporated governing body. This stated value reflected the aspiration of Council to function at a high standard of governance, the benchmark for which was seen by the Councillors as the standard required by law of directors of corporations. As explained by Councillor S,

It's important that we work as if we are [directors] under the Corporations Act. I approach it as if I have the same duties and the same obligations as if we were a for-profit organization and that way, if we do that, we are most probably covering all the bases. (Interview #1, p. 12)

Secondly, Councillors agreed that they would protect the ethos of the School and the interests of the stakeholders. These statements are an aspiration to preserve the foundational elements of the culture of the School established by the School's founder. These elements are the training of character on the foundation of Christian faith and the fostering of scholarship (School History, 1986) and are consistent with the statements by the Church on the normative features of schools of this religious denomination (School Council, 2007a; School Council 2007b; Schools Commission, 1996). The most common statement in the normative literature for nonprofit organizations and schools in relation to stakeholders is a representational role (Chait, Ryan & Taylor, 2005; McCormack *et al.*, 2006); however, some literature extends that role to protecting the ethos of the organization and the interests of stakeholders (for example, Ministerial Working Group, 2012).

The statement to protect the interests of the stakeholders recognizes the School exists to provide an educational service by the staff to students and parents, within the patronage of the Church, as owner of the assets, and in a manner that maintains a connection with students post the time of the service delivery. These stakeholders are the School community and Council sees itself as accountable to them for preserving the School as an institution. This sense of community is an important aspect of the School's culture. Councillor D observed that,

It's very interesting being in an old institute ... it's very subtle. I think there is a really potent desire to belong and there's a potent desire to uphold the consciousness of belonging, therefore there's a requirement to actually preserve the institution, although not necessarily to hold it back, it's still got to move. (Interview #1, p. 7)

Councillors' interactions with each other and the School community

Council's code of conduct contained a commitment by Councillors to treat each other and other members of the School community with honesty, courtesy and respect, maintain the highest ethical standards and ensure their personal, business and financial interests do not conflict with their duty to the School (School Council, 2007b). The Code also contained a commitment to recognizing the efforts and contributions of the entire School community. The School's strategy document acknowledged the contributions of the School community to its development and recognized that implementation will be a community effort. The Chairman has stated that an important part of a Councillor's role is to attend School events and be visible and accessible to stakeholders (Field notes). I was interested to understand whether these public and formal statements of beliefs and values would be consistent with the deeper levels of the culture of Council (Schein, 2010). I therefore wanted to learn whether these formal statements would translate to a set of shared norms which would guide and constrain the collective and individual behaviours of Council.

Shared underlying assumptions

My observations of Council at work and conversations with Councillors revealed strong cultural forces that supported the articulated statements about the ethos of the School, the protection of stakeholders and the standards of behaviour for Council. The data from the observations and conversations was analyzed using inductive and deductive approaches and a 'content analysis approach' was used to identify the themes emerging from the data. Each of the most significant shared underlying assumptions revealed from the observational and interview data are summarized in Table 12.1 and grouped into those relating to the School and those relating to the dynamics of Council. Each of these identified shared underlying assumptions will be discussed in this chapter.

Table 12.1

Summary of Identified Shared Underlying Assumptions

About the School

- The fundamental purpose of the School is to build a student's character
- Participation and success in the interschool sporting competition is essential
- The School will always be a 'boys only' school
- The School is accountable to stakeholders and being responsive to and balancing the expectations of stakeholders is critical for the School's success

About Council

- Council and Councillors act with integrity
 - Communication between Councillors and with management will be open and respectful and decisions made by consensus
 - Each Councillor will have a high level of commitment to the School and the work of Council
 - Each Councillor will leverage their social and cultural capitals to promote and help the School and as a source of information about the School and its operations
-

About the School

The mission of the School is to develop a student's character.

The most significant shared underlying assumption of Council about the School was that an education at the School would develop a student's character. Character development would occur through broad and wholehearted participation in school life, programs supporting personal development based on Christian values and undertaking community service. Council's work was guided in all respects by this cultural dimension, as they see themselves as the guardians of the ethos of the School.

The School's founder viewed education as a process where 'boys were made men'; for 'the training of character and the thorough teaching ... of secondary subjects' (School History, 1986). In 1914 the then Archbishop told the School's speech night that 'it was the Church's duty to provide an education for the making and development of human character' (School History, 1986). This concept of the 'making of the man' had been a continuing cultural dimension over the School's one hundred years of operation, although it had been interpreted differently by different Headmasters at different historical moments. The current Headmaster had a 'back to basics' approach and thought he was the person 'who has returned the School to its roots ... to its mission relative to the two founding headmasters' (Interview #2, p. 6). To him this meant the 'man of character, with values of 'servant-leadership' and 'the dignity of others' and 'maintaining high standards of behaviour' (Interview #2, p.7). The Headmaster's interpretation of the 'making of the man' was reflected in the School's public statements; as a School owned by the Church, to 'demonstrate our love for God by a life of service to others, together with tolerance and inclusion for all members of our School community' (School website). The Headmaster thought tradition, Christian beliefs, behavioural standards and full engagement in School life provided the opportunity for this character development.

The concept of character development through schooling was explored with Councillors in interviews. Only Councillors R and F referenced character development in the context of religion. Councillor R, the clerical member, observed that the spiritual tenet should be maintained equally with the other tenets of the School as,

Our aim is to make men, but the ones' who can come out with a spiritual basis as well, with a personal commitment to Christ, will have more in their lives personally and maybe will be able to face some of the challenges of life because of it. (Interview #1, p.7)

All other members of Council saw character development as a conception founded in values of fairness and social responsibility, not religiosity. Their conception was shaped by the School as an

institution, not by the Church and notwithstanding the Church was the owner of the School.

Councillors S and Y, parents at the School, both referred to character development in their reasons for choosing the School. As explained by Councillor S,

We are about educating boys to men ... about the [developmental] journey and about our boys and their families being part of a supportive community. (Interview #1, p. 27)

Councillor Y observed that he chose the School because it 'was an all round school ... and you know we're talking about the making of men, well I think that's what they do' (Interview #1, p. 14). He specifically referred to the School's co-curricular and service programs as contributing to the students' development and the aim to have the student leave the School a 'decent, solid fellow' (Interview #2, p.11).

Council was aware, from survey data and their interactions with the School community, that most parents did not choose the School for its religious denomination. Council did, however, consider that parents' choice was influenced by the School's aim to develop students into well rounded young men with a work ethic, a community spirit and a strong network of support through the old boys. One of the Deputy Headmasters commented that 'parents choose [the School] for its academic program and character development' (Field notes, February Council Meeting). For Councillor D, his experience as a student and boarder created a distinction between the Church as an institution and the principles of fairness and social responsibility supported in the Church's philosophy and embedded in the School's ethos. In his words,

Some of us on Council were at School during the reign of Black Will, the School priest, who was one of the most unchristian priests you could imagine, which is why we're probably passionately respectful of the School as an institution and passionately disrespectful of the Church as a governing body ... if [the Church] let us run this place like we want to run it, they will get enough Christianity and we will turn out fine young men. (Interview # 1, p. 16)

Council supported the philosophy of the Church; however, as discussed in Chapter 11, were vigilant in 'managing' the Church so as to ensure the School's ethos, that is, their conception of 'character development', was maintained. There was a tension in the relationship which had been ongoing since the early days of the School's governance by a School Council. There were indications that the Church was seeking an even greater involvement by the School in the broader Church community. This was not surprising, given the Church had clearly stated that Councils of Church schools were 'charged with the exciting work of glorifying God in our Schools' (Schools Commission, 1986). As discussed earlier, the Church had an expectation that the School would participate in the governance framework for the Church and would develop close links with other arms of the Church,

such as the parishes and the community based services. One of the strategic aims of the Church, as articulated by the Archbishop, was to ‘have schools tackle all the marks of mission in some way because they are part of the whole Church, engaged in the whole mission’ (Archbishop, 2011). One avenue where the Church was able to exert influence on the culture of the School and Council was through the appointments process, particularly in the key roles of the Chairman of Council and the Headmaster who interacted with key people in the field of the Church, namely the Archbishop, and the Chairman and Executive Director of the Schools Commission. The Chairman of Council and Headmaster were crucial in the development and maintenance of a relationship that would support the School in maintaining its independence from and accountability to the Church.

The development of character embodied the notion of all round development of the student, through scholarship, sport (and other co-curricular activities) and service, supported by pastoral care and other programs. The School had, over the last decade, been known for solid, but not excellent scholarship. As competition in the subfield of independent schools intensifies, all comparator schools are able to offer, as part of their core educational offering, high academic achievement, broad co-curricular programs with opportunities for participation in elite competitions, and comprehensive pastoral care programs. Council was aware that the School needed to lift its academic attainment so as to remain competitive in the field; however, it did not want to sacrifice the ‘making of the man’ conception in the process. As the Headmaster told Council,

We have ‘academic’ improvement as strategy number one because it is our core business, but we want to be excellent in all things and not sacrifice one aspect for another. (Field notes, September Council Meeting, p. 5)

Although the School was gradually lifting its academic attainment across all students, as evidenced, for example, by improvements in NAPLAN results as students’ progressed through the grades; it was not achieving as well in the top band for senior students. As explained by the Chairman,

I think we need to avoid mediocrity in any area, and we have slipped academically, so I have thought we need to lift our overall level of academic achievement without a disproportionate effort on improving the top two percent. But it is the two percent that the community focuses on in deciding whether your school has the academic goods. I don’t know whether we can get back to our previous academic levels without losing any of the other aspects. I see we have 1800 boys who seem to be doing well and I wonder if we need to change anything. I don’t think we can lift our academic levels to the level of say, [name of school that has the highest tertiary entrance scores] and I’m not sure we need to or want to. (Field notes)

This is an attempt to maintain the School's differentiation from other schools in the field of independent schools and preserve the School's markers of distinction in the field.

The Headmaster's performance indicators in more recent times included a measure related to senior scores and a program was being implemented to provide additional support and encouragement for boys entering their senior years who were identified as having potential to achieve in the top academic band. Although Council discussed this issue on a number of occasions at Council meetings, there was not a clear sense within Council as to how academic attainment was to be lifted, whilst the cultural norm of the 'making of the man' was maintained. This goal conflict had arisen because of a significant external contextual change; namely, the increased focus of stakeholders, including Federal and State governments and parents, on educational standards and attainment, driven by Australia's falling performance against international educational benchmarks. The Federal government has responded with a new regulatory body, a national curriculum, national testing regimes and publicly available data on each school's academic performance. An environment of hyper competition in academic attainment is emerging and parents monitor a school's performance in the league tables across the year levels, rather than just a focus on final year tertiary entrance scores.

The Headmaster observed that Council was the keeper of the cultural capitals of the School. In the context of an incoming headmaster, he observed that it was Council's responsibility to make clear, ... what the mission is, what the values are, what the culture is and what the standards are of this School and the Headmaster is to abide by those and express himself and manage by those. (Interview #2, p. 4)

Councillor C observed, 'Council is there to protect the essence of the School, the traditional aspects, those things that make it what it is' (Interview #1, p. 15). All Councillors thought it was therefore important to have old boys on Council. In the words of Councillor Y (who was not an old boy),

We have to make sure there's enough institutional knowledge maintained [on Council] to ensure the traditions and culture of the School are maintained. So I think you're always going to need to have one or two old boys on the Council. (Interview #1, p. 9)

Councillor C thought old boys had an intuitive understanding of the ethos of the School. He observed, 'we have the feel for it because we went there and have this sense of belonging' (Interview #1, p. 15/16). The increasing diversification of Council, once almost completely comprised of retired old boys, had not weakened the view that old boys on Council were an important element to maintaining the School's ethos.

Participation and success in the interschool sporting competition is essential

A related shared underlying assumption was that, as a boys' school, participation and success in the elite interschool schools sporting competition was critical. This cultural dimension was founded in the School's history and the intense competitive spirit generated within this sporting association, which had a history almost as old as the School's. The School was a founding member of the association in the early 1900s, as sport was seen by the first Headmaster as an important part of a young man's development. The emphasis then was on participation, whereas now it was successful participation. 'Success' in the interschool competitions meant the School being able to compete strongly, with a sufficient number of premierships wins in the major sports over a cycle, of approximately five years, so that each boy in his secondary schooling experienced the School celebration and sense of achievement that followed a premiership win. The Headmaster had, with the support of old boy Councillors, strengthened the notion within Council that sporting success built and maintained School 'spirit', which in turn supported students' aspiration to participate in the sporting program. Although the School's founder's emphasis was on participation in sport, this cultural norm had evolved into participation and success, requiring a more 'professional' approach to sport within the School. Council did not find the desire to win in conflict with the cultural construct of building a student's character. Sport was seen as excellent for character development, requiring commitment and hard work and learning to be a member of a team. Council rationalized the proposition that participation and success were compatible, as success built morale and fostered participation.

Forward enrolments were seen as being influenced by the School's sporting reputation. As noted by the Chairman, 'if we come last in the competitions our enrolments will drop' (Field notes, September Council Meeting). There were numerous examples of Council decision making being directed by this assumption. The School invested in specialized coaching and Council had a policy to provide scholarships to support students who demonstrated talent in key sports, as part of a broader scholarships policy which also supported academic and other co-curricular endeavors. Council members attended key sporting events to support the students and student sporting achievements were widely celebrated. Council had approved significant capital expenditure projects over the previous five years, in the tens of millions of dollars, to upgrade sporting facilities so the students could train and host competitions on campus. The Headmaster's performance indicators included an indicator on performance in the interschool sporting competition (Field notes, February Council Meeting; Chairman Interview #1, p. 9). Old boys followed the School's success in key sports, such as rugby,

and the School's performance was a topic of conversation at many old boys gatherings. As observed by the Deputy Chairman,

If we don't win the rugby the old boys are a bit upset by it. They don't care about some of the minor sports, but the six traditional are very important and the old boys are very concerned about the sporting reputation of the School. (Interview #1, p. 12/ 13)

The issue of the nature and extent of sporting scholarships was discussed at length at Council. These discussions affirmed Council's commitment to sporting scholarships for a number of reasons, including strengthening School morale through success in the interschool sporting competitions and the significance of sporting scholarship holders progressing to representation in national teams 'which attracts other students and adds to the life of the School' (Field notes, Headmaster, September Council Meeting). The Headmaster observed at a Council meeting, 'we would have come last in the rugby without our current scholarship holders and the School hasn't come last in rugby for a very long time'; to which one Councillor wryly and accurately responded, '1979' (Field notes, September Council Meeting). Council was also concerned to ensure that any scholarship holder 'benefits from coming to the School and fits in and contributes to the School' (Field notes, Councillor R, September Council Meeting). Although scholarship holders predominantly performed at the lower end of academic achievement, Council wanted them to be active members of the School community and participate broadly in School life. It did not want the culture of the School adversely impacted by 'sporting superstars'. The professionalization of sport within the School, and in the other schools participating in the competition, had displaced some students from the 'firsts' (the top teams) in the major sports. These students were those who traditionally performed highly in academia and sport and invariably held leadership positions in their final year. Councillor Y observed that,

It is often the parents who are upset their son did not make the firsts in senior; however I don't think the boys mind. They are happy to play in the seconds, because they know that bringing in the sporting scholarship boys lifts everyone's performance, and lifts the morale of the teams because they know they have a good chance of doing well in the competition. (Field notes)

Notwithstanding their commitment to sporting success, Council had consciously decided to play within the letter and spirit of the sporting association's guidelines concerning sporting scholarships. This was an example of the interplay between different cultural dimensions; the desire for sporting success and acting with integrity. If desire for sporting success was not balanced by a commitment to integrity different decisions concerning scholarships could have been made, such as encouraging outstanding sportsmen to repeat their senior year with the support of a scholarship so as to strengthen the School's prospect for a premiership in that sport.

The Headmaster was committed to each of the shared underlying assumptions about the School described above. These cultural elements would underpin the search for the next Headmaster. As discussed in Chapter 13, it was likely Council would be searching for a new Headmaster in the near future. The Headmaster had considered prospective candidates for the role and made these comments about one such person,

Now I know someone out there who is currently the head of another very good school in this country who would like my job ... and I think he could do a fantastic job but he has absolutely no tolerance for the [interschool sporting association]. He believes it is unhealthy and too competitive ... But sport really started to take a professional image when I got here ... and so to have a head who wanted to change that would be of absolute material interest to the governing body and to the culture of the School; because even the boarders are talking publicly about how they could win the overall competition this year for the first time. (Interview #2, p. 5)

The Headmaster recognized that the next Headmaster would require a *habitus* and *capitals* that were consistent with the cultural norm of participation and success in the interschool sporting competition.

The School will always be a ‘boys’ only’ school

That the School should always be a ‘boys’ only’ school, even in the preparatory levels, was another very significant shared underlying assumption deeply embedded in Council’s culture. The School had always been a boys’ only school and successive Councils had resisted any attempt to change this. The School History (1986) tells of a former Headmaster who recommended to the School Council in the early 1970s that consideration be given to co-educational classes should the then Council wish to introduce early primary education to the School. This was met with a resounding ‘no’ and the School subsequently expanded into preschool and early primary education on a boys’ only basis.

The strength of this cultural norm became clear to me at one Council meeting when Councillor D questioned whether the School should continue as boys’ only in the preparatory grades. There was a slight uncomfortable silence, with some tense faces, sighs and dropping of eyes to the table. The reaction of Councillors hinted of impatience, as if Councillor D had said something inane. The Chairman quickly moved the meeting on, without an opportunity for discussion, with a light comment ‘can we assume we are going to stay a boys’ school’; at which Councillors responded with a laugh and the tension eased (Field notes, May Council Meeting). It seemed this cultural assumption was not open for challenge. As explained by Councillor Y,

There is probably two things we’re never going to change; we are a [Church] school and a boys’ school, so people can stop talking about going co-ed. (Interview #2, p. 15)

I was surprised that Councillor D would raise this issue as the norm was already evident to me and I had assumed was shared by Councillor D. I was similarly surprised by the Chairman's approach, as my observations at Council meetings were that any issue raised by a Councillor would be given 'air time' for discussion. The Chairman's approach to the issue was in part a reaction to Councillor D's manner⁴⁷ at Council meetings, and that Councillor D had raised the single sex nature of the School previously. My sense also was that Councillor D, as an old boy, son and brother of old boys, was assumed to understand and accept this cultural construct; that is, he should have known better as he was part of the 'family'. However, the approach of Council in responding to Councillor D's question was also indicative of the defensive mechanism that is triggered when there is a challenge to an important part of an organization's culture.

The School is accountable to stakeholders and being responsive to and balancing the expectations of stakeholders is critical for the School's success

Another significant shared underlying assumption was Council's attitude to stakeholders. Council recognized their legitimate role in the School and embraced stakeholders as an important part of the life of the School. They also recognized their accountability to the Church as owner, to the students and parents for the students' educational journey, to the staff for their work environment, and to the old boys for their continuing inclusion in the community of the School. This cultural norm and Council's approach to stakeholder relations has been explored in depth in Chapter 11.

About the Council

Council and Councillors act with integrity

My observations of the discussions and decisions taken at Council meetings confirm Council had a shared underlying assumption about acting at all times with integrity. This assumption was supported by Council's espoused values as articulated in Council's Code of Conduct. As one Councillor observed,

Ethical conduct is encapsulated in and central to the values of the School. Not only does the Council, through the School management, promulgate ethical conduct in oral and written form at every opportunity, Council members model it in their interactions with each other, with the management and with members of the School community. (Council Evaluation Questionnaire)

An example of integrity in action was discussed in Chapter 11 concerning Council's support of a decision by the Headmaster to expel a student even though the student's father was the President of the Old Boys' Association and influential in the School community.

⁴⁷ Refer discussion in chapter 10 on the *habitus* of Councillor D

Integrity and high ethical standards are identified in the normative literature as part of the key personal attributes for an effective director (Cadbury, 2002; Higgs, 2003; Tyson, 2003).

Communication between Councillors and with management will be open and respectful and decisions made by consensus

Several other significant shared underlying assumptions were revealed from the data concerning the way Council functioned as a group. One was a norm of open communication between Councillors and with the executive. As explained by the Chairman,

We try to run things openly at [name of school] and make sure all the issues are on the table and we encourage active participation from the senior staff. (Field notes, Strategic Planning Day, August)

The Chairman also expressed it this way, ‘we don’t want just the good news, we want the bad news’ (Interview #1, p. 8). The Chairman’s commitment to this norm of open communication was supported by all other Councillors, for example Councillor Y’s observations that,

There is a lot of discussion at Council which is good ... we discuss things fairly openly at Council and the Headmaster is not afraid to speak his mind. (Interview #1, p. 3)

If anybody’s got something that they want to say they say it, and at great length. I think that is one of the strengths of Council. (Interview #2, p. 15)

Councillor R, as a new member to Council, said he thought Council put itself ‘in a position to look at the warts and all [of issues] and do something about them, and they will, I don’t doubt they will, do that as they see fit’ (Interview #1, p. 3).

Open communication was fostered by an environment where participants listened to each other. Councillor S commented, ‘I think we have a good feeling of personal and professional collegiality’ (Interview #2, p. 5). At one Council meeting the Chairman commented to the meeting that, ‘I hold the view that the most important thing for the board is to be able to work together and tell the truth’ (Field notes, October Council Meeting) At Council meetings, I observed the norm to be all Councillors asking questions, expressing views, offering observations and actively listening. The Chairman skillfully facilitated discussions, ensuring each Councillor had an opportunity to participate and express a view. Moments of humour lightened the serious nature of Council’s work and provided welcome pauses during a Council meeting. These communication norms supported Council’s method of decision making. Decisions were made collectively and not until an issue had been talked through. Councillors were therefore expected to make a contribution and bring perspective and judgement to issues. Once a decision was made, all Councillors were expected to support the decision. An

example of Council's communication and decision making norms was consideration by Council, at the February Council Meeting, of whether the School should add an extra year 6 class. Council papers contained a discussion paper by the Headmaster. The Chairman opened the discussion by noting the background and highlighting several additional strategic issues. The Chairman then 'opened it for comments' and asked 'how do people feel about this?' The Chairman had not indicated his position at this point. All Councillors asked questions or made comments. The Chairman then commented that he was 'sensing a bit of a split on this?' There was a further round of questions and comments. The Chairman then asked each Councillor whether they were supportive of the proposal. There was no consensus. At this point the Chairman indicated that he was 'not in favour of this at this point'. He suggested a proposal 'to try to break through the different views' and asked each Councillor if they were 'happy to go down that path?' All Councillors agreed. The Chairman then specifically asked the Headmaster whether he was happy with the approach. He responded by acknowledging it was a significant matter for decision and that the issue could benefit from further work. Council returned to the matter at the following month's Council meeting and a consensus decision was made.

These cultural norms concerning communication and decision making moderated Councillors' *habitus* and the effect of their field positioning. A Councillor with a strong personality and physical presence, such as Councillor D, was expected to moderate the way he expressed views in Council meetings so that he did not dominate the discussion. When he strayed from this norm, the Chairman provided him feedback to that effect. The views of old boy Councillors, who saw themselves as the core of Council, were moderated by perspectives from other Councillors. Because all contributions were welcomed, Councillors could, to a certain extent, 'be themselves' and express ideas and views in their own way. The communication norms, reinforced by the Chairman's skilful facilitation of meetings, meant that Councillors could not use their voices to silence or intimidate colleagues at the table. For example, Councillor R, new to Council and initially concerned about not being as well qualified as other Councillors, settled in very quickly and became an active contributor to discussion. One of the effects of the communication norms was the moderation of Councillor C's *modus operandi* of behind the scenes influence and discussions, as having all major issues 'on the table' for discussion at Council meetings meant Councillor C, who otherwise spoke infrequently, had to 'show his hand' and express a view to which all were privy.

Gendered dimensions of communication were still evident in Council meetings, even with the benefit of the communication norms developed under the Chairman's leadership. The men Councillors were more vocal than the women Councillors (allowing for the higher ratio of men to

women on Council). Councillor S, the only Councillor with deep educational expertise (other than the Headmaster), would have had difficulty accessing the vocal space without the benefit of understanding and practising the communication norms. Councillor F, although presenting more ‘strongly’ in voice than Councillor C, always looked to the Chairman before speaking and was rarely engaged in a ‘back and forth’ discussion with other Councillors. In observing Councillor F in Council and Committee meetings, I became aware that I was reacting to Councillor C’s speech patterns, in particular her common use of a rising intonation when offering an opinion. The rising intonation made a statement sound like a question and gave me a sense that Councillor C was unsure of her view, and therefore possibly that her view was not the result of considered thought. I reflected on my own board experiences and realized that at some point I had learned that this was not the way men spoke and that I needed to reflect men’s speech patterns in order to effectively communicate in that environment.

Each Councillor will have a high level of commitment to the School and the work of Council

Another important cultural force in Council was a shared underlying assumption that each Councillor would have a high level of commitment to the School and the work of Council. This commitment was to be demonstrated through attendance at all Council and Committee meetings, formal School events, and key stakeholder events, such as those hosted by the Foundation. One of the reasons Councillor S decided to retire from Council after one term was her inability to attend all meetings and events. As she explained,

In my first year I was still Acting Principal at [school] and although I could come to Council meetings I couldn’t come to events because more often than not the functions coincided with what was happening at that school. I couldn’t come to the committee because the meetings were on at the same time as our finance committee, so I didn’t start, I felt, with a great commitment. It wasn’t that the commitment wasn’t there, I just had another job and that was the understanding I had with the Chairman. But now I am going away a lot and miss some Council meetings and that’s not fair, not fair to everybody else. I don’t think it is good for Council and I don’t think it is good for me [to miss meetings and events]. (Interview #2, p. 1/2)

An issue of concern for Council identified through Council’s performance evaluation process was Councillors missing Council meetings. In addition to Councillor S’s absences, Councillors D and Y missed some meetings due to their respective executive roles which required frequent interstate travel. The Chairman recalled where,

We went through a period for about five years when we didn’t lose a Council member to a Council meeting. Maybe we were all mates and in a little unit but we didn’t lose people to Council meetings. In the last couple of years I’ve had to grapple with that because Council members are missing meetings, and some of those can’t be avoided, but I tend to make people feel badly if they don’t go to a meeting. Maybe I shouldn’t do that. (Interview # 2 p. 12)

The Chairman was clear that the level of commitment to Council should not be lessened because it was an unpaid position,

It makes absolutely no difference that people are doing it pro bono. If you take on this commitment you must treat it in exactly the same way as you would being on any other governing body. (Interview #2, p. 12)

The Chairman appreciated, from many years of experience serving on boards, that Councillors', even if all demonstrating the same 'commitment' would contribute to different degrees to the work of Council. He observed,

But in any board, as you know, you get a few who are doing a lot of the work and a few who add value by being able to give opinions, but aren't necessarily getting fully engaged. (Interview #1, p. 5)

This accorded with my observations of Council members' contributions at Council and Committee meetings. For example, on the Finance Committee I observed on occasion Council members, who had not fully read the papers, still making a worthwhile contribution to the meeting's consideration of issues, by drawing on their knowledge of the School and their considerable skills from their executive roles. The context of the Finance Committee probably contributed to this dynamic due to the extraordinary level of preparation for meetings by the Deputy Chairman, who chaired this committee, and the high level of competence of the Business Manager. A sense of reliance or complacency can arise when board members have the benefit of highly skilled, experienced and engaged colleagues. Research by Deem *et al.* (1995) found that the differential participation of UK school governors varied substantially and was more significant for effective governance than their capacity and knowledge.

To make the required high level of commitment invariably leads to consideration of candidates' motivation to join Council. A strong service ethic and a significant connection to the School were identified in the data as key drivers for Councillors' embracing the expected level of commitment. The position also conveyed cultural capitals that were valued in several fields and which would be beneficial to a Councillor's positioning in those fields. For example, Councillor R, as a member of the clergy, would strengthen his cultural capitals within the field of the Church by reason of his position on Council as the Archbishop's nominee. A study by Erakovic (2009) revealed that clarity and alignment of mission with their own personal interests and the opportunity to engage with people of similar interests were important attractants for board members of nonprofit organizations. The greatest barrier to participation by board members was the demands of their own business or employment.

Each Councillor will leverage their social and cultural capitals to promote and help the School and as a source of information about the School and its operations

It was expected that Councillors would leverage their social and cultural capitals in different fields to promote the School. If a person held a dominant position in a field, statements by them about the School would have legitimacy, and hence enhance the School's reputation. The Headmaster believes that,

At least one third of the Council should be people who have got credibility, people who are networking, people who talk about their experience on the [school] board and give the School profile. (Interview #2, p. 12)

Importantly, a Councillor was also expected to leverage their capitals so they had several sources of 'intelligence' about the School to help inform Council. These sources were principally through their connections with key stakeholders of the School and through their own experience as a stakeholder, such as those Councillors who were parents. As explained by Councillor Y,

There are a lot of occasions during the year where the wider school community comes together and ... when you know people and they know you, you keep running into them and the opportunities, the conversations and chats are significant. (Interview #1, p. 3)

In addition to the benefits that stakeholder engagement at many levels of an organization brings, Councillors believed that the Headmaster should not be the 'single source of truth' about the life and functioning of the School. Involvement of other members of the executive staff at Council meetings, through attendance or presentations, and working closely with the executive in committees provided different perspectives and emphasis of matter for Council. As observed by the Deputy Chairman, 'working with the executive you keep your ears open and you learn what they say, how to interpret it' (Interview #1, p. 10). The Business Manager, as the Council Secretary, had a reporting line directly to Council which provided an important liaison and information source for Council. As discussed in Chapter 13, the Business Manager adeptly managed this dual reporting line, maintaining an open communication with Council, while recognizing the Headmaster's authority. The Headmaster also appreciated the value of Councillors being 'networked into the daily life of the School', so as to understand the culture of the School and bring that understanding to their deliberations and decision making (Interview #1, p. 2). This expectation of School governors being 'in touch' with the School was also found in a study by Price (2005), where trustees valued being able to 'tap into' the daily activities of the school, thus providing a mechanism for monitoring by the board that would not be available to a board of another type of organization.

My cultural assumptions

In the process of the cultural analysis I was confronted with my own cultural norms about the School and the way Council should function. It was important that I develop an awareness of these assumptions so that I could control and reduce the effects and influence of my relation to the object of my research; namely the complex integrated social processes of governance of Council as the School's governing body. The nature of my work as a non-executive director of different companies in diverse sectors and industries, each with their own culture, requires me to be adaptable and modify my behaviours so I can move between organizations and 'fit in' with each group. Whilst this adaptability facilitates my transition to a new group and environment, over time, as I learn more of the deeper levels of culture of the organization, a tension develops if I do not feel comfortable with the group's culture. My response invariably has been to try to influence the group to change, usually through roles of special responsibility, such as Chairing board committees. Working with Council provided me with an appreciation of how difficult it is to change culture because of its inherent strength and the anxiety that change brings to members of the group. As Schein (2010) explains, 'culture is deep, pervasive, complex, patterned and morally neutral' (p. 60). I realized that in many instances in board roles where I had tried to initiate significant change, there were not sufficient drivers or processes to support the change I advocated. I also realized that, although on one level I could be adaptable, I was still entrenched in my own cultural beliefs, particularly my beliefs around board member competence and behaviours. I needed to 'overcome my own cultural prejudices about the right and wrong way to do things and to learn that culture simply exists' (Schein, 2010, p. 60).

In relation to the School I was challenged by the goal conflict between an 'all round' educational journey and a commitment to academic excellence, particularly when I observed the School's commitment (in focus and resources) to sporting participation and success. I found the influence of the old boys in strengthening the sporting reputation of the School unhealthy, as their singular focus on sporting success appeared to be in support of their own sense of self, rather than the interests of the School as an educational institution. In relation to Council, the norms on decision making, communication and commitment resonated with my cultural norms of a collaborative working environment and respect within an organization for the governing body's role and contributions. However, I was challenged by the gendered *habitus* and gendered communication styles of Councillors F and S. My experience of boardrooms dominated by men had generated norms for me that privileged male dimensions of *habitus* and *capitals* over female dimensions. After the first couple of Council meetings I found myself reflecting on how Councillors F and S could 'do things

differently' to compensate for their gendered habitus and the lack of an important social capital; namely, being an old boy. I had to accept what I was observing and drop an expectation that Councillors F and S should be different so as to be, in my eyes, more effective as members of Council.

Conclusion

To understand the culture of Council and its influence on the way Council functioned, I sought to decipher the pattern of significant shared underlying assumptions, by employing Schein's conception of organizational culture and his dimensions of external adaption and integral integration, and identify whether there was congruence with the more observable indicators of culture, namely the artifacts and espoused beliefs and values. In this chapter I have described several significant foundational elements of the culture of Council and its effect on Council functioning and decisions. The analysis confirmed a high level of congruence between the deepest levels of culture and stated values; with the exception of Council's interpretation of the Church's stated mission for the School. Council functioned at a subtle and sophisticated level to ensure their 'interpretation' of mission, founded in the ethos of the School, informed the key strategic and operational decisions of the School. Each of the shared underlying assumptions about the School could be traced back to the early leadership of the School by the founding Headmasters, although nuanced changes could be discerned; confirming Schein's theory that the leadership of an organization is the original source of these deep cultural elements.

The shared underlying assumptions provided Council with stability and meaning and moderated Councillors' *habitus* in their work on Council and framed their contributions and decision making. An example of the strength of Council's cultural foundation was seen in the dismissal of any notion that the School may in the future become co-educational. 'Culture change is difficult, time-consuming and anxiety-provoking' and there was no indication that Council was about to embark on that course in relation to any of the cultural foundations explored in this chapter (Schein, 2010, p. 33). Council was faced with the realization that it needed to improve academic attainment, particularly in the senior school in respect of tertiary entrance scores, and in the context of publication of league tables for a number of year levels in the media. However, this created some difficulty for Council in accommodating this goal within the cultural construct of the 'making of the man'. Council was concerned that working towards this goal would adversely impact the ethos of the School. The last decade of solid, but uninspiring academic performance, had been accepted by Council as an ingredient of the making of the man recipe. In contrast, the professionalization of sport in the School over the last several years had been easily accommodated within the same cultural construct. Examining my

own cultural assumptions about the School and Council enabled me to understand my positionality and thus control the impact of my experiences and perceptions during the analysis of the data.

Chapter 13

Functioning of Council

Introduction

Council had implemented a comprehensive governance system for the School. Drawing heavily on their collective knowledge of corporate structures and processes, a framework supported by policies and processes had been designed to manage the risks of the School taking into account contextual and stakeholder factors. The development of this system and how it was implemented was influenced by context, stakeholder expectations, cultural norms of Council and the School and the *habitus* and *capitals* of Councillors. Key features of the governance system and its application by Council are explored in this chapter, drawing on documents and observational and interview data.

The Role of Council

Council was the body with the authority to govern the School and the accountability for actions and omissions by the School. Carver (2006) notes that the governing body sits at the pinnacle of the hierarchy and therefore ‘its total authority is matched by its total accountability for all corporate activity’ (p. 9). The constitution specifically listed a number of Council responsibilities, including determining and implementing strategy and policy, authorizing the School’s curriculum, financial and operational performance management, asset management, risk management and staff employment. Council had the power to delegate as it saw fit, including to Committees. The constitution also provided that Council (with approval from the Schools Commission) had the power appoint the Headmaster who was accountable to Council for the day to day management of the School. Council decided the parameters of the Headmaster’s authority and responsibility.

Council had, through a Charter of Council, endeavored to provide more specificity and clarity around its role vis-à-vis the role of management. The Charter expressed the primary role of Council to,

- Appoint the Headmaster and evaluate the performance of the Headmaster and the School,
- Protect the interests of all stakeholders and the philosophy and ethos of the School,
- Establish the strategic direction of the School and to monitor its performance against that direction,
- Monitor performance against approved plans and policies, and
- Ensure compliance with all statutory and regulatory requirements⁴⁸.

⁴⁸ These elements reflect the normative literature for the role of a school council in an independent school - refer Chapter 4

A list of twenty three areas of specific responsibilities for Council followed this primary role description. The Charter confirmed that the ultimate management of the School was with Council and delegate the ‘leadership, day to day management and welfare of the School’ to the Headmaster as the Chief Executive Officer. The Charter confirmed the responsibilities of the Headmaster in the broad areas of,

- Advice on and implementation of School policies,
- Attraction and retention of students,
- Curriculum and co-curricular development and spiritual and pastoral care,
- Financial and operational management, and
- Stakeholder engagement.

Interestingly, the only reference to an educational framework for the School was a generic reference to responsibility for curriculum and co-curricular activities. The Charter was supported by specific delegations, for example financial delegations specifying limits on financial authority.

The Charter provided for Council Committees to support the work of Council, including the two standing Committees of Finance and Education. Each Committee had a charter outlining its role, responsibilities, authority and procedural elements. The Charter also provided for a number of procedural matters including Council meetings. Council’s approach to the establishment and responsibilities of Committees was supported by the normative governance literature (AICD, 2010).

Council’s responsibility to appoint the Headmaster, establish the strategic direction and monitor the School’s performance and compliance are regarded as essential elements of the role of the board in the normative literature on corporate governance⁴⁹ and nonprofit governance⁵⁰. Nonprofit governance literature also confirms the role of the board in representing the interests of stakeholders and implementing the mission. In the context of the School, Council was required to operate within a mission mandated by the Church. However, Council determined the strategic direction of the School within this mandate, and, as discussed earlier in this chapter, Council had an ‘applied’ approach to the religious overlay in the mission, by the re-articulation of religiosity into a values based educational community, in recognition that the School was also framed by the State field, the economic field and the fields of education, and nonprofit organizations.

The Chairman and the Deputy Chairman took the lead on the development of the Charter and other governance documents, bringing their extensive experience with governance frameworks from

⁴⁹ Cadbury, 2002; Stiles & Taylor, 201; ASX, 2007.

⁵⁰ Cornforth, 2003; Hudson, 2009; Miller-Millesen, 2003; Chait & Taylor, 2005; Stone & Ostrower, 2007; Houle, 1997; Herman, 1989.

the corporate sector. The School's governance documents have been used by the Schools Commission to assist other Church schools develop their governance frameworks.

The Charter was supported by a number of policies specific to the work of Council, such as a Code of Conduct for Council and Council Performance Process, as well as an extensive range of policies covering key operations, from curriculum to student conduct to risk management and asset management.

Council spent a significant amount of time on policy development and review, as these policies provided guidelines for the Headmaster and staff in the day to day management of the School and set important boundaries for the exercise of authority within the School. Policies are laden with values and perspectives, even if not explicitly stated, and have important implications for stakeholders. Policies set the expectations for people, roles and programs within the School and informed choices and decisions (Carver, 2006).

Governing bodies can draw the boundary between the work of the board and the work of management where they want to, however need to recognize the universal proposition from the normative literature that the board cannot perform the role of the Chief Executive Officer (Carver, 2006; Herman & Heimovics, 1994). As described by Councillor KL from the Stage 2 interviews,

The board cannot exert executive control ... it would be like taking away the fingerprints of the Chief Executive.

Carver (2006) advocates a policy governance model for school governing bodies under which the boundary between the board and management should be set along policy setting (board) and policy implementation (management) lines on the premise that boards should delegate to the maximum extent that is consistent with the board's accountability function. A limitation in the application of Carver's policy governance model is that it can result in a minimization of the monitoring and evaluating role of the board and therefore the need for and benefit of board members with appropriate task related skills.

In the corporate world, a recent survey of ASX 200 chairman and directors, found that there is a significant shift in the boundaries between board and management and the board is playing at a deeper level than in the past and is more involved in operational detail (Deloitte, 2009). What is emerging in corporate boardrooms in Australia is a model of shared accountability with more involved boards, particularly through the Chair and Committee Chairs. It is not a blurring of the boundaries, but a shift in the model to a concept of 'shared accountability'. This concept envisages a sharing of the roles and responsibilities with both board and management being accountable for the means and the

ends. This means more time being spent by management on Committee and board work and boards having more involvement with management.

Where Council drew the boundaries was influenced by the School's contextual and relationship factors, the collective and individual capacity of Councillors and their *habitus* and *capitals*, and the culture of Council. Governance is a dynamic process. Clarity of the roles of Council and the Headmaster and a shared understanding and commitment to the arrangement is important for an effective working relationship between Council and the Headmaster; however, tension at the interface is a continuous reality. The Chairman thought the boundaries between the role of Council and that of the Headmaster were different to where they would be for a company in the corporate sector. In the words of the Chairman,

I think the line between board and management is blurred here. A school will always be different to the corporate world because I think they're dealing with different animals on a day to day basis and the Headmaster is not like a CEO in the commercial sector. At Company A [name of commercial company that the Chairman chairs] I've got an experienced managing director who's come through the ranks, gone through the hard knocks, been managing director of a failed company, reported to a board previously, gone through all the financial courses etc, he's an experienced CEO. If you look at the School, the Headmaster has a \$45 million business, not a small business, and you look at the training he's had to get to that point and the pressure he's under from parents, press and others on a daily basis. I think he needs the support [of Council] and if he was left alone he would make a lot of mistakes. I know I have saved him from making a lot of mistakes. We cross the line and get into operations more than we should in a pure governance sense, but I'm comfortable in doing that because I want to ensure that we're covering off on the things that I know the School sees are there to cover off on. (Interview #1, compilation of comments from p. 8, 9 & 14)

The Chairman's approach was different to what may have been expected from an experienced corporate sector player; someone socialised to a strategic non-operational approach to governance and a clear understanding of the distinction between governance and management. However, it was the Chairman's extensive experience in the fields of commerce and schools that has enabled him to appreciate the important differences between schools and corporates. The School had complex contextual and relationship factors that influenced the governing task and governing body functioning.

Councillor Y acknowledged the boundary between the role of Council and the role of management was not easily managed. He noted,

There is a risk with Council from a governance point of view, because it is very involved in the School, that they will start to try to poke their finger into operational matters. But because we do discuss things fairly openly at Council and because the Headmaster is not afraid to speak his mind, I think everyone sort of knows roughly where the line is. (Interview #1 p. 3)

My observations of Council meetings and the interview data revealed that each of the Councillors had an appreciation of the board versus management role challenge. I had expected the Councillors with a 'corporate' background to appreciate this challenge. I also expected this of Councillor S as a former principal of independent schools experienced in working with a board. Councillor R's earlier management career in the public sector also equipped him with some knowledge of governance. However, Councillor F did not seem to understand the difference in real terms between the role of Council vis-à-vis management. This lack of understanding became apparent when observing Councillor F in her role as Chair of the Education Committee, a topic discussed later in this chapter.

An example of the 'blurring of the line' between Council and the executive concerned Council's involvement in the development of a new expulsion policy to respond to parent concerns with the level to which the decision to expel had been devolved within the School. After considerable discussion at several Council meetings, it was decided that any decision to expel would only be made by the Headmaster (as opposed to being made at Head of School level) and would be communicated by the Headmaster to the parents and student. The discussion initially created considerable tension between the Headmaster and Council, as the Headmaster thought that disciplinary matters were a matter for his judgement and not the involvement of Council. Council, however, saw this as an important stakeholder issue and one in which Council should, after discussion with the Headmaster, form a view. Council thought the existing process did not sufficiently recognize the student and his parents / guardian as important stakeholders of the School or protect the School's reputation in the broader community. As explained by Councillor S in relation to this issue, 'one of the major roles of Council is to protect the culture of the School and its reputation and standing in the community' (Interview #1, p. 27).

Council therefore saw it as part of their role, as stewards for the stakeholders and guardians of the School's values, to review the policy. Council's involvement in this issue could be justified; however, it highlighted the practical issue of managing the boundary between the role of Council and the role of the Headmaster and his executive team. Importantly, in changing the policy Council ensured the Headmaster was the person with the authority to make an expulsion decision. Council focused on values, that is, recognizing the importance of the student and his parents in the process. As noted by Councillor S,

Under normal circumstances I would be saying to Council - this issue, discipline, is operational and none of your business, but when you have complaints that are coming to the board, going to

the Church, when you have parents out there creating havoc that is damaging the School's reputation and standing in the community then it is Council business. (Interview # 1 p. 19)

The Chairman envisaged a future where School Councils would be less involved in operational matters as Principals became more experienced in the chief executive component of their roles. However, he did not see schools replicating the governance model of the corporate sector because of the nature of schools.

[In the future] as heads become more competent and with the appreciation of the governance model the line [between the board and management] will not be quite as blurred ... although I think a school will always be different to the corporate world because I think they're dealing with different animals on a day to day basis. (Interview #1, p. 14)

Research in the nonprofit sector suggests that boards engage in the day to day issues as well as the strategic issues (Steane & Christie, 2001), with managers more focused on a clear delineation of roles than board members (Erakovic, 2009). The Headmaster's view was that Council 'interfered' in the running of the School, particularly through the work of Council's Education Committee.

The Chairman also thought Council had an important role in protecting and supporting the work of the Headmaster. This however, required open communication between Council and the Headmaster. As explained by the Chairman,

If something goes wrong in a school and a Council doesn't know about it the Head is likely to get less support than he would if it had been something that he had shared with the Council or that the Council had set a policy or taken a decision on. (Interview # 2, p. 8)

Open communication between Council and Headmaster was valued by Councillors. Council expected to be briefed on key issues and to have early advice of any significant problem areas. This expectation was also part of Council's approach to the exercise of its responsibility to hold the Headmaster to account. As explained by the Chairman,

We don't want just the good news, we want the bad news, and it's important ... and it's one of the reasons that I come and talk to the Headmaster weekly. (Interview #1, p. 8)

Councillor S, a former secondary school Principal, observed,

There are heads who would not tell their boards anything, and that comes back to you and your ability to know yourself and how to manage up and manage down, but it's also about being open. I believe that the more information you give the board the better. One of the absolutely critical things is that they [management] let us know – we rely on them to let us know if they have any sort of issues to do with staffing or students or whatever that is going to blow up. 'No surprises' is absolutely critical. However there has to be the kind of relationship with the board

that by giving it to them warts and all and letting them know what you are doing about it isn't going to see you labeled a poor head. (Interview #1, p. 22/23)

The Chairman thought the benefits of an effective School Council were gradually being recognized in schools. As he explained,

I think heads are becoming more accepting of governance, instead of seeing it as an erosion of their authority, because of the exposures and risks that have increased for them and in ten years' time heads, CEOs, or whatever they will be called, will have more respect for councils than heads might have had over the last ten years. If you go back twenty years the head was absolutely in control and council members didn't go into schools. (Interview #1, p. 14)

The Chairman had the commitment of all Councillors that Council would seek to function like a corporate board; by adopting corporate practices to governance. The Chairman sought this commitment because, although he appreciated the differences between a corporate and a school, he saw corporate governance as providing higher and better governance practices. Councillor S described her role as 'that of a company director. All the company director stuff about acting responsibly, exercising care and skill and all the governance stuff' (Interview #1, p. 18). The Deputy Chairman observed,

The Chairman has told Council the standard that we'd operate at ... is like a corporate board and new members see the way we operate. Our stakeholders expect the same level of governance and accountability as shareholders of major listed companies. (Interview #1, p. 5)

Council was clear they had a monitoring and evaluating role; to monitor and evaluate the performance of the School and the Headmaster's management of it and to hold him to account for that performance. That the School's constitution conferred on the Headmaster the leadership and management of the School did not moderate Council's view of the importance of this aspect of their role as a governing body. Council set parameters for the Headmaster's authority, received regular information in the form of Council papers and other documents, accessed other sources of information concerning the School, evaluated that information and assessed the Headmaster's performance through a formal process against agreed indicators. These control mechanisms focused attention on the achievement of goals and sustainment of resources. Council acknowledged the Headmaster as the educator-in-chief of the School and the dominant position he held in the field of the School; however, they were not daunted by it. While recognizing his leadership of the School, it was to Council as the governing body that he answered for the responsibility conferred upon him. Control mechanisms were interdependent with trust mechanisms that promoted decision making and a unified organization. An example of trust mechanisms will be discussed in the following section concerning strategic direction

of the School. An ongoing balance between ‘control’ and ‘trust’ elements was required so as to enhance the initiative and motivation of the Headmaster. Research has found this ‘cooperative relational process ... contributes to board effectiveness’ (Stiles & Taylor, 2001, p.118) Trust and control are interdependent because boards operate in complex and uncertain conditions. Control mechanisms focus attention on organizational goals and trust mechanism promote decision making and enhance cohesiveness.

The Chairman provided Councillors with an opportunity to provide feedback on the Headmaster’s performance during scheduled ‘in camera’ sessions built into Council meeting agendas. The Chairman provided the Headmaster with ongoing feedback and did not only rely on the formal performance appraisal process.

How the School performed across its curricular and co-curricular activities exerted a continual pressure on the functioning of Council. Council had a holistic view of performance, reflecting the School’s historical and current focus on developing the ‘whole student’. Student participation and performance in all areas of School activity was reported to and monitored by Council. However, academic results had come more to the foreground in recent years as competition from other schools increased. All ‘good’ schools had extensive co-curricular programs and aimed to provide supportive and resilience building pastoral environments. The Headmaster’s performance metrics included measures on the School’s academic ranking in senior year tertiary entrance scores and performance in the interschool sporting competition. As discussed in Chapter 12, the School was learning how to accommodate a goal of high academic attainment within the cultural construct of character development.

Council’s monitoring role was also to ensure the resources of the School were preserved and enhanced. These resources included not only the physical assets, but also the School’s reputational capital, the skills of staff and the cultural and social capitals of stakeholders. Council had recognized, as part of its strategic and monitoring roles, the value of an external professional perspective on aspects of the School. Several years previously Council commissioned a review of some structural and operational elements of the School. Council used the results to inform it’s near term goals and monitoring focus. Although Council’s motivation for commissioning the review was not a lack of confidence or trust in the Headmaster, the process caused initial concern at executive level because the Headmaster thought it was unnecessary. After the event, Council and the Headmaster acknowledged that the issues highlighted and recommendations made were beneficial from both a Council and executive perspective.

All Councillors wanted to have a good understanding of what was happening within the School; ‘the life of the School’ (Councillor C, Interview #1, p. 27). To develop this understanding Councillors accessed multiple sources of information about the functioning and standing of the School, and did not just rely on the Council papers and formal Headmaster reports. As described previously, these other sources were from other roles they held, such as a coach or parent, connections to School stakeholders, attending School events and interacting with people in the broader community who had relationships or dealings with the School. Councillors used their capitals and positions in related and unrelated fields to access meaningful information. Multiple sources of information were important to Councillors, as they did not want to be dependent on information that was given to them by the person that they were to hold to account for the day to day management of the School, namely the Headmaster. This approach addressed an issue identified in a UK study on school governors, which found that a significant percentage of governors relied too much on the head teacher as the source of information about their school (Earley, 2003). In another independent school context where I was a Council member, I observed the Principal, who was not a member of the Council, occupy a position in the field of Council second only to the Chair, through effective use of *habitus* and *capitals* and, with the support of the Chair, draw very strict boundaries around the work of the Council, so it was confined to very high level strategic and financial oversight based on a flow of information strictly controlled by the Principal.

My observations of Council meetings provided numerous examples of how information from ‘other’ sources was constructively woven into the discussion and consideration of issues. Sharing this useful information also strengthened a Councillor’s capitals and thus positioning in the social world of the Council.

Although Council carried out a monitoring role and had control mechanisms in place it was not in response to self interested or opportunistic executives as espoused by agency theory (Clarke, 2002). To the contrary, Councillors and the executive each saw themselves as stewards of the School with their interests aligned with the School’s interests. Their respective governance and management practices reflected elements of stewardship theory and they sought to sensitively balance elements of control and trust (Davis, Schoorman & Donaldson, 1997).

Council’s Role in Strategy

The normative literatures for the corporate and nonprofit sectors identify strategy as a key responsibility of the board (Cadbury, 2002; Stiles & Taylor, 2001; Chait, Taylor & Ryan, 2005). Similarly, the recent literature and research on school governing bodies in the US and the UK asserts

strategic direction as a key responsibility for governors (James *et al.*, 2011; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011). Much has been written about what this means in practice, that is, is the board's role to develop, to approve, or to verify a strategy exists? 'Best practice' sees strategy developed as an iterative process between the board and the executives; starting with a high level conversation about the existing strategy, organizational performance and challenges for the future. A process is agreed and the executives undertake the research, accesses external expertise if required and prepare discussion papers for further conversations with the board. From these discussions will evolve strategic goals to which the board and executive commit. The executives then develop the operational plans, budgets and performance indicators to achieve the strategic goals and these key corporate documents are reviewed and signed off by the board.

During the year I spent with Council, they followed this approach to review and refresh the School's existing strategic plan. There were several iterative conversations at Council meetings leading up to the strategic planning day, focusing on the existing plan, what had been achieved and what the Headmaster and his senior executives saw as the current and future challenges for school education. Discussion papers were prepared in advance of the strategic planning day, attended by all Councillors and the senior executives. The existing strategy was confirmed; however, specific actions were agreed under the themes of teacher quality, curriculum development and stakeholders. It was also agreed to conduct focus groups with key stakeholders facilitated by an educational consultant to 'test' elements of the mission and strategy. The interactions between Councillors and the extended executive team were collegiate, good humoured and open. The process and interactions promoted collaborative decisions and cohesiveness of Council and the executive; a good example of trust as a component of Council's governance practice.

Council's approach to strategic planning required Councillors to have a sound understanding of the School's purpose and internal and external operating environment and the skills to conceptualize, evaluate and communicate. My observations of Councillors' participation in the strategic discussions at Council meetings and at the strategic planning day revealed differences in the knowledge and skills of Councillors. These differences in capacity resulted in variable contributions in both number and quality. In relation to knowledge the most obvious capacity differential was in relation to matters concerning 'education', as compared with say matters of a business nature (finance, resources and risk management). For example, several Councillors were limited in their contributions to discussion on some of the strategic issues for schools arising from the Federal Government's educational reforms, such as the implementation of the national curriculum and the quality of teaching and performance

based pay. In relation to skills, some Councillors were more comfortable when talking about concrete matters such as enrolment numbers and capital projects compared with conceptualized thinking. This may have been a reflection on the focus of the day as being a review of the existing strategic plan rather than development of a new plan. The differences in Councillors capacities may have also been intensified by the manner in which the day was conducted. The Chairman facilitated the discussion and, although the atmosphere was collegiate and the discussion free flowing, the meeting lacked a framework to support concept development or analysis. There were also signs of some lack of preparation on the part of several Councillors; whereas all executives appeared very well prepared.

The evaluation by Council of its performance, discussed later in this chapter, revealed a disconnect between how Councillors rated the executives' ability to deliver on the strategic direction (high) to how Councillors thought the executives would rate their ability to provide the strategic direction (moderate). The accompanying comments from Councillors indicated that the executives' view would reflect how they saw their relationship with the Council, rather than as a reflection on Council's collective skills in strategy development. Given the significance of strategy in Council's role, Council could explore more fully with the executives their views; as either communication or capacity issues should be addressed to maximize the outcomes of the process. Although the evaluation questions referred to Council setting strategy and management implementing, my observations confirmed that Council approached strategy development as a shared endeavour.

Research has shown that many school governing bodies find it difficult to operate strategically (Ofsted, 2002; Balarin *et al.*, 2008). Ofsted noted in their 2002 report on UK governing bodies that, Governors in about 90% of schools have a satisfactory or better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their school, but they are less effective in shaping the direction of the schools. (p. 5)

This report identified a lack of governors' capacity and dominance by the head teacher in many schools. A 2008 UK study found that school governors ranked strategic planning fifth in their assessment of their most significant contributions, with supporting the headteacher and monitoring plans and targets ranking higher (Balarin *et al.*, 2008).

Council had processes for monitoring performance against the plan; however, the linkages between the strategy and operational plans could be clearer and operational reports to Council similarly aligned.

Some studies of nonprofit boards have found correlations between board effectiveness in the area of strategic planning with organizational effectiveness (Brown, 2005; Green & Griesinger, 1996;

Crittenden *et al.*, 1988). Certainly Council viewed strategy as one of its core responsibilities and believed it was accountable to the School's stakeholders for its development and implementation and for delivering successful outcomes. To this end, Council invested significant time and other resources in planning and monitoring processes.

Council Meetings

The normative literature emphasizes the importance of clear procedures, quality briefing papers and a skilled chair for effective meetings (AICD, 2011a; ISQ, 2012). The majority of Council's work occurred in meetings, either at a full Council meeting or in the standing Committees of Finance and Education. Council had developed a number of cultural artifacts and meeting protocols which shaped the format and flow of the meetings.

Councillors and other meeting attendees usually arrived at the meeting ten to fifteen minutes before the formal meeting commencement time. This provided an opportunity for social conversation while having some light refreshments. I observed the Chairman delay the formal start of the meeting by up to fifteen minutes on several occasions when the majority of attendees arrived close to the meeting start time, so as to allow people time to connect and talk. This time was important, not only in having attendees interact, but also to help participants transition from their previous activity, which in most cases would have been unrelated to the School, to the task at hand.

The Chairman sat at the head of the board table with the Headmaster to his right and the Council Secretary to his left. Other Councillors took the seats closest to the Chairman and executives seats furthest away. This seating allowed the Chairman to guide and support the Headmaster in meetings and to have the support of the Council Secretary close at hand. Councillors were otherwise together as a group and the seating for other executives confirmed them as 'outside' of Council.

The agenda distributed with Council papers provided the frame for the meeting and meetings were conducted so as to cover all agenda items and in the order in which they were listed. Deferral of agenda items was decided collectively. Usually the papers, dispatched to Councillors five days in advance of the meeting, provided support for all matters to be discussed. The exceptions were an occasional urgent matter, matters covered in the Chairman's report which was delivered verbally (although these usually pertained to matters for information rather than decision) and the last agenda item of 'general business' where matters of a minor nature could be raised, again usually for information.

Full Council meetings always commenced with a prayer, led by the clerical member of Council if in attendance. The opening prayer was usually followed by a presentation from an external

party or a member of staff. Questions and discussions on the presentation topic followed and the presentation session was usually finalized within one hour. Presentations were primarily designed for Council's monitoring role; although they also fulfilled an 'educative' role, building Council's collective capacity. The presenter, if not a usual attendee at a Council meeting, left the meeting at this point and the meeting proper commenced with noting of apologies and approval of the minutes of the previous meeting. The Headmaster's written report to Council was 'tabled' and the Headmaster spoke to the report. The report covered all aspects of the School operation, including curricular and co-curricular activity, enrolments and financial management, staff management, stakeholder engagement and risk management, and discussion was extensive. Reports from Council's standing Committees were spoken to by Committee Chairs and papers requiring decision or noting dealt with. The Chairman's report was towards the end of the agenda so matters of a particularly sensitive nature (for a discussion with Councillors only) could occur and other meeting attendees able to leave the meeting. This organizing reduced the need for members of staff to leave the meeting room at several different times during the meeting.

From my extensive observations at Council meetings over the course of one year, it is the case that discussion in meetings was open and free flowing. Councillors and members of executive staff in attendance all contributed widely and confidently. There was a clear indication that Council was where matters concerning the proper functioning of the School would be articulated, understood and scrutinized. Questions and discussion provided understanding and contributed to the development of alternative approaches. The Headmaster, not unexpectedly, had a central role at Council meetings. He spoke at length without impeding whole Council discussion and debate. Notwithstanding the Headmaster's positioning in the field of Council, his participation and contributions were valued and welcomed. As he noted,

Council has been incredibly supportive of me in the Council chamber and they are very aware that I am a CEO and that they should take seriously my recommendations. There are few things that I've put on the table that haven't got through. (Interview #1, p. 11)

The Chairman's regular meetings with the Headmaster to act as a sounding board would have also contributed to this 'success rate'. Scrutiny of issues though by Councillors was not seen as undermining the authority of the Headmaster or his leadership within the School community. The quality of the interactions was high; professional, positive, serious, respectful and genuine. From observation, only Councillor D tended to get 'off track' or take too long to express a view, which on occasions caused some tension in the meetings. The discourse at the meetings reflected Councillors'

high levels of education and senior professional or business experience. Discussion at Council meetings revealed a mix of strategic issues and day to day issues, reflecting the findings of empirical research into the functioning of nonprofit boards (Steane & Christie, 2001). A challenge for Council, like many other governing bodies, was to not let the immediate concerns crowd out discussion on longer term issues or for strategic intentions to give way to operational issues. It was evident from analysis of the data gathered from interviews, observations of Council meetings, and Councillors interactions with the School community that Council could operate reflexively in several modes as illustrated in Figure 13.1.

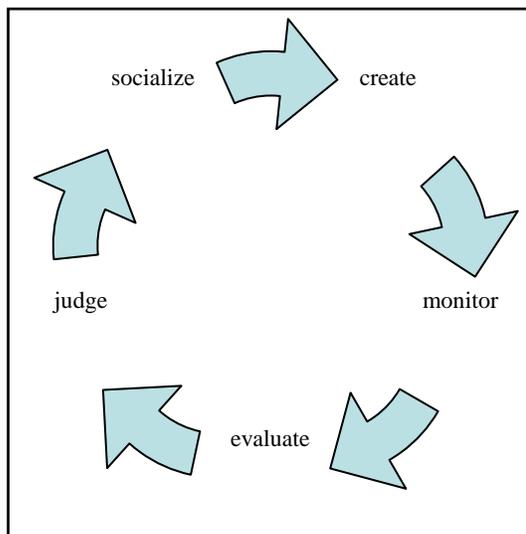


Figure 13.1. Modes of Functioning of Council

The Chairman and the Deputy Chairman were a powerful duo with shared views on most issues. Their experience, authority, long standing and hard work provided a solid core for Council as a group. The similarities in their practice were subtly revealed through the research interviews and observations of Council and committee meetings.

An important cultural artifact was the break during the evening meeting to share a meal. During this hour papers were pushed to one side and the conversations around the table ranged over many topics, including the School. All Councillors enjoyed and valued this time with each other and the conversations were always animated and good humored. It also provided a break from the concentrated effort required to participate actively in the formal meeting. The presentation and the meal added about two hours to the meeting length, and meetings usually did not finish until past ten pm. The Chairman was conscious that the meetings were lengthy and noted that,

One of the things that cause me long meetings is that I'm not all that sort of autocratic. I'm a bit careful about the decisions we make so everyone has an opportunity to contribute and the

resolution is supported by everyone. I could have a Council meeting over in an hour if I wanted to but that's just not going to have people feeling positive about their contributions and their role. I also like to make sure people are aware of what I'm doing. I mean, I like to give a little rundown at the end of the meeting of what I've done so they know where I've been and what I'm doing. (Compilation of comments from Interview #1, p. 6 & 8)

On meeting length Councillor Y observed,

We always go on about the fact that the meetings are so long but you know deep down I don't think any of us particularly mind that, having put the evening aside, so I don't see that as a big deal. (Interview #2, p. 12)

The Chairman scheduled two 'in camera' sessions per year at the end of a Council meeting without any management present. He explained his rationale for this:

I schedule two sessions a year in the meetings without the Headmaster and the Business Manager and the others; and the reason I do that is to avoid the festering. If someone's got a problem with the Headmaster, for example, or they've got a problem with me that they don't want to put out in front of the administration, here's an opportunity to do it. So I say to the Headmaster, 'it's not necessarily about you, but if someone's got a problem with something you're doing it's better I know about it and it's better you know about it' and this is a mechanism to do it so it doesn't fester. And I go to the Headmaster the next day and say 'this is what we talked about'. I won't spell out who said this and who said that but I'll sort of say, 'there is a bit of sensitivity around this' or whatever and he will say 'well, what are your concerns?' ... so it's just a mechanism to communicate and to avoid those sorts of issues. (Interview #1, p. 4/ 5)

My observations of these sessions during the year confirmed that they achieved this purpose. Councillors wanted to 'chew the fat' on how the Headmaster and the School were going and the Chairman did not seek to moderate any views expressed, although several times other Councillors moderated their colleagues' statements.

There were concerns within Council as to the quality of the Headmaster's written report, which was acknowledged as being a significant part of a Council meeting, usually taking approximately one and hours for delivery and discussion. Councillor Y noted that the structure of the report could be improved and contain more analysis and observation from the Headmaster, rather than a 'cut and paste' from memorandums prepared by different executives (Interview #2, p. 12 & 13). The Headmaster believed he was responsive to suggestions Councillors may have so as to ensure he was providing Councillors with a report that was comprehensive and useful to facilitate discussion and decision (Interview #2, p. 3). The quality of the Headmaster's report was important as it framed and supported discussion on key strategic and operational issues for the School. My review of Council

papers and observations at Council meetings revealed this to be area where enhancements could be made, although it would take some time to optimize the structure and improve the linkages with the School's strategic and operational plans.

Council meetings were skillfully facilitated by the Chairman. He managed the mechanics of the meeting, while creating an environment where matters were decided by consensus and Councillors encouraged to express views and be respectful of others' contributions. In the words of Councillor D, He chairs meetings efficiently and respectful of the fact that everybody has volunteered to come here. (Interview #1 p. 5)

The effectiveness of Committee meetings similarly relied on the preparation and skills of the Chair of the Committee. The role and functioning of the Committees will be explored later in this chapter.

A Critical Role – the Chairman

The role of the Chair is described in all of the governance literature as critical for a well functioning board (Cadbury, 2002; Higgs, 2003). This makes the role of the Chair a key element in the governance framework, as he or she has a pivotal role in creating the conditions for individual board member and board effectiveness. The significance of the role is recognized in the normative literature by the many attempts to define what a Chair must be and do in order to be 'effective' (Higgs, 2003). For the School, this translated to the Chairman promoting and upholding high standards of governance and integrity, promoting an open and collaborative Council environment and clear and consistent processes for discussion, decision making and decision implementation, initiating and managing succession planning for Council, establishing a close relationship of trust with the Headmaster, providing support and advice while respecting executive responsibility, and representing the School in stakeholder relations (Higgs, 2003; Cadbury, 2002). Each of these elements will be discussed below in the context of the Chairman of Council.

Role model

The Chairman was seen by his Council colleagues as a role model of very high personal and professional standards. As observed by Councillor S, 'he leads in an ethical and responsible manner' (Interview #1, p. 17). His *habitus* and *capitals*, as described in Chapter 10, gave him a high standing in the eyes of Councillors and a dominant position in a number of fields, including Council and the School. He had all of the key personal attributes identified in the normative literature for an effective director (Higgs, 2003; Cadbury, 2002; McNulty, Roberts & Stiles, 2003).

Board environment

The Chairman adopted a collaborative approach to discussion and decision making at Council meetings. The norm was for the Chairman to elicit views from Councillors before expressing his view and for Council to reach decisions by consensus. I did not observe any decision that required a vote. The Chairman summarized discussion at appropriate points, drew discussion to a close when all views have been expressed and framed the decision reached. This approach developed a sense within Council that there was an expectation and opportunity to contribute, that different as well as like views could be expressed and would be heard, that each person would have contributed to a collective decision and that there would be clarity in the decisions taken. The Chairman also consulted with Councillors in between Council meetings on significant issues so that ‘there are no surprises’ (Councillor C, Interview #1 p. 18).

In the words of Councillor Y, ‘we have quite open meetings and the Chairman is very consensus driven’ (Interview #1, p. 3). Councillor Y thought this environment was ‘one of the strengths of Council’ (Interview #2, p.15). An example, discussed in Chapter 12, was the discussion and decision making process at a Council meeting concerning an option for an additional class in the middle school (Field notes, March Council meeting). The Headmaster presented the option with pros and cons identified. The Chairman gave a summation of previous Council discussions on the issue and facilitated a discussion where each Councillor had the opportunity to ask questions and express views. As no consensus was emerging from the discussion, the Chairman proposed a ‘way forward’ and confirmed with each Councillor and the Headmaster their support for the approach. The Headmaster acknowledged that it was a significant decision to be taken and said that he accepted ‘the wisdom of Council’, although this was clearly not the outcome he had hoped for. This example of the process for decision making reflects some elements of decision making identified by Kefford (1990) in his case study of decision making process in the governing body of an independent school. Kefford found that resolution was the most common decision making style and that decisions took a relatively long time to make. Councillor S summed up the approach of the Chairman in this way,

He’s brilliant in the way he handles robust debate and difference of opinion and difference of personalities. He’s very insightful, he’s very aware, he knows the right time to step in.
(Interview #1, p. 16)

The normative literature supports the Chairman’s collaborative leadership mode as being ‘best practice’ (Cadbury, 2002; Higgs, 2003). Sir Adrian Cadbury (2002), a renowned company Chairman, summed up the essential role of the Chairman as being ‘to turn a group of capable individuals into an

effective board team. This demands application and an understanding of the nature and motivations, and strengths and weaknesses of all members of the board ... the object is to enable board members to work as a team, in order that they may achieve as a group what would be beyond them separately' (p. 109). When asked about this collaborative approach to meeting discussion and decision making, the Chairman commented,

It is something I have learnt over the years that you need to do. I mean if you go away with a resolution and you've got a couple of people who don't feel they have contributed or are unhappy with the outcome ... you will spend more time later on trying to fix that up. But what it does do, and I haven't figured out a way to avoid it, is put time into the meeting. (Interview #1, p. 8)

The Chairman saw his role as the Chairman of Council as being very different to that of a Councillor. This is because:

I've said many times I was a stronger character on Council when I wasn't Chairman. Chairman is a completely different role. I mean you really have to play the game, recognize everyone's position. If I was sitting on that side of the table and the chairman was here and there was the other side of the table, I would tell people what I thought and I'd be very strong in my thoughts, but I just find I shouldn't do that now ... Occasionally I will come across and put a position out but that's not my role as a chairman. So my influence, if you like, I don't think it's as strong as it was when I was just a Council member ... I have influenced things in a different way but my personal opinions haven't been anywhere near as strong. (Interview # 3, p. 17)

Yet other Councillors looked to the Chairman for the lead on many issues. As Councillor C observed, 'everyone gets the sense if the Chairman is not happy, and if he's not happy, then it's not going ahead' (Interview #1, handwritten notes). It is to be expected that members of Council would look to the Chairman, in his leadership role, for direction on the 'how' of Council's work. However, this leadership role combined with the Chairman's *habitus* and *capitals* also meant the Chairman had significant influence on the outcomes of the process of Council's work. This accords with the findings of Kefford (1990) that the Chairman of his governing body in another independent school was a significant influence in the decision making process. My observations confirmed that the Chairman did not seek to dictate outcomes and showed a deep understanding of the role of Chairman and a genuine commitment to collaboration. He had demonstrated that a 'soft power' approach was effective in facilitating shared goals and outcomes (Nye, 2004).

Succession planning

Council had determined that the 'ideal' composition of Council should comprise a mix of key stakeholders (Church, old boys and parents) and the core skill sets of finance, governance, and

business. Education was seen as a beneficial ‘additional’ skill set and Council was satisfied that this could be satisfied through one member of Council having educational knowledge and skills. A ‘generic management’ view of the world may contribute to a view that education is not a fundamental skill set; yet absent this skill set can make it difficult to make independent judgments on educational matters. This may also be a reflection of the dominance of Councillors from the corporate sector on Council, exhibiting a preference for skill sets that are found in corporate boards. Research by Steane & Christie (2001) suggests that the inclusion of board members with corporate type of expertise, such as accounting and law, affect a preference in the prioritization of tasks that mimics the approach to governance found in the private sector and corporates. As a member of Council, the Headmaster could provide the ‘educational’ capacity; however, he was also the person Council must hold to account for the provision of the educational services.

Council’s ‘ideal’ composition reflected the context of the School and its key stakeholders as advocated by contingency theorists who posit that context and other contingencies should be reflected in board composition (Rogers, 2005; Donaldson, 2001; Miner, 2003). This composition provided the basis for succession planning of Council. In planning for the imminent retirement of two Councillors, the Chairman was focusing on the ‘categories of governance, academic and old boys’, to find suitable replacements (Interview #3, p. 11). The Chairman was hopeful that some candidates would also bring finance and broader business skills, noting that with the retirement of the Deputy Chairman the Council would lose an Old Boy with strong skills in governance, finance and business. The Chairman consulted with Councillors in Council meetings and individually to confirm the skill set they would seek in candidates and asked each Councillor to provide names of prospective candidates so the Nominations Committee had a ‘solid long list’ to work from (Chairman, Field notes). The process of identifying, assessing and recommending candidates for Council, and the role of Chairman, was managed by the Nominations Committee. This Committee was constituted when needed and Chaired by the Chairman. The process was informal to the extent that a list of prospective candidates was identified by discussion amongst Councillors to identify ‘who do we know, who could we have a discussion with’ (Councillor F, Interview #2, p. 5). Councillors were confident that their own networks of old boys would identify suitable candidates for a role on Council and as a possible future Chairman. Council did not engage the services of a search consultant to identify candidates, nor considered looking outside the metropolitan area. Discussions at Council meetings about prospective candidates identified a significant number of old boys with broad business skills, reflecting the social capitals (personal networks) of old boy Councillors. Council had a more difficult time identifying

people in tertiary education and suggestions were limited to the more well known academics holding senior administrative positions at Universities in the metropolitan area. Interestingly, it was thought more appropriate to find a person from the tertiary education sector than someone from school education as the Chairman had concluded that ‘I don’t think an ex-head should sit on Council in judgment of the current head’ (Field notes, October Council Meeting). The logic of this premise was informed by the Chairman’s assessment of the dynamic between Councillor S, a former Principal and the Headmaster. There was concern that the Headmaster ‘sees having a former head on Council as a bit of a threat’ (Deputy Chairman, Interview #2, p. 11). Councillor S advised she was retiring from Council in the near future. Reflecting on the Chairman’s comments the day following the Council meeting, Councillor S observed,

I suppose it was a bit of experiment, they hadn’t had an ex-head before, but I don’t know that it was particularly so good. I said to the Chairman at the end of last year that I was concerned I had upset the dynamics of the Council because I could see some things that were happening were not good practice and good process and I spoke up about them. (Interview #2, p. 3)

My observation of Councillor S, over the course of numerous Council and Committee meetings, was that she offered insights and opinions in a balanced, thoughtful and supportive manner. Any perceived ‘threat’ felt by the Headmaster may well have been a reluctance to have anyone on Council that had a deep understanding of education and the running of a school. The Headmaster did not view her as an educational peer, which could have been a consequence of her gender and /or the nature of her educational experience, that is, she was not an expert in boys’ education in a single sex educational environment. Councillor S talked of the experience of having former Principals on the Council of the schools where she had been Principal and described how she valued the support and understanding that these former Principals brought to the board table. In the same way, former Chief Executive Officers are highly valued in the corporate sector as non-executive directors, as they bring significant operational, industry and stakeholder experience to the role.

The Chairman noted that there would continue to ‘be a parent or two on Council’. He acknowledged parents as an important element of Council composition, whilst personally ‘not liking’ having parents on the Council because of his experiences with several parent Councillors that ‘could not separate their governance role from their parent role’ (Interview # 3 p. 4). The Chairman anticipated the appointment of two Councillors during the second half of 2011. At the end of 2011 the Old Boys’ Association and the Parents’ and Friends’ Association were to nominate candidates for consideration. The Chairman expected the Old Boys’ Association to confirm their existing nominee

for a further term; however, did not at that time have visibility on the Parents' and Friends' Association's intentions.

As noted in Chapter 9, the constitution required a simple majority of Councillors to be members of the Church and all Councillors to support the expressed aims and vision of the Church. This added a level of complexity to the selection process, although experience had shown this to be manageable. In compiling a list of prospective candidates from their networks, Councillors were able to identify religious denomination and early 'sounding out' of prospective candidates confirmed their preparedness to commit to the Church's mission for the School.

All Councillors acknowledged the significant commitment a position on Council required. That the role was unpaid did not affect the authority, responsibility and demands of Councillors (Carver, 2006). Some Councillors thought of themselves primarily as a volunteer, which had the potential to 'excuse' them from a complete commitment to the role. Although Councillor S missed some Council meetings due to her retirement travelling, she had concluded that this approach was 'not fair' and was intending to retire from Council. As she explained, 'it's not a good way. I don't think it is good for Council and I don't think it is good for me' (Interview #2, p. 2).

At the August Council meeting there was a general discussion on succession planning for Council and how difficult it was for Council members who have demanding careers to participate fully as Councillors. The Deputy Chairman commented that 'it is almost impossible for someone with a full time high pressure job to be on this Council' (Field notes, August Council meeting). This was seen as an issue in attracting Councillors of a younger age who were likely to have a significant commitment to their careers. The counter balance to this concern was a subtle reminder by Councillor Y to Councillors about the nature of their role versus the role of management, when he noted 'that busy people are less likely to interfere inappropriately' (Field notes, August Council meeting).

A challenge for Council was to reflect upon how the skills and experience, which Council had sought and achieved for their Council, required change to meet the School's future strategic challenges and changing nature of the community. There was little age and cultural diversity on Council, although gender diversity was an issue that Council had worked to address in the last five years. The evolving nature of education, changing demographics and shift in the way we live and work may require different experiences and skills or for Councillors to develop new areas of knowledge, not necessarily deep expertise, but knowledge that allows them to question appropriately and exercise good judgment on the issues before them. Ranson (2012) challenges the notion of capacity being

business focused. Whilst acknowledging the business dimensions of school management, he argues the principal rationale of schooling is to enable learning and expand capability. He argues,

An education is not in the end a technical activity about procedure but has to take into account considerations about the kinds of lives families and communities believe is appropriate for their young people to lead and capabilities they ought to possess. Discussions about the ends of learning cannot be separated from the purposes of living, the *making* of lives, and these considerations are social, cultural and political in nature rather than technical procedures ... The practice of organizing and governing education, therefore, does not depend just on *techne* (technical knowledge) but on *phronesis* (wise judgement about the purposes and practices that will unfold the potential and capabilities of lives). (p. 40)

Council privileged corporate and business skills, and while these skills are not necessarily incompatible with the skills Ranson advocates for a learning environment, they are unlikely, on their own, to provide the 'wise judgement' Ranson sees as necessary for the future and central to good educational governance.

An important issue for Council to understand in recruiting Councillors was why someone wanted to be a member of Council; what motivated them, particularly given the significant time commitment required. Council competed with many other non-profit organizations for committed and experienced people. With no monetary rewards, access to social and cultural capitals that offer an improved position in the hierarchy of the School or other fields for a person can be a significant motivating factor. For example, the social capital available to a person as a member of Council of an elite school may be able to be used by that person in several fields at the one time, say the fields of business and the Church. Many of the city's businessmen were old boys or parents of the School and many would have valued the position of Councillor of the School. Conversely, a person would be a more attractive candidate for Council if they already held significant cultural and social capitals in fields considered important to the School, such as business. In this way Bourdieu's concept of *hysteresis* explains how an already successful person can succeed further through holding a position as a member of Council.

The Chairman expressed an intention to retire from Council within the next two years. He had discussed his plans with Council and so focus could be given to succession planning for the role of Chairman. The role and expectation of Council was to recommend candidates to the Archbishop for appointment. It was assumed within Council that the recommendation would have unanimous support. As the Chairman explained, 'it is critical that everyone on Council supports the person selected and that there is unity on Council' (Field notes, Informal meeting with Chairman). The Chairman noted that Council and the School community expected the next Chairman to be an old boy (Interview #3, p.

5). A woman was out of the question. Of the current and continuing Councillors, only two were therefore eligible to be considered. This was a consequence of a strategy, led by the Chairman, to have a more diverse Council (even though the Chairman continued to see that ‘old boys have a special place on Council’), and the planned retirements of the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, both old boys (Interview # 3, p. 5). Contrast this position with the composition of Council approximately five years previously, when Council was comprised of seven members, all old boys. The Chairman was concerned about how planning for his retirement was shaping up; Councillor D was unlikely to want the role and would not have unanimous support, effectively becoming a ‘one horse race’ of Councillor C. The Chairman intended to ‘bring on some old boys who might be able to take on that role’ (Interview #3, p. 5), thus broadening the pool of possible candidates for the role and providing time for each prospective candidate to settle into Council and become known to other Councillors. He was also mindful that without a strong internal candidate the Archbishop may appoint an ‘outsider’ as the next Chairman. The position is prestigious and the Chairman was aware of at least one influential outsider with very strong connections to the Church who would like to be appointed. Councillors were mindful of the high level of expertise, experience and commitment, particularly in terms of time, the Chairman brought to the role and that a future chairman may not be able to match that standard. As described by Councillor F,

If I felt that I would then be exposed because the chairman didn’t have enough weight, enough time to give, was not abreast of things, I don’t want to be putting my hand up [to stay on Council] and getting into troubled times with decisions that are being made and being exposed that way, so succession planning is huge. (Interview #2, p. 5)

A period of significant adjustment is likely to follow the appointment of a new Chairman. Whilst a transition may be facilitated by the *habitus* and *capitals* of the incoming Chairman, the person will bring their own views and experience in interpreting and performing the role and will require a period to establish themselves with Council and stakeholders.

Relationship with Headmaster

A 2009 survey by Deloitte of directors of ASX 200 companies found that directors saw the ideal relationship between the Chair and the Chief Executive Officer as a healthy partnership based on a common purpose and mutual confidence. The relationship involves both mentoring and monitoring; however, there is awareness that it can be difficult balancing these two roles. The research conducted in 2010 into UK school governing bodies confirmed the quality of the relationship between the Chair and the School Head as significant in enabling high quality governance (James *et al.*, 2010).

The Chairman had worked hard at establishing a constructive, open and trusting relationship with the Headmaster. He recognized that the Headmaster, who had been trained in education, had the day to day management of a multi -million dollar organization with a complex stakeholder environment. He had encouraged and supported the Headmaster to undertake training to further develop his skills as a Chief Executive Officer reporting to a board, including executive training through Harvard University, the Australian Graduate School of Management and the Australian Institute of Company Directors, and participate in chief executive forums and networks. Most importantly, the Chairman supported the Headmaster by acting as a sounding board for issues the Headmaster faced in his multi faceted role.

As explained by the Chairman,

One of the reasons I come and talk to the Headmaster weekly is because at least that way what he might not be prepared to share in a Council meeting he will raise with me – he will often shy away sharing something in the Council meeting, not that he doesn't want the Council generally to know, but he probably thinks someone will attack him. If I meet with him regularly and sit down with him, without an agenda or anything like that, things will just come out ... and you talk it through ... and at least I know about it and can do something about it if it's something I can do something about. Sometimes I will say, 'well look I think that's something we should take through to Council' and he will bring it forward or I'll offer if it's really sensitive.

(Interview #2, p. 8)

Having been a former senior executive in his corporate career, the Chairman appreciated the isolation of the role and that the Headmaster needed in the Chairman someone who could be a mentor and sounding board, while at the same time being the person who would ensure an appropriate level of restraint on the Headmaster's authority and monitoring of how that authority is exercised. As the Chairman succinctly explained, 'I say to the Headmaster, the only person who is likely to tell him how it is, how it really is, is me' (Interview #3, pge 8). Councillor D observed, 'in this Council the Chairman is seen to be a valued authority and mentor to the Headmaster' (Interview #1, p. 5). The Headmaster acknowledged, although in a more limited way, the trust element in his relationship with the Chairman. He commented that,

The Chairman and I work on the law of no surprises ... we've let each other down a bit on that but not to the point where it's been detrimental to our relationship and we do talk over the main things. (Interview #1, p. 11)

The Headmaster also had the benefit of a 'critical friend' in Councillor Y. They periodically met over lunch. Councillor Y's *habitus* and *capitals* assisted him to be like an objective 'outsider' to the Headmaster and provide insights and advice on the dynamics of Council.

Stakeholder relations

The Chairman clearly provided leadership in connecting and communicating with stakeholders. He led the commitment by Council to open and meaningful relations with stakeholders and attended all significant events in the life of the School, which included numerous events involving old boys, staff, parents and students, as well as attending all events in the Church community that related to the School and governance of Church schools and events in the broader community. Stakeholder engagement would account for approximately one half of the Chairman's time. When combined with meeting preparation time and attendances at the School for meetings with the Headmaster, briefings and administrative tasks the Chairman spent almost two days each week of the calendar year on School matters (excluding approximately six weeks of leave) (Chairman, Interview #2, p. 7). The Chairman acknowledged that this time requirement was a reflection of what he saw as necessary to be an effective Chairman and that the next Chairman may not be so involved in the life of the School, confining their involvement to the more direct tasks of chairmanship, such as board meetings. He observed that,

You can have a chairman who is a figurehead and leaves it to the head and council is a sort of tick off mechanism once a month ... and I have a great fear that that could happen in a school like this ... I am more hands on, and I don't expect the next Chairman to be as hands on as I've been – hands on in the sense that I spend a lot of time here in different ways. (Chairman, Interview #3, p. 12)

He also observed that,

I think it's going to be harder and harder to get people to take on the role [as chairman] ... because a lot goes with it. I spend one to two days a week on the role, depending on what's on the go, and I come to all the events to be seen and to make sure I'm seeing what I'm told is going on ... You can't have a career and do the job I don't believe. (Interview #2, p. 8 & 11)

The Deputy Chairman shared this view commenting that,

One of the problems with this Council and with any not for-profit board is the governance requirement becoming more and more so the pool of people you can draw on who have the time to devote to it becomes less and less and that's a real problem. You know, you virtually have to be retired now to sit on this Council. (Interview #2, p. 11)

Another Critical Governance Role – the Headmaster

Council recommended to the Schools Commission a 'suitably qualified person' to be Headmaster of the School and the terms of their employment. In practical terms, this meant a person who was a communicant member of the Church. The Church was represented on the panel to interview prospective candidates for the role. The School had had seven Headmasters and all had been members

of the Church. The Archbishop made the appointment and the Church was the employer. The powers and duties of the Headmaster were set out in the constitution which, as noted earlier in this chapter, conferred on the Headmaster the responsibility for the 'leadership, day-to-day management and welfare' of the School.

The Headmaster's role was extraordinarily complex, as he was expected by the School community to be both Educator-in-Chief and Chief Executive Officer. As the educational leader of the School, the Headmaster needed to be recognized in his own right as a leading educator within the School (particularly by the School's academic staff) and in the broader community. He was to lead the School in learning with a clearly defined pedagogical focus, while responding to changes in the field of schools. As the Chief Executive Officer, he was responsible for a multi-million dollar business, requiring a focus on strategy, infrastructure, risk management, forward enrolments and resource management; matters removed from the field of schools. Contemporary school leadership, while grounded in the field of school education, is responding to increasing demands from the field of government and the field of the economy (Addison, 2007).

A number of recent research studies have identified the increasingly complex, intensified and multidimensional nature of contemporary Principal practice (Gronn, 2003; Cranston *et al.*, 2003; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007; Addison, 2007). As observed by Addison (2007) in the context of independent school Principals,

Their worldview is one in which contemporary compliance standards and corporate governance, in addition to issues generated by the economic field such as risk management and enterprise bargaining, ensure that much of their time is associated with a variety of issues very much removed from the field of schools. (p. 241)

Councillor S believed that the 'traditional Headmaster is a thing of the past' and Headmasters can no longer be primarily focused on students and staff (Interview #2, p. 10). Historically, financial and other operational aspects of independent schools were the province of the Bursar who was appointed by the School Council and reported directly to the Council. At many of the oldest independent schools it has only been in recent years that that this structure has changed so that the Bursar, usually renamed as 'Business Manager', reports through the Headmaster and the Headmaster is recognized as also being the Chief Executive Officer.

The Headmaster was also the 'face' of the School and a role model for the students. The Headmaster presented the School to its many stakeholders and had an active role in stakeholder relations. He was a powerful reflector of the culture and ethos of the School and was a significant

identifier of expectations within the School. This meant the *habitus* of the Headmaster was vital as he maintained and shaped the identity of the School. As explained by Councillor D,

The Headmaster's character is really important in lots of transactions in the day to day. He is, in the end, a big face on the front door of this place. (Interview #1, p. 19)

Because the School was a 'Church' school, the Headmaster's leadership was expected to be one of 'servant leadership' and this 'service to others' ethic was encoded in the discourse of his leadership and in the culture of the School. On several occasions during Council meetings the Headmaster described his leadership of the School as one of servant leadership⁵¹. This discourse of leadership framed the Headmaster's response to ethical issues relating to people and resources. This concept of the 'vocation' of leadership could create conflict with the 'contemporary constructs of school principals ... as chief executives of a schooling corporation' (Grace, 2000, p. 242). However, Council supported the Headmaster taking decisions informed by educative or moral principles and not just clinical business metrics. For example, the School's support of parents regarding the payment of school fees if they were experiencing temporary financial difficulty. Council and the Headmaster's views were grounded in the socio-educational focus of the field of schools; although Council sought a 'best practice' corporate governance approach to their work as governors grounded in the competitive and strategic aspects of the economic field. Council and the Headmaster were able to steer a course through these potentially conflicting approaches. The Church was also working towards positioning diocesan school Principals as the 'spiritual leader of the faith community formed by the school family'. There was no recognition by Council of this additional dimension in the Headmaster's role and the Headmaster's performance metrics did not include any 'faith' element.

A challenge for Council was to maintain an understanding of what the multidimensional nature of the Headmaster's role meant on a day to day basis and how the sometimes conflicting aspects of the role could be managed. The Headmaster did not think Council fully appreciated the complexity of his role. Referring to his perception of Council's understanding (as a group) of his role, he commented, 'they do not understand the intricacies and the minutiae of it and the constant emotional demands' (Interview #1, p. 6). However, in my conversations with the Chairman and several other Councillors, particularly the Deputy Headmaster and Councillor S (a former secondary school Principal), they demonstrated a clear and strong understanding of the extraordinary demands of the role. Council's support of the Headmaster to undertake professional development activities away from the School,

⁵¹ Servant leadership stresses that to serve others is the leader's main aim (Bass, 2000).

take sabbaticals at regular intervals and have the support of a well resourced executive and secretarial team were examples of practical ways Council recognized the demands of the role. Councillor S described the role as ‘all consuming ... you have just got one focus ... and it doesn’t actually leave you time for other aspects of your life, like friends’ (Interview #1, p. 6).

The Deputy Chairman believed the Headmaster had ‘always been a very good Headmaster’; however, he believed he had grown in the chief executive aspect of the role with the support of Council and the Business Manager. Council had supported a number of professional development activities for the Headmaster, specifically for the chief executive aspect of his role. In the words of the Chairman,

Hopefully schools are recognizing that they’ve got to give their heads a lot more training and experience. I got the Headmaster to join a CEO group, I put him through the AICD course and on his sabbatical I didn’t send him around schools, I sent him around companies. He went to Sydney and spent time with some of the major companies where we’ve got old boys heading them up and who were prepared to give him a day or two, and that to me was more valuable than going around schools. He’s been around schools; he knows what schools are like. Sure there will be some that are the leading edge that he might go and talk to ... (Interview #2, p. 9)

The Headmaster participated in leading conferences for school educators, as well as associations to support Chief Executive Officers in their roles. Although the Headmaster was now a senior and very experienced Headmaster, the Chairman still believed he needed more active support than a chief executive with similar years of experience in the corporate sector. The Chairman viewed this as a dual reflection of the nature of the training and experience educators had by the time they reached the senior leadership level and the changing nature of schools and complexity of stakeholders (Interview #2, p. 9). Councillor S, a former secondary school Principal, observed that,

The one thing when you go into the head’s role that you don’t usually have experience of is the financial side of things and governance issues. (Interview #3, p. 14)

This observation accords with a recent study of principals which found that many thought they were not adequately prepared for the chief executive function of their roles prior to appointment (Addison, 2007).

The Chairman questioned whether the dual nature of the role would continue to be vested in one person in the future. He mused,

I actually do believe that we’ll get to the stage where there will be CEOs of schools and a [separate] educational professional, someone who is happy to be the educational head of the place but who doesn’t want this big responsibility of running a big commercial business ... I

think there are fewer and fewer coming out of the education system who actually want to take on this responsibility. (Interview #2, p. 10)

My experience as a former Trustee of an independent school and my observations of the Headmaster lead me to believe that Principals highly value the educational leadership aspect of their principalship and would see the duality of their role as inseparable. Councillor F thought it critical that the Headmaster ‘wears both hats’. She saw the educational vision and skills of the Headmaster as one of the strengths of his leadership of the School. In her view,

You can’t be the Principal of a school like this without the educational background because education is the key ingredient, especially in this changing world where we need to send our young men out into a world that’s constantly changing. (Interview #1, p. 8)

The Headmaster’s practice of principalship was strongly influenced by the logics of practice of Council and of individual Councillors, particularly the Chairman. There was, for example, tension in the relationship between the Headmaster and Council arising at the interface of the respective roles of Council and the Headmaster, particularly concerning educational matters. Except in the area of finance, past Headmasters would not have expected or tolerated questioning on the educational direction and practices of the School (School History, 1986). The Headmaster believed that on pedagogical and curricular issues, Council was ‘dabbling’ without the expertise, particularly in the work of the Education Committee. The duality of the Headmaster’s role meant he was an educational expert which created an expectation in him that Council would rely on his expertise. Further, that it was not his or his executive group’s role to build Councillors’ ‘educational’ capacity. The Headmaster’s perspective was grounded in the field of schools, notwithstanding the influence of the economic field (and his understanding of the requirements of contemporary governance). The Headmaster valued Council for their non-educational expertise and experience and their connections in fields outside the field of schools.

The Headmaster was a non-voting member of Council. This differed from a corporate model where Chief Executive Officers were often members of the board and held a vote and, as directors, shared accountability with the non-executive directors. Many CEO’s see their board role as providing a more equal and therefore more collegiate relationship with other board members. My observations of the functioning of Council were of a working relationship between the Headmaster and Council where the Headmaster reported to Council, rather than a dual role of reporting and membership as shown in the stakeholder map in Figure 11.1 in Chapter 11. The Headmaster had a voice on Council through his role as Headmaster. The Headmaster’s key performance indicators for the year did not

include any indicator related to his role as a Councillor or his relations with Councillors. I doubt that a deliberative seat on Council without voting rights enhanced the accountability of the Headmaster or Council; although it could lead to accountability confusion. In relation to the Headmaster's deliberative seat on Council he commented that 'I have always accepted it as a cultural curiosity of the School' and not of any practical benefit to his role as Headmaster (Field notes).

Council was alert to the need to plan carefully for succession to the next Headmaster. The Headmaster was on a fixed term contract and the lead up to the expiry of this contract provided a timeframe to address the Headmaster's desire for a further term and Council's views as to the appropriateness of a further term. The Headmaster was supported by two experienced Deputy Headmasters who were obvious internal candidates. The pool of external candidates was not considered by Council to be large, although geographically spread, as Headmasters and Deputy Headmasters of pre-eminent independent schools in Australia and New Zealand were the primary source (Field notes). The appointment of the current Headmaster was made with the assistance of a search consultant and this appeared to be standard practice among the leading independent schools. The Chairman was very conscious of the functional benefits that experience in other sectors could bring to the multi faceted nature of contemporary school leadership (for example refer to the comments of the Chairman in Chapter 11) and could seek in a candidate more than just school leadership experience and socialization in the field of schools. The Chairman thought a candidate with broader experience, for example from the field of the commerce, could also bring social and cultural capitals that would appeal to important stakeholders, such as the parents and the old boys. The Chairman valued the chief executive aspect of the role more highly than the education role as he noted,

I think I could walk into this role [as Headmaster] and do it reasonably well. Now I'd need a lot of support in areas but that's what CEO's do. You don't have a CEO who knows everything; so the smart CEO gets all the good people around him. (Interview #2, p. 10)

The Chairman downplayed the educational expertise that is held by school Principals, although he would highly value industry specific knowledge for a Chief Executive Officer in other fields, such as the resources sector, the domain of his executive career.

The Chairman also indicated he would be prepared to privilege the role of Chairman over the continuing tenure of the Headmaster in succession planning for Council. In the final interview with the Chairman he said his strategy might be to support Councillor C as the next Chairman of Council, even though that would be likely to precipitate an earlier than planned departure of the Headmaster from the School, as Councillor C 'clashes with the Headmaster seriously' (Interview #3, p. 6 / 7). This

potential strategy was, in part, driven by the possibility that the Chairman may be faced with only one real candidate, Councillor C, for the role of Chairman. The Chairman had rationalized the appropriateness of the strategy on the basis that, by the time the Chairman retired, the Headmaster would have completed nine years in the role and that was probably a sufficiently long tenure to justify a new Headmaster. The Chairman observed that the Headmaster ‘keeps laying it on the table that the next Chairman will determine his tenure at the School’ (Interview #3, p.6). That the Headmaster’s decision to leave the School would be influenced by choice of Chairman was not surprising and is supported by research which confirms that the most important factor in determining whether a school head remains in his or her position is the relationship between the head and the governing body (for example, Price, 2005).

The Chairman thought it was part of his role to assist the Headmaster with transition to a role after the School. The Chairman noted that, ‘I’m trying to help him get some forward positions now, to create a life for him after the School and so we’ve been talking through possibilities for him in that area’ (Interview #2, p. 5). Given the respect the position of Headmaster (former and current) is accorded by the old boys, the Headmaster should be able to access their social capital in finding future roles outside the field of education, such as board positions. As a former Headmaster he will remain connected to the School and will, like the old boys, have continuing access to the School’s cultural and social capitals.

The Headmaster had considered the transition to the eighth Headmaster of the School and observed,

My message to Council is when the next Headmaster comes you must spell out very clearly what the mission is, what the values are, what the culture is and what the standards are of this School and the Headmaster is to abide by those and express himself and manage by those. (Interview #2, p. 4)

These observations confirm that the legitimacy of the next Headmaster requires his *habitus* and *capitals* to fit the ‘rules of the game’ of the School. It will be important that he shares, at least partially, the social and cultural capitals of the parents and the old boys, and the social capital of the Church.

The Headmaster had considered how his leadership of the School would be viewed when he left the role. He observed,

I think I have returned the School to its roots relative to the founding Headmasters. I have placed importance on protocols, such as emphasis on manners and greetings and the formality of assembly... I also hope that my legacy has been to have the boys see each other as human

beings that are worthy of respect ... to strengthen the humanity of the school and in doing so allowed boys to feel really good about themselves and therefore they can perform better, whether it be academic, chess or playing the violin ... (Interview #2, p. 7)

Council Committees and their Chairs

Council Committees were delegated important work critical to Council's governance function. The Committees worked closely with the relevant areas of the School's executive staff and the Chairs reported on the activities of the Committee's work to Council. Although the Committees only made recommendations to Council their recommendations were very influential.

There was a significant difference in the workload and level of engagement between a Councillor's role and being a Chair of a Committee. A Committee Chair was expected to be well prepared and have an in-depth understanding of the matters being considered. As explained by the Deputy Chairman,

If you are Chairing a [Committee] meeting you need to understand the material fully because if people start firing questions, and they may or may not be fair questions, and if you don't understand it you are leaving the staff exposed to flak. (Interview #2, p. 10)

The manner in which a Committee Chair managed the relationship with members of the executive staff was also critical to the effective functioning of the Committee. The Committee Chair had an important role in working with executive staff to ensure the agenda linked logically to the strategic plan and the operational work flow within the School, that supporting papers were well prepared, that the meeting environment was conducive to open communication and thorough discussion and that clear recommendations to Council were formulated and communicated. The role of Chair carried a considerable work load; including meeting preparation and liaison with executive staff and Chairman of Council between meetings. The Deputy Chairman reflected on the difference between the approach and workload of a Committee member and the Chair of the Committee noting,

For years as a member of the Finance Committee I could just lob up after reading the papers the night before. I would identify the couple of things that I'd want to ask a question on and attend the meeting. That is easy preparation, but when you're preparing to chair a meeting it's a different ball game. You owe it to people to do it properly. And then [after the meeting] you have to prepare for Council meetings because you have to report back to Council from the committee. (Interview #2, p. 10)

Committee members were often reactive, that is, they responded to the agenda and papers they received and worked within the parameters those papers created. Conversely, the Committee Chair was expected to be strategically focused, guiding the work of the Committee to cover its areas of

responsibility as outlined in its charter and responding to strategic and operational imperatives and requests from Council. A Committee Chair could involve other Committee members more in the work of the Committee by, for example, asking a member to take the 'lead' on an issue. This approach shared the workload and provided opportunities for members to develop the skills required for a Chair role and to work more closely with executive staff.

The two principal standing committees of Council were the Finance Committee and the Education Committee. Interestingly, the Chairman was not a member of either standing Committee; contrary to the governance practice I had observed in numerous corporate and nonprofit organizations where the Chair of the board is a member of Committees like the School's standing committees. The Chairman had regular and close contact with the Chairs of the standing Committees. As noted previously, Council also constituted a Nominations Committee on an 'as needs' basis which the Chairman chaired.

The Finance Committee ran smoothly with a clear appreciation and acceptance at Committee and management level of the nature and function of the Committee. The reasons for this were threefold. Firstly, finance had historically been an area of focus for Council because past Headmasters (like most Headmasters of that time) had little financial skill and the Bursar reported directly to the Council (Deputy Chairman, Interview #1, p. 7). Secondly, the functioning of a Finance committee is well established in the corporate and the nonprofit sectors and many of the areas of potential tension between the board and management have been resolved over many years of interaction. The Chair of the Finance Committee brought his learnings of corporate finance board committees to the role. Finally, the Finance Committee was chaired by the Deputy Chairman, a very knowledgeable finance professional with significant experience as a non-executive director in the corporate sector and hence significant credibility in the role. He also had a confident imperturbable manner, which he used to good effect when tensions occasionally developed. For example, in addressing the Headmaster's concern in a Finance Committee meeting about the additional burden on staff if an extra process was introduced to require staff to formally acknowledge they had received and read relevant School policies. The Deputy Chairman was able to explain the benefits from a risk management perspective and share information of effective and efficient practices common in the corporate sector assisted by over the shelf computer software (Field notes, November Finance Committee). His *habitus* and *capitals* contributed significantly to the high functioning of the Committee. The Finance Committee had two external Committee members, both old boys. These members contributed specific expertise in areas of funds management and capital projects; areas of responsibility for the Committee. In addition

to providing functional expertise, these Committee members had the capacity to assist maintain the Committee's institutional knowledge and expertise at times of rotation of Councillors on Committees. Council assumed, correctly, that all matters would have been thoroughly considered by the Finance Committee and readily accepted its recommendations.

The area of intersection between the work of the Council and that of the Headmaster, which created the most significant issues for Council, was the Education Committee. The charter for the Committee designated the Committee responsibility to advise Council on the School's programs in the areas of curriculum, co-curricular activities, culture and communications. Periodic reviews of programs and policies were contemplated as part of the work of the Committee. Although the constitution confirmed the authority of Council in matters of curriculum, the Headmaster questioned the need for the Education Committee. In his words,

Council is far too operational, especially the Education Committee ... There is a strong view on the executive team that we shouldn't have an Education Committee because it is the core of the School's activity and there is a huge difference in the level of expertise and understanding between the executive and Council ... there is real gap in their knowledge. The Finance Committee is quite different. You appreciate the educators haven't got a background in finance, risk and audit and so on so it's good to have that outside assistance come in and play a key role. Doesn't the Council appoint the Headmaster to have the responsibility that the educational side of the School is shipshape? (Interview #1 p. 11 & 13)

Councillors were aware of the Headmaster's concerns. For example, as explained by the Deputy Chairman,

The Headmaster would say we are over governed, particularly with committees. He's never riled against the Finance Committee and I think that's an historical thing, headmasters traditionally aren't all that up on the finance, but he has riled against the Education Committee, which of course is much more in the area that he is much more familiar with. (Deputy Chairman, Interview #1, p. 17)

However, Council viewed a Committee of this nature as a useful mechanism for providing strategic input and oversight of core areas of School operation. In the words of Councillor D,

We want a Committee that will be potent about academia, co-curricular and culture. [These matters] have a rightful place in our Council chamber because we want to turn out outstanding boys. (Interview #2, p.12/13)

To have a 'potent' Committee required a match between the demands of the task and the Committee members' capacity. The Headmaster observed that he did not think there was 'too much knowledge about education and it's all derived from personal experience as a student or a parent and just

common sense as a member of the public' (Interview #2, pg. 11) Was the Headmaster right in his assessment of a lack of capacity? The Deputy Chairman thought that the difficulties lay with 'turf wars' and that 'with a change of attitude the Headmaster could find the Education Committee a very valuable tool' (Interview #2, p. 6).

The members of the School Councils of the 'like' schools (the Stage 2 interview participants) were divided over whether an Education Committee as a Committee of the board should exist⁵². Councillors KL and ST were not in favour of an Education Committee on the basis that education was the core business of the school and that it was a whole of board concern. Councillor QO equated an Education Committee with a too deep level of oversight that risked School Council members delving into operational matters. Councillor QO also thought that oversight of educational matters could be provided by the whole board and was conscious of unnecessarily increasing Council members workloads. To contrast, Councillors GH and VP saw an Education Committee providing benefits in contributing knowledge and mentoring, as well as providing oversight, although neither of their School Councils had such a committee.

The nature of the Education Committee presented challenges in the definition of its role and the interface between Council and management and the processes to support constructive communication, oversight and a meaningful information flow to Council. As observed by Councillor S,

The problem with an Education Committee is how do we manage it, how do we add value without getting into the operational? (Interview #1, p. 20)

Councillor S, as a member of the Education Committee, struggled to have clarity on the role of the Committee in a way that she thought would fulfill her governance responsibilities, which was, 'to probe and challenge, to ensure that what is happening is in the best interests of the School and the students' (Interview #1, p. 20). Councillor D (a former member of the Education Committee) argued that,

It is not the Education Committee's role to debate head to head the virtues of the academic system as though you are a perfect authority as an academic and that we were presenting my opinion, a practitioner's opinion. The role of the Education Committee is as a governance body; to say tell me what you are trying to achieve and tell me the tools you are using to achieve that and maybe we can poke and prod you but not actually tell you what to do. (Interview #1 p. 6)

⁵² Refer Appendix H for naming conventions of the Stage 2 interview participants. Councillors KL, ST, QO, GH, MB and VP were the participants in the Stage 2 interviews and will be referred to by these references in this Chapter.

The Education Committee was also seen by some Councillors as the ‘softer, warm and fuzzy esoteric kind of committee’ (Councillor D, Interview #1, p. 3), which may have contributed to a view that it would be more difficult to have clear parameters for Committee work; rather than appreciating that this type of Committee required the same clarity of role and disciplined processes that assisted the Finance Committee to operate effectively and efficiently. There was also a view from some Councillors that the composition of the Committee contributed to the way the Committee functioned. In the words of the Chairman,

I’ve got a few people on that Committee who really want to get into the kitchen without quite knowing how to get into the kitchen without upsetting people. (Interview #3, p. 9)

Councillor Y also thought the make-up of the Committee may contribute to its method of functioning,

There are some people who do have quiet different views on governance and they probably sit on the Education Committee more than the Finance Committee. The Finance Committee is made up of people used to corporate boards whereas the Education Committee has probably got more people who have either come from education or non-corporate backgrounds who are not used to the delineation between the board and management. (Interview #1, p. 4)

In interviews, Councillors identified a number of significant issues with the way the Committee functioned, including the lack of a strategic framework. For example, one of the Committee members, Councillor S observed,

The Committee doesn’t work ... we get into problems of operation that we shouldn’t and that is a frustration for management ... the purpose needs to be revisited and where the boundaries are ... so we can do our job of oversight more efficiently. (Interview #2, p. 7)

Another Committee member said that he thought the structure of the Committee did not achieve the stated purpose of the Committee (Councillor C, Interview #2, p. 8). In contrast, the Chair of the Committee, Councillor F, believed that the Committee was functioning well and making an effective contribution to the governance framework.

I believe one of the really strong points ... of the Council ... is having the Education Committee and being able to walk that very fine line between what is the Headmaster’s area and what is the Council’s area. The Headmaster will work really well with me and will listen to what I’m saying. At the beginning of the year I put a list together and meet with the Headmaster and these form the topics for the committee for the year and the Headmaster runs with it ... There is an unwritten understanding between the Council and the Education Committee and the Headmaster, we understand it is still the Headmaster’s realm. In meetings I am nothing more than a director of time as [management] run with it. (Interview #1, p. 13 & 24)

Contrary to this sentiment the Headmaster observed,

The committee is *ad hoc* because we are responding to what Councillor F wants and we are trying to find things to put in the agenda to keep the agenda going. Councillor F uses last year's agenda items to develop a compliance checklist for this year's agenda, whereas some of the educational things that were on last year's agenda should not be looked at for, say three years, because that is the way the educational cycle works. There needs to be a clear frame of reference for why we have these meetings. We, the staff, dread the meetings as they are a waste of time. (Interview #2, p. 14 & 15)

The interface between the work of the Education Committee and the Headmaster was a significant issue for Council as there were multiple interrelated reasons for the tension. There was a lack of trust and absence of a shared approach to objectives or outcomes. Historically, there had been significant conflict between the former Chair of the Committee (now retired from Council) and the Headmaster and it seemed that Councillor F, in trying to foster a more collegiate approach with executive staff, had reasoned that allowing the Headmaster to formulate the meeting agendas would translate to management viewing the work of the Committee as relevant. Councillor F clearly wanted the Committee to be seen as important and useful to Council, although was not confident this was the case as expressed by her concern in a Committee meeting that Council may see the Education Committee 'as the backwater' (Field notes, October Committee meeting). My observations of these Committee meetings was that they operated without clear objectives and a strategic framework, the quality of the papers was variable, the Committee spent significant time on non-strategic and, at times, unimportant operational issues and the ability to question or challenge management on educational issues relied principally on Councillor S, as a former Principal and someone who kept abreast of educational issues. The executive staff was disengaged and the Chair, despite her good intentions, struggled to have a productive meeting. My observation was that Councillor F as the Chair did not have the capitals to legitimize the role of the Committee or provide her with the authority to be the Chair, notwithstanding the sanction and support given to the Committee by Council's Chairman. Further, the Chair, despite holding qualifications in primary education, did not have the capacity to provide a conceptual frame for the work of the Committee or to evaluate information to the depth required for the Committee to be effective in its monitoring role. The other Committee members attempted to work within the existing structure, which was bounded and informed by the Committee papers and meeting format; however, their contribution was limited as a result.

An example of poor quality Committee papers was an agenda item supported by a pro forma document to be completed by staff for student learning support. The document was not accompanied by any explanatory paper. One of the Deputy Headmasters was asked to speak to the document and

his opening comment was that he was ‘not overly familiar with this’. Executive staff could not answer several of the Committee’s questions. The absence of a supporting paper and executives not being well prepared meant that quality discussion on the program, for which the document was only a supporting piece, could not occur. This agenda item appeared to be a ‘filler’ to give the Committee something to do. The normative literature places the responsibility for the quality of the meeting agenda and the supporting papers with the Chair of the meeting (AICD, 2011b). Good practice is that the agenda is set by the Chair in consultation with the appropriate member of executive staff. The Chair works with management to ensure supporting papers are well written and provide sufficient information and analysis to facilitate discussion and decision.

The low level of functioning of the Education Committee had a flow on negative effect on the functioning of Council. In the first round interviews, Councillors (other than Councillor S, a member of the Committee) commended the work of the Committee and the Committee’s Chair. During the second round interviews, disquiet with the operations of the Committee emerged, although Councillors were still very supportive of the conception of an Education Committee and the need for the Headmaster to understand the importance of this Committee’s work in carrying out their governance function. They were all ‘willing it to work’. My focus on the role and functioning of the Education Committee and the nature of my questioning in the second round interviews with Councillors raised the issues to the foreground. As the researcher I had observed the Committee at work, determined meaning from those observations and fed that meaning back to Councillors in interviews. I did not broach the functioning of the Committee with the Chair of the Committee in the second round interviews, as I had reasoned the Chair was unmindful of the issues.

Approximately six months after completion of the data collection the Chairman told me that he was working with the Chair of the Education Committee (Councillor F) to revise the charter so as to clarify the scope of the Committee’s work as a ‘monitoring and review role’ and by ‘setting the areas of responsibility at a higher level’ (Documents, Chairman’s email). I considered whether the issues could be resolved through clarity of roles and application of processes. While a revised charter would provide structure for the work of the Committee, the capacity of the Committee Chair and Committee members and the level of commitment from executive staff to support the work of the Committee will be critical elements to the Committee making a useful contribution to the governance of the School. Clarity of role must be supported by capacity; capacity of the Committee members to perform the specific functions effectively. Capacity is a dynamic concept and contemplates ongoing learning and development and continuing support for the work of the Committee through the institutional

arrangements (Seddon & Cairns, 2002). What capacity, that is, what knowledge, skills and understanding, do members of an Education Committee require?

Capacity for members of an Education Committee comprises several interrelated proficiencies, including the ability to understand educational issues and information conceptually, the ability to communicate about educational matters with management (which may require an understanding of the language of education), and the ability to understand procedural matters relevant to the functions of the Committee (Robinson *et al.*, 2003). An obvious source of that capacity is an educator, although not exclusively of their domain. A lack of capacity has significant consequences for governance. It shifts responsibility to management to decide the nature and format of information for the Committee, positions management as the 'single source of truth' and reduces the effectiveness of the Committee to provide oversight and monitoring of the School's educational strategies and policies and evaluate their effectiveness. Does Council therefore need some educational 'experts' as Councillors or can a group of non-experts fulfill the role? The Chairman believed Council needed one 'education person on the Council' and the Committee (Interview #2, p. 11) and saw that Councillor S currently performed that role. Councillor S agreed she was on Council for her educational background and skills and thought it important that she keep up to date on educational matters, including trends and research in pedagogy. (Interview #2, p. 26/27) Councillor F, as the Chair of the Committee, viewed herself as having 'educational' skills and experience from her early work as a primary school teacher yet the Headmaster and some members of Council did not see her as having expertise in the field. Councillor Y (not a member of the Education Committee and preferred executive staff did not use the word 'pedagogy') did not see that any 'special' capacity was required for the Education Committee. In his words,

What I want to know as a Council member ... is that they have people like [x] and [y] figuring out the academic side, [so I know] good you did that, don't try and explain it to me because I don't understand it. (Interview #2, p. 13)

Councillor Y's approach was to rely heavily on the expertise of the education professionals and hold them to account against academic performance measures such as the senior year tertiary entrance scores. Councillor KL⁵³ also challenged the notion of educational expertise on a School Council, although his comments did not argue against the notion of capacity. He said,

The role of the board is to debate and understand the philosophical basis for the educational framework within the school and management needs to be able to explain that framework to the

⁵³ Stage 2 interview participant - Council Member of 'like' school. Refer Appendix H

board without the board needing any expert knowledge. Why do I need to be an expert in anything? I can understand, analyze and make decisions on key things without being an expert. All critical issues facing an organization must be able to be explained to and understood by non-experts. (Field notes)

To put Councillor KL's views in context; he was someone with deep experience in governance and management across different sectors and industries. He was not an educator and did not see himself as someone with educational expertise, yet he had the tools and skills to understand and analyze complex issues and to develop strategies and policies in response. His foundational skills allowed him to operate effectively in different contexts and thus he did not see the need for specific educational expertise to be an effective School Council member. He had, however, also developed a level of educational expertise from his work as a School Council member as evidenced by his thoughtful comments in the interview on the strategic challenges facing school education in an international and national context.

Councillor QO⁵⁴ had a contrary view. As Chair of a School Council, she valued educational expertise on Council and spoke of how a member of her Council was able to enhance the Council's strategic and monitoring and evaluating roles because of this expertise. She gave examples of this Council member accessing futuristic thinkers in education for strategic planning discussions and asking questions that assisted Council evaluate the appropriateness of the school's response to external factors. Councillor MB⁵⁵ did not think any educational expertise on the School Council was necessary. He argued that,

The role of School Council is to employ the best educational leader that they can, show him or her they have complete confidence in them, provide them with all the resources he or she needs and let them get on with it ... The council must acknowledge the expertise of the principal as the head teacher of the school. (Field notes)

When asked about School Council's monitoring and evaluating role, he thought this could be fulfilled without educational expertise, as Council should receive regular reports from the Principal supported by appropriate external mechanisms, such as parent surveys.

My observations of Council and my experience as a School Council member of an independent school lead me to conclude that educators as members of Council are a very valuable part of effective school governance; notwithstanding that 'educational' capacity for governance purposes can be found in non-experts. I equate the value of educational expertise to the governance framework as akin to the

⁵⁴ Stage 2 interview participant - Council Member of 'like' school. Refer Appendix H

⁵⁵ Stage 2 interview participant - Council Member of 'like' school. Refer Appendix H

value of financial expertise. It seems to be universally accepted that financial expertise held by people such as Chief Finance Officers and accountants is a valuable task related expertise to have represented on a School Council. This could be for a number of reasons. Firstly, the law requires board members to have an understanding of the finances and ‘business’ of the organization and specific responsibilities imposed on directors in relation to the accounts of the company cannot be delegated to management (ASIC v Healey, 2011). A Committee to oversee the financial audit process and the appropriateness of financial controls within an organization is a universally well established and accepted governance mechanism for for-profit organizations. Financial matters in some companies are extraordinarily complex and regulatory frameworks and the harmonization of accounting standards across the developed world has added to the complexity to the classification, reporting and management of finances. Further, matters of finance were historically the province of the School Council in the older independent schools, as the Principal and executive management were all educators and did not have the skills to manage the finances. Although the finances of independent schools are not inherently complex, careful oversight and prudent judgement is required, particularly around matters such as managing and forecasting forward enrolments, capital expenditure, investment policy and cash flow management.

As the years have passed, executive management in the School has expanded to include roles covering all the core areas of task related expertise that a contemporary school requires to operate, for example, finance, information technology, human resources and stakeholder engagement. My observations confirm that the governance of the School is enhanced by the deep financial expertise held by several of its Councillors. In the same way, an obvious source of capacity to establish educational strategy and policies and evaluate the implementation by management resides in educators. Why then not actively seek out educational expertise as a source to strengthen the governance of the School? As studies by Sparks (2009), Robinson *et al.* (2003) and James *et al.* (2010) show, capability of School Council members is a crucial issue for effective governance. These capabilities importantly include an understanding of the world of education, an ability to be able to communicate with professional educators about this world and an understanding of the practical implications of decisions made on educational matters.

The concept of an Education Committee and having educational expertise on Council is not embraced by the Headmaster. At the School, this is primarily driven by a history of conflict between the Education Committee and the Headmaster and his assessment of the Committee as ineffective. This environment proved challenging for Councillor S, who was the primary repository of educational

expertise on Council and who was retiring from Council. Although Council had indicated a desire for someone with educational expertise to replace Councillor S, the history meant the next person will face considerable challenges in contributing their expertise to the governance of the School⁵⁶. Perhaps clarification of the role of the Committee combined with an appointment of a new Councillor as Chair, with the support from other Councillors who had a reasonable level of capacity to engage in in-depth discussion on educational matters, could reposition the Committee to be an effective part of the governance framework. However, the Headmaster and his executive staff would need to reframe their attitude to the Committee; they must play their part in supporting the work of the Committee. This could include an element of professional development support for Committee members, particularly those non-experts. Board education does not need to be limited to ‘governance’ matters and can include tutorials on specialized educational issues led by members of management and external experts. I acknowledge that this approach adds to the work and responsibilities of the School’s executive staff; however, playing a part in School Council education will benefit all, as the quality of discussion and decision making at Council level will be improved and Council will be better placed to fulfill its oversight obligations.

The Education Committee could enhance and strengthen the work of the School’s educators; it does not need to be seen as a threat to the role or authority of the Headmaster or the educators within the School. It could also be a forum for accountability; although this could be elevated to Council level, with appropriate changes to Council meeting format. Boards across the sectors are now realizing the value in specialized committees, use of expert consultants, tutorials and expanded director education programs to assist them in their role (Lipton *et al.*, 2010).

Parents on Council

As outlined in earlier chapters, Council had two current parents as Councillors and three past parents. One of the ‘current parent’ Councillors is the nominee of the Parents’ and Friends’ Association. The potential for a conflict of interest with parent Councillors was raised in several of the interviews. The general law recognizes the potential for board members to have interests that may conflict with their role as a board member and the need to protect the organization’s interests and imposes on board members fiduciary obligations of loyalty and good faith to the organization. These obligations translate into specific duties to act in the interests of the organization, to use their powers for proper purposes and to avoid actual and potential conflicts of interest (Farrar, 2008). Each of these

⁵⁶ I enquired about Council composition prior to submission of this thesis. Eighteen months have passed since Councillor S retired from Council with no appointment made of a person with educational capacity.

general law duties is legislated in the *Corporations Act*⁵⁷. The School's constitution captured the essence of these fiduciary obligations by stating that Councillors must exercise their powers in good faith and in the best interests of the School and for a proper purpose and must not improperly use their position or information from their position to gain an advantage for themselves or another person. The School's constitution also set out a process for dealing with situations where a Councillor had a material personal interest. Council also had a Code of Conduct and Ethics which confirmed a Councillor's obligation to ensure their personal, business and financial interests did not conflict with their duty to the School.

However, managing potential or actual conflicts of interest is not simple. In addition to requiring an appreciation that the roles are different, that is, as a member of Council (acting in the interests of the School and not as a representative role of particular stakeholder groups) and as a parent, it requires an understanding of the nature of their duties to the School and the application of sound judgment to the different scenarios and issues that will present. The Chairman had a key role in managing this issue at Council level. The Chairman's experience with parents as Council members had been mixed:

I don't like to see parents on Council when their kids are in year 10 and onwards, [because it can be] very problematic when their sons are being considered for leadership positions. Generally you've got to have a very circumspect parent otherwise you can have difficulties and you get back to the tuckshop talk which is the other reason it's difficult having parents ... But when I say I don't like parents on Council, I was a parent on Council, the Deputy Chairman was a parent on Council and we both had sons as school captains ... I sacked a Council member for what I felt was inappropriate behaviour. He had a boy in year 11 and he was one of the real leadership contenders. He missed the first ballot, I don't know what happened, but then I had this Council member having meetings with the staff, individual staff members, and suddenly the boy was back in. Now it's certainly denied that it had any influence on that but the circumstances were just overwhelming for me and, after consulting the other Councillors, we thought this is not acceptable and so I asked him to leave. (Interview #1, p. 6)

In a further interview with the Chairman, approximately twelve months later, he returned to this issue, as he found himself dealing with one of the Councillors who had 'become a bit of a parent in the last six months or so. Her son has moved out of year 11 into year 12 and he's not in the debating team and she seriously thinks he should be in the debating team ... so I hate having parents on Council' (Interview #3, p. 10).

⁵⁷ (Sections 181, 183, 184 and 191 – 196)

Yet all Councillors noted the importance of being connected to the School community and having a sense of what was happening in the School and particularly through avenues other than Council meetings and Council reports. Being a parent created the opportunity for developing significant networks in the School community, enhancing the visibility and accessibility of Council to stakeholders and deepening their understanding of the School as an organization. Former parents brought a level of understanding about the School that could be very useful, although the currency of their knowledge and networks diminished over time. As explained by the Deputy Chairman,

When I was a parent on Council (and I was only a parent for the first year I was on Council) and in the next couple of years I knew a lot of people ... and one of the reasons why I feel my effectiveness is diminishing is that I know fewer and fewer parents now directly because all the ones that I knew are gone. (Interview #1, p. 10)

The current parent members of Council were not just 'reconnaissance' Councillors. They also had capabilities to fulfill the governing task.

Councillor C expressed concern that a current parent as a Councillor may be reticent to speak out on issues. He observed,

I think it is difficult because there's a reluctance to say something because your kids are there ... you mightn't go so hard on an issue because of concern that my son is going to wear a bit of it. (Interview #1, p. 11)

Councillor Y noted that being a parent on Council gave him a close connection with the School community and insights into the culture and functioning of the School. He was aware of the distinction between his role as a Councillor and as a parent and commented that 'it can be difficult; sometimes you want to have a whinge about something and then you think, well actually that would be whinging as a parent, not as a member of Council' (Interview #2, p. 15). However, he was also aware that being a Councillor privileged him as a parent over other parents of the School. He gave the following example,

We had a problem with [name of son] with bullying and I said to the Headmaster, 'look I've got this problem, I need to come and talk to you as a parent' and we probably got slightly better service so to speak than if I hadn't been on the Council, but I very much said to him 'you know this is me as a parent coming here to talk to you' and the Headmaster got the head of the middle school and the head of the year in and I had this really quite productive meeting. I was very happy with the outcome, but would a normal parent have got quite that level of service and that speedily, probably not. But then I thought no bugger it, I spend so many hours at this School I should get better treatment. So I was quite comfortable with that. (Interview #2, p. 14)

Councillor Y's example illustrates an important distinction between dealing with an issue of his son's welfare in his capacity as a parent (with the benefit of his social and cultural capitals, namely his established professional relationships with key people which have been fostered by his position as a Councillor) and using his position of authority to improperly obtain a personal gain for his son. Councillor Y did not ask for exemplary service in dealing with his son's issue; he did not need to, his social and cultural capitals supported the type of response he received.

The participants in the Stage 2 interviews expressed differing views about the merit of having parents as members of Council. These views were influenced by their personal experience as members of a School Council, either being a parent or observing parent members. A shared theme was that School Council members who were parents could bring insights into a critical stakeholder group to the Council discussion; however, it was a difficult role and required a professional and sensitive approach by the parent member.

A 2010 Report into school governing bodies in England found that parent governors were important members of the governing body, although parent involvement in governing was not without difficulties (James *et al.*, 2010, p.39). The most common issues identified were the need to help parent governors broaden their view past their own child's education and keeping the proportion of parent governors to other members in balance. Other studies, such as Sparks (2009), identified a lack of capability in parent governors.

Council Secretary

The Council Secretary ensured the smooth running of Council and the Finance Committee. The Education Committee was provided administrative support by the Headmaster's executive assistant. All Councillors acknowledged the significant contribution that the Council Secretary made to the governance of the School, through the secretarial function and in her role as Business Manager. She had a direct reporting line to Council for secretarial functions and a reporting line to the Headmaster for the business management role. The Council Secretary ensured Council and Committee papers were collated and distributed in advance of the meeting. She acted as minute taker at meetings and attended to the many and varied requests for information from Council. She was also responsible for maintaining all governance documents and key operational documents, such as the School's strategic plan. Her role as Business Manager encompassed the operational areas of finance, facilities and funding arrangements of the School. The Council Secretary joined the School in 2008 and became the first woman to be a member of the School's senior executive group. In 2009 a woman

was appointed to a senior academic administration role; thereby increasing the representation of women in the senior executive group to two of seven members.

The Council Secretary had eight years prior experience as a business manager in an independent school. She held a Bachelor's degree in economics and had a former career in banking. The Council Secretary presented with a professional, capable and approachable manner. Immaculately dressed, well spoken and confident she would be at home in corporate board rooms. Her business acumen, comprehensive knowledge of her areas of responsibility, attention to detail and the thoroughness of her reporting made her a highly regarded professional. She was consulted by Councillors on her areas of responsibility and contributed confidently to discussion at Council meetings. There was significant governance expertise on Council and the Council Secretary noted that her advice on such matters was rarely needed. However, the Chairman and Deputy Chairman always consulted with her on governance issues. She observed,

They converse with me on a level as they would each other ... and I think the Council value the secretary's role as well. (Interview #1)

She was respectful of the positions of authority of Councillors and the Headmaster. She managed adeptly the dual reporting lines to Council and the Headmaster. In her words,

I have to balance my interactions with Council with making sure the Headmaster doesn't feel sidelined ... but at the end of the day he is the CEO and needs to know what is going on. (Interview #1, p. 2)

My observations confirmed the Council Secretary worked effectively at the interface of Council and the management of the School. Her professional and open manner, and willingness to share information, responsibility, and decision making, while accepting accountability for outcomes, contributed significantly to her effectiveness. She operated at the strategic, as well as the operational level. She contributed to strategic discussions and planning at the executive and Council level reflecting a broader trend in the expansion of the role of school business managers (Mertkan, 2011).

Feedback provided to me following a presentation on governance I made to the Australian Association of Business Administrators revealed that the duality of the role of Business Administrator and School Council Secretary created significant tensions and challenges for many Business Administrators at the interface of the School Council and the School Head. One experienced Business Administrator of an independent school commented that he 'found the tensions inherent in the dual role created irreconcilable conflicts'. He expressed the view that the roles should be held by different people so that the Council Secretary reported to the School Council and the Business Administrator

reported to the School Head (Field notes, June 2012). The Council Secretary and Business Administrator of the Case Study School, although aware of the tension at the interface of the School Council and the Headmaster, did not express concern with her dual roles and appeared to manage this duality well.

Council Evaluation Process

Council was committed to a formal evaluation process, carried out annually. This process was introduced in 2009 by the Chairman as an element of the governance framework for the School. The Chairman drew upon his experience with board evaluations in the corporate sector; he saw the process as being part of ‘good governance’ and one that could be used in the context of Council. Recent UK research on school governing bodies found that about three quarters reviewed their performance and activities (Balarin *et al.*, 2008). Councillors supported the concept of an appraisal process on the basis that it provided an opportunity to reflect on how they functioned as a group, to identify any areas of concern and to provide additional feedback to the Chairman with respect to any Council member who was being considered for appointment for a further term. In addition to the formal appraisal process, the Chairman sought regular informal feedback from Councillors at the end of meetings and in one on one discussion. The corporate governance literature and nonprofit governance literature recognize ongoing assessment of board performance through a systematic approach as a responsibility of the board (Cadbury, 2002; Carver, 2006; Hudson, 2009; Brown, 2007; Chait, Ryan & Taylor, 2005).

The formal process was a questionnaire supplemented with a questionnaire on individual Councillors seeking reappointment. All Councillors had the opportunity to provide feedback on the format of the questionnaires, which the Chairman adapted from questionnaires he used in a corporate context. The results of the questionnaires were collated by the Deputy Chairman and provided to the Chairman who reported back to Council. The Chairman met separately with any Councillor who had an individual evaluation to provide feedback and discuss areas of concern or professional development needs. The questionnaire required Councillors to rate and comment on Council’s perceptions of management and Council’s performance as a group against eight criteria on a nine point rating scale and sought responses to an open ended question on improving Council’s effectiveness. The assessment criteria are listed in Table 13.1 below.

Table 13.1

Council Evaluation Criteria

Communication by School of mission, vision and values
Assessment of ability of management to deliver School's strategic direction
Assessment of whether management sees Council as having the ability to add value to the School's strategic direction
Effectiveness of communication by Council to School community of expectations of ethical conduct
Conduct of Council meetings
Composition and functioning of Council committees
Quantity and quality of Council papers
Communication between Councillors and between Councillors and Headmaster
Process for assessment of Headmaster performance and Council performance

The individual assessment comprised an assessment against twelve criteria on a three point rating scale and open ended questions about actions and behaviours to be either affirmed or counseled on and whether the Councillor should be appointed for a further term. The assessment criteria are listed in Table 13.2 below and reflect the shift in focus in the corporate sector to conditions and behaviours of non-executive directors being indicators of board effectiveness (Roberts, McNulty & Stiles, 2005; Higgs, 2003). The criteria included the behavioural characteristics identified by Leblanc and Gillies (2005) for effectiveness of an individual director, namely collaborative, consensus driven and persuasive.

Table 13.2

Individual Councillor Evaluation Criteria

Meeting attendance
Preparation for meetings
Time and attention to responsibilities
Relevant experience
Effectiveness of contributions to discussions
Weight accorded contributions by other Councillors
Contributions to strategy
Contributions to committee work
Listening
Relations with other Councillors and executive
Attendance at School events
Conflicts of interest

The Headmaster, although a non-voting member of Council, was not invited to complete either of the questionnaires. It was assumed that applicable feedback from the Headmaster would ‘filter through’ to the Chairman and would emerge through the Headmaster’s performance review process (Field notes). However, excluding the Headmaster from the process was a potential loss of valuable information. Research has indicated that a Chief Executive Officer is in a ‘better position than individual board members to assess the diverse contributions of entire boards and less susceptible to self-evaluation bias’ (Green & Griesinger, 1996, p. 399). Excluding the Headmaster also further removed him from a role as a member of Council. His participation in the process could assist help him and other Councillors develop a more sophisticated view of position on Council. The appraisal process did not specifically assess ‘faith’ elements, such as the constitutional requirement of Councillors to support the aims and vision of the Church.

The evaluation for 2010 accorded with my observations of Council at work and comments made by Councillors during the interviews. In particular, the evaluation identified the functioning of the Education Committee as an area of concern, the need for continued commitment by Councillors to meeting and event attendance and Councillors support for the evaluation process. The individual evaluation of Councillor D highlighted some concerns with the impact on the dynamics of the group by his *habitus* and his ability to commit the time required as discussed in Chapter 10. As observed by Councillor Y,

Look, I think Council works pretty well. We can do some things better ... but we know what they are and we are talking about them. (Interview #2, p. 12)

All Councillors perceived Council to have a high level of effectiveness, reflecting research by Balarin *et al.* (2008), which found that generally UK school governors thought their governing bodies worked effectively. Although my research project was not concerned with determining the effectiveness of Council, it is worth noting that in the Balarin research governing bodies deemed effective by their governors shared the characteristics listed in Table 13.3.

Table 13.3

List of Characteristics for Effective School Governing Bodies

Clear understanding of their role and responsibilities
Shared vision of what the school is trying to achieve
Good attendance at meetings
Good communication
Work to a clearly structured agenda
Effectively chaired
Meetings where members feel able to speak their minds
Supplied with good quality, relevant information

I observed all of these features in the functioning of Council and the Finance Committee. The Education Committee was lacking most of these attributes and the impact on the functioning of the Committee was evident as discussed in this chapter.

Councillors were supported to undertake professional development activities, such as courses for board members. The evaluation process provided a further opportunity for Councillors to explore capacity building opportunities. The Church, through the Schools Commission, encouraged members of School Councils to undertake formal study and qualifications in theology, as ‘opportunity for theological study will add to the culture of our schools’ (Field notes, Council meeting). This was an example of the Church exerting influence in the governance of its schools. By shaping the composition of School Councils’ and structuring their professional development, the Church could strengthen the alignment between Councillors and the Church’s mission.

Conclusion

This chapter considered how Council viewed its role and how it functioned in its governing tasks. Council had a clearly defined role, supported by documents and well developed processes. The governance framework in place at the School are supported by the normative literature as high quality and appropriate to support effective governance (ISQ, 2012; Land, 2002; Price, 2005; Devarics & O’Brien, 2011). Effective governance however requires more than statements and documented processes. The practice of governance is complex, and Council, in order to respond to the School’s contextual and stakeholder factors, diverged from the text book and involved itself at a deeper level in operational issues than might be expected from a governing body operating with a ‘best practice’ approach to governance⁵⁸. Council was comfortable doing this, although it caused tension with the

⁵⁸ Reflecting an emerging trend in the governance of for profit organizations to a concept of 'shared accountability', Deloitte (2009).

Headmaster. The relationship between Council and the Headmaster was characterized by interdependent 'control' and 'trust' mechanisms, which empowered whilst maintaining oversight. The data revealed the significance of the roles of the Chairman and the Headmaster for the governance of the School and the implications for governance from the duality of the Headmaster's role as Educator-in-Chief and Chief Executive Officer. The data also showed that Council's standing Committees were an important part of Council's functioning and the significant difference between the effectiveness of the two Committees. There were a number of reasons for the lower level of functioning of the Education Committee, including a lack of task specific capacity within the Committee membership, ineffective chairing of the Committee (capacity related), and reluctance from the Headmaster to support the Committee (conceptually and the way it functioned). Council formally reviewed its own performance annually; a practice supported as good practice by the governance literature, and perceived itself as an effective and self scrutinizing body. However, the Headmaster was excluded from the performance assessment process with the resulting potential loss of valuable information for Council.

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Chapter 14

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this research was to present and explain the role and functioning of the governing body of a leading Australian independent school (the School), based on extensive data collected at the School, through attendance at School Council and Committee meetings and formal School events, interviews with members of School Council, the Council Secretary and the Executive Director of the Schools Commission, and analysis of relevant documents. Succinctly, the research was a study of the governance of an independent all boys' school. Although there is a significant body of normative literature on the role, processes and practices of governing bodies in different organizational contexts, including schools, there have been a limited number of empirical investigations into the functioning of school governing bodies, and these have been principally in the context of government owned schools in other jurisdictions, such as the United Kingdom, the United States and New Zealand. Studies on independent schools in Australia are virtually nonexistent, although there is some limited survey data in a 2008 ISCA report and several doctoral theses exploring school governance (Kefford, 1990; Beavis, 1992; Kloeden, 1999; and Payne, 2004). There is a need for substantive research on the role and functioning of boards in an independent school context. Such research can inform the discourse and understanding of governance of all schools, including government and Catholic schools.

This study required methodological approaches that facilitated access to observational and interview data and a framework within which to interpret and present the multiple facets of the governance task. A case study of the School provided rich data from interviews, observations and documents over a complete cycle of the school council's governing work, which corresponded to one school year. Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' of *habitus*, *capitals*, *field* ('logics of practice') and Schein's complementary conception of organizational culture, provided the analytic tools that assisted the identification and critical examination of generating structures within the social system of the School Council and the development of a deep functional understanding of the way governance practices are constituted in an independent school and their social and cultural effects.

A number of important findings emerged from the data which have been explored in the preceding chapters. These findings are significant in addressing the research questions and have implications for theory and practice. A summation of the principal findings is incorporated in the following section which specifically addresses the research questions.

Research Question 1 - What is the role and authority of the School Council?

Council was constituted by the Church to act as the governing body of the School under a constitution authorized by a canon of the Church, even though the School was not a corporate entity and the Church was, at law, the governing body, owner of the School's assets and employer of the School's staff. In recent years, Council's intention was to govern like a board of directors of a corporate sector entity, as under the Chairman's leadership a corporate governance model was considered to provide a 'best practice' approach to governance of the School.

Council framed its role within the parameters of the School constitution, and adopted corporate governance documents, such as charters, to functionally describe its role and responsibilities. Those responsibilities encompassed the appointment of a Headmaster, determination of the School's strategic direction, monitoring of the School's performance, and protection of the ethos of the School and the interests of its stakeholders. The Headmaster was delegated authority for the leadership and day to day management of the School. Council expected the Headmaster to be accountable to Council for this delegated authority and Council exercised its monitoring capacity to assess the proper and effective exercise of that authority. The strategy of the School, as an educational services business, was determined by Council in collaboration with the Headmaster and his executive team and was the foundation for structures, operational plans and processes within the School. The authority conferred on Council by the Church provided the scope for Council to make holistic decisions concerning the School, including for example, asset acquisition and capital expenditure.

The Church, as owner of the School and other diocesan schools, has set the mission, and through its Schools Commission, has expected Council to give an account of the articulation of that mission within the School. Council was afforded latitude to articulate and operationalize the mission, although the extent of this 'freedom' was a matter of contention with the Church from time to time. Council was cognizant that the parameters of its authority as a governing body could be effectively modified by the Church through a number of mechanisms, including policy statements, directions and control of the composition of Council. Council, through the Chairman, worked assiduously to maintain the broadest scope of authority for Council. Council levered their collective skills and experience, and particularly their corporate knowledge and standing in the field of commerce, and the School's success as an educational services business, to justify the level of authority conferred. Council had, over a long period of time, successfully managed the School's finances, risks, compliance, capital expenditure and assets, and forward enrolments were strong. The School employed sophisticated approaches from the private sector to manage communications with key stakeholders and effectively marketed the School

to stakeholders and the broader community. At the Schools Commission level of the Church there was recognition that the Church did not have the educational or administrative expertise to 'run the School'. The perception that the School had a 'best practice' approach to governance and the willingness of the Chairman to engage at many levels within the Church has maintained Council's broad authority.

Research Question 2 - Does the Council see itself as accountable for the authority it holds? If so, to whom, why and how?

Council thought it should be responsive and accountable to a core group of stakeholders of the School; namely the students (present and past), parents, staff and the Church. Council recognized that the interests of these stakeholders had different foci. The Church expected delivery of the Church's mission, while preserving the School's resources. Staff expected a fulfilling and safe environment in which to provide exemplary educational services. Students and parents expected a holistic educational journey in a supportive pastoral environment and the creation of networks and opportunities for the future. Old boys expected a continuing 'home' in the School community and the preservation of the School's ethos. Council recognized each of these expectations and their legitimate place in the life of the School and considered they could be accommodated within the premise of the School as an educational institution of distinction.

Council's conception of accountability for the authority conferred upon it to govern the School was a significant generating structure for the governing practices of Council. Accountability of Council to these stakeholders informed Council's expression of its role in its governance documents and guided Council discussions and decisions. Communication with these stakeholders was the principal means for Council to discharge its accountability, and included an extensive and sophisticated range of formal and informal mechanisms to provide information and seek feedback on the work of the School and its performance. School performance was multi-faceted; and those aspects identified as important by stakeholders, through the communication mechanisms, were measured and reported against.

There was tension in the relationship between the Church as owner and the School. This tension was at the interface of the role of the Church as owner and the role of Council as governors of the School. The Church saw the School as part of the Church and predominantly as a 'faith community'. The focus of the Church was narrow; religious education classes, opportunities for chapel and the Eucharist, and teachers and Councillors being of the faith. In contrast, the focus of Council was broad: scholarship, co-curricular activities, pastoral care, quality teaching staff, forward

enrolments, risk management and compliance, funding, capital expenditure and asset management, alumni, stakeholder management and so on. Influences on the School from the business field and the field of school education and nonprofit organizations needed to be accommodated or countered by Council so as to preserve and enhance the School as an educational institution with a distinct ethos with heritage-conserving traditions. Council understood the mission set by the Church for the School, and articulated and operationalized it in a way that it considered could be accommodated within the wider construct of the School. The expression of the mission in the School was a values based philosophy which imbued all aspects of School life. In this way the School could ‘live the values’ of the faith and still cater to a predominantly secular clientele with high expectations of academic, co-curricular and pastoral care programs, staff quality, excellent facilities and future careers. The Church, principally through its Schools Commission, at times challenged Council to justify its approach. The Chairman and the Headmaster, through continual interaction with influential members of the Church, worked to explain and maintain the School's approach. This required participating in the life of the Church and leveraging cultural and social capitals to build relationships and standing that would support constructive and often difficult conversations, and advocacy concerning the School. The Church’s view of the School as a faith community also created expectations of the School to participate broadly in the life of the Church. The School responded positively to this expectation, principally through student and staff participation in Church service activities. The School also hosted Church activities and supported other diocesan schools by sharing knowledge and processes. There was an emerging expectation from the Church, based on their view of the School as a part of the whole, that the School’s financial strength could be levered in support of the Church’s objectives, such as the development of more diocesan schools. Expectations of this nature focused attention on the divergence of interests of the Church as owner and the School’s predominantly secular clientele purchasing an educational service, and the critical role for Council in meditating the different interests of the stakeholder groups.

Council recognized the significance of a broader range of ‘stakeholders’, including government, to the wellbeing of the School and included several of these broader groups within its strategy for meaningful stakeholder engagement. Interestingly, however, Council did not see itself as accountable to either the Federal or State government for the work or performance of the School or its standing as an educational institution. Council's frame was that the School was a successful educational institution governed by a group of skilled and experienced people.

Notwithstanding the changing context for education and role of governments in funding, testing, accreditation, and curriculum, Council had defined governments out of a significant role relating to school education because governments were seen as not needed, except as a passive provider of funds.

Research Question 3 - What are the factors that have determinative influence on the way the school council undertakes its work and why do those factors have determinative influence?

The factors that have been found to have determinative influence on the functioning of Council included a complex interplay of context, stakeholder expectations, the *habitus* and *capitals* of Councillors, the cultural norms of Council and the School, and the ‘logics of practice’ of the *fields* in which Council was located.

The rich history and traditions of the School, metropolitan location, classification as an independent school, and ownership by the Church provided context for Council’s governance of the School. These contextual factors were all determinative influences on the functioning of Council. The one hundred year history of the School generated rich traditions which brought distinction and exerted a strong influence on the culture of the School. The metropolitan location of the School facilitated access to higher socio-economic families and access to centres of government and commerce, several leading tertiary educational institutions, and a broad range of community, cultural and sporting events. The School's classification as an independent school influenced its structure and imposed a significant regulatory burden; however, the School was well resourced with professional staff and effective systems and processes, and able to respond appropriately to this challenge.

The culture of the School exerted a determinative influence on Council. A significant cultural norm, laid down by the School’s founder, was that the fundamental purpose of the School was to build students’ character. In a contemporary policy context of pressure on academic attainment and increasing competition for forward enrolments, Council was endeavouring to accommodate a commitment to superior scholarship within this cultural construct. While the School had served its students well in the past, as they ventured primarily into the world of business, supported by the network that being an old boy and having played some rugby assured, the School now required a more sophisticated worldview of providing a contemporary education so as to endure as a highly regarded educational institution. Council wanted the School to lift its academic performance, whilst maintaining its ‘making of the man’ vision and a top ranking in the interschool sporting competition. Council was concerned that working towards this goal would adversely impact the ethos of the School. In contrast, the professionalization of sport in the School over the last several years, including the

offering of sporting scholarships and a goal of premiership wins, had been easily accommodated within the same cultural construct. It appeared that sporting success was more aligned to the cultural construct than superior academic attainment. This was consistent with what was valued by many of the old boys, particularly those involved in the Old Boys' Association; namely, the networks and sporting success of the School.

Ownership by the Church was a determinative influence, as the Church, through a number of formal and informal mechanisms, worked to strengthen the School's expression of the mission of the Church. The Church's focus on the School as a 'community of faith' created tensions at Council and executive level. Council's worldview was that the School must appropriately respond to the concurrent influences of the economic field, the State field and the fields of school education, religion, and nonprofit organizations, in order to maintain and enhance its standing as an academic institution. The School catered for a predominantly secular clientele seeking a broad liberal education, not a religious one. Council's rearticulation of the mission through the filter of the School's ethos and culture produced a values based educational proposition based on Christian principles.

Other stakeholders who were a determinative influence on Council comprised current students, parents, staff and old boys. As discussed in research question two, the expectations of these groups informed Council deliberations as Council accepted accountability to them for the School's performance. Council also appreciated that the social capital of these stakeholder groups strengthened the School as an institution and as a learning environment.

The influence of Councillors' *habitus* and *capitals* and their field positioning on the way Council governed is explained in the response to research question five below.

Research Question 4 – How and why does the School Council carry out its governing task?

Council members saw their role in terms of governing as guardians; guardians of the School's ethos, resources, and the interests of the Church, students (past and present), parents and staff. As guardians, Council had a clear sense of accountability to these groups and the governing task was framed by this accountability. Council's approach, together with the Headmaster's approach, to these governing tasks was grounded in the socio-educational focus of the field of schools; although Council sought a 'best practice' corporate governance approach to their work as governors grounded in the competitive and strategic aspects of the economic field. The study found that Council and the Headmaster were effective in steering a course through these potentially conflicting approaches. Council recognized that the purpose of the organization should inform the way the organization was governed and were conscious they were governing an educational institution.

Council had implemented an effective and sophisticated governance framework based on a corporate approach to governance. This approach, whilst providing solid foundations of structures, policies and processes, was moderated by the specificities of school governance. Council responded to these specificities through a model of 'shared accountability'. The Headmaster was delegated the authority for the day to day management of the School; however there was a 'blurring' of the line between the role of Council and the role of the Headmaster. Council justified this approach on the basis that schools 'were different', because of their context, the complexity of their stakeholders, and the embryonic stage of development of Headmasters' as chief executives. Council functioned at a deeper operational level than is supported by the standard governance literature, although this operational involvement was usually framed in the context of matters pertaining to the ethos of the School or stakeholder engagement and thus within the ambit of Council's role, as articulated in its governance charter. Council's approach created tensions at the interface that were sensitively and effectively managed by the Chairman. The Chairman continually mediated between Council and the Headmaster so that there could be a shared approach to roles and responsibilities and a shared accountability for the outcomes. This model required goal congruence and relationships based on trust. Notwithstanding that the Headmaster was a non-voting member of Council, his position in the field of Council reflected his accountability to Council for the authority he had been delegated. The contestation between the governance role of Council and the management role of the Headmaster reflects a universal theme in the corporate governance and nonprofit governance literature, namely, the tension at the interface of board and management, leading to a provisional resolution through the notion of 'shared accountability' and governance practices that are responsive to the specificities of each organization.

Council's perception of and response to the dual nature of the Headmaster's role (that is, as Chief Executive Officer and Educator-in-Chief) was a significant finding in the study. Contemporary school leadership, while grounded in the field of school education, has responded to cross field effects and embraced the notion of the head being accountable for the business aspects of schooling, in addition to the educational aspects. Some members of Council, notably the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman, gave greater weight to the chief executive aspect of the role over the educator-in-chief role. This was evident, for example, in the Chairman's view that his own corporate experience equipped him for a role as a school head. Council's collective experience had been that most school leaders came to the role with little preparation for the chief executive function. The Chairman responded to this by prioritizing professional development activities for the Headmaster that focused on the chief

executive aspect of his role. Although Council recognized the Headmaster as educator-in-chief, Council members saw they had an active role in relation to pedagogical and curricular issues, principally through Council's Education Committee. This created a tension between Council and the Headmaster, primarily due to the lack of capacity of Councillors to engage fully on educational matters, the Headmaster's view that Council should rely on his expertise as educator-in-chief, and the ineffective chairing of the Education Committee. The tension at the interface of the Committee and the Headmaster developed into a significant governance issue for Council to which the Chairman responded with several initiatives, including a rewrite of the terms of reference for the Committee and revised processes. These initiatives did not respond to the critical issue of the capacity of the Committee to fulfill its governance role.

Council primarily carried out its governing tasks at Council and Committee meetings through discussion and decision making. Meetings were an effective, although intense, mechanism for deliberation and decision making on a broad array of matters concerning the School. Council's mode of decision making by consensus required particular meeting processes which responded to the *habitus* of Councillors and the social dynamics of the group. Communication norms of open and respectful communication complemented Councils' decision making mode. Leadership by the Chairman during meetings, to create the conditions for each Councillor to contribute fully, was identified as a critical factor for effective meetings. Council was also engaged in governing tasks through its interactions with stakeholders and in activities in the State field and the fields of school education, nonprofit organizations and religion. These tasks required Councillors to represent the School in different contexts and respond to different views and expectations concerning the School. The Chairman had a leadership role in representation and advocacy for the School in the fields of school education and religion. He navigated these fields adroitly, keeping abreast of trends and issues, maintaining open lines of communication, and always willing to engage, consult and share knowledge and experience.

The composition of Council created important links with stakeholders, such as members who were parents or old boys or who were nominated to Council by stakeholder groups, such as the Old Boys' Association. Stakeholders, as members of Council, created specific governance issues especially concerning the potential for conflicts of interest. Councillors were required to consider interests broader than their own stakeholder group and manage any conflicts of interest. Similar issues are common in many nonprofit organizations which seek to have stakeholders represented on their governing bodies.

Council viewed itself as an effective and self-scrutinizing governing body. It evaluated its performance as a whole, and the performance of individual Councillors when being considered for reappointment, and reflected on those evaluations to identify ways to enhance the governance of the School.

Research Question 5 – How do members of the School Council relate to each other, the school community and the external world in relation to the governing task?

Councillors' interactions with each other in the social space of Council and with stakeholders were influenced by cultural norms and the *habitus* and *capitals* of members of Council and their positioning in the field of Council. Councillors who were old boys held the dominant positions in the field of Council. This cultural capital was valued over all others as old boys were the 'keepers of the code', the people with the School's ethos and culture embedded into their psyche. The Chairman of Council therefore was required to be an old boy and there was deference to the views of old boy Councillors on matters pertaining to the School's ethos. The old boy Councillors were there to ensure the School continued as a boys-only educational institution, which would shape men out of boys and forge friendships and networks that would assure future opportunities and support. An essential component of the old boy Councillors' conception of character development was participation and success in the prestigious interschool sporting competition. Council supported the professionalization of sport in the School, as evidenced by their approval of an extensive sporting scholarship programme and capital expenditure to provide superior sporting facilities on campus. However, Council was unsure how to accommodate a goal of superior scholarship and academic performance within this conception of the 'making of the man'. Significant external contextual changes, generating an environment of hyper competition in academic attainment amongst leading schools, were exerting pressure on the School to lift its academic performance. Council was concerned that responding to this pressure could change the ethos of the School, yet there was an absence of in-depth discussion at Council to facilitate a greater understanding of the issue and the development of a strategic response.

In addition to old boy representation, Council aimed to have a balance of skills and experience in Council, identifying financial, governance, business and educational experience; although privileging corporate skill sets over educational expertise, which preferenced a prioritization of tasks that reflected a corporate approach to governance. Council lacked the capacity to effectively use existing educational expertise on Council. Although Council constituted an Education Committee and wanted to be engaged on educational issues, the outcomes were not very successful. An ineffective

Committee structure and leadership, and an inability to respond to the tensions at the interface of the role of Council on educational matters and the role of the Headmaster, created a dysfunctional microcosm in what otherwise was a high functioning Council. This was a lost opportunity, as effective use of educational capacity on Council could have strengthened the governance model.

Councillors' *habitus* and effect of field positioning was moderated by cultural norms informing how Council would function as a group (dimensions of internal integration) and how Councillors would respond to the external environment and in their relationships with stakeholders (dimensions of external adaptation). Council's view of its role and its practice as a Council was informed by these shared cultural norms which had a high level of congruence with Council's espoused beliefs and values and which valued and supported the ethos of the School. For example, the cultural norms of open and respectful communication and consensus decision making moderated the dominant cultural capitals of old boy Councillors and Councillors with strong personalities and physical presence. The strength of Council's shared underlying assumptions about the School was evident in the response of Council to a Councillor posing a question in a Council meeting on whether the School should continue as boys' only in the preparatory grades. The question was taken as a challenge to the very essence of the School and the Councillor was sanctioned decisively and effectively. Councillors engaged frequently with the School community, in both informal and formal settings, and were expected to be visible and accessible. Stakeholders were considered by Council as important members of the School community and interactions between the School and stakeholders were valued. Council expected interactions with stakeholders to be open, transparent and respectful. Connections of Council members to the School community were seen as an important source of information about the life of the School and seen as assisting Council to monitor stakeholder views and expectations. This cultural norm was a significant dimension of external adaptation as Council had learned that multiple sources of information about the School community and the broader external environment were important to its effective functioning. Council did not wish to rely on the Headmaster as the 'single source of truth' about the life and functioning of the School. The Chairman engaged with stakeholders weekly, attending events, meeting with stakeholders and liaising with the Headmaster on stakeholder issues. Councillors also engaged with the external world, principally in the fields of school education and religion, and were expected to leverage their capitals to promote and assist the School. The Chairman had a specific role in representing the School across the fields as discussed in research question four above.

Gender was a subtext that emerged from the data. The School, specializing in boys' education, was an environment shaped and dominated by men. It had only been in the last four years that there had been any women in the School's senior executive group. In that time, two women had been appointed, as the Business Manager and the Head of the Senior School, representing 28% of this group. Council, once the sole province of old boys and male clergy, had 25% of its voting members' women, that is, two of eight. In this regard, based on statistics of women's representation on Australian ASX 200 companies, the School would rank as a high achieving organization (AICD, 2012). Notwithstanding the gender diversity, the environment was still moderated by how men saw the world. The cultural norm of respectful communication and decisions by consensus was an aid to more effective group processes with a diverse group; however, overall the men in the group valued more highly the capitals of the male Councillors. The cultural capitals that were most highly valued within Council were (i) significant corporate experience and recognition in the corporate world, and (ii) being an old boy. This advantaged four of the five men on Council. Although one of the men was not an old boy, he was a very significant figure in the corporate world, a parent and a donor. The remaining man on Council compensated for his lack of corporate and old boy status by his standing as the Archbishop's nominee to Council and as a member of the clergy.

The women were at a significant disadvantage from the outset and needed to have different forms of cultural capital to receive a level of recognition within Council. Councillor S's educational expertise was not as highly valued as the business expertise held by the men and was diminished by her gendered *habitus* and the past unsuccessful working relationships between former Councillors with educational expertise and the Headmaster. Councillor F had successfully leveraged a form of feminine cultural capital to position herself in a more dominant position in the field. She also had the overt support of the Chairman and held a 'leadership' position on Council through her role as chair of the Education Committee.

The *habitus* of the men and their communication style also strengthened their capitals and position in the field. All of the men spoke confidently and authoritatively in Council meetings. They often referenced their comments in the context of other important environments in which they held a significant position and they reinforced with their Council colleagues their capitals and positioning in other fields. Councillors S and F had communication styles that were different from those of the men and they did not generally have the same amount of vocal space in Council meetings compared to the men. The cultural norms of Council, which supported collaborative decision making and open and respectful communication, supported the communication style of Councillors S and F, and was

significant in moderating the impact of the *habitus* and cultural capitals of the men in Council discussions.

Implications for theory and practice

I acknowledge that the conceptual framework chosen in this study to illuminate independent school governance does not cover all aspects or perspectives of governance. Every organization and its governing body can be framed in many ways. The data and my own experiences as a school governor led me to this frame selection, which I believe offers a useful, practical and insightful way to understand independent school governance. This study adds to the very limited research that has been undertaken on governance in independent schools and particularly at the individual school level. The structure of governance is broadly similar across independent schools and this case study offers knowledge that will be relevant to other independent schools.

Independent school governance must respond to complex contextual and relationship factors. Governance of a school as an educational organization also requires practices that create the right 'social and cultural conditions that engage young people in their learning' (Ranson, 2012, p. 42). The specificities of school governance are best served by a shared approach to roles and responsibilities and a shared accountability for outcomes, supported by capable, critical and committed Councillors working collaboratively and collegiately.

The interviews conducted with members of School Councils of 'like schools,' conducted subsequent to the case study, 'confirmed' the research findings from the case, particularly issues around the specificities of educational governance, the nature of accountabilities, and the context of school ownership. Further, School Councils are now a common feature in public school governance. Although they have less autonomy than School Councils of independent schools, elements of their role and accountability and the influence of context, culture and stakeholders on their functioning can also be informed by this case study.

An implication arising from this study is that independent schools need to develop their own model of governance; a model that enables them to be contemporary learning environments, while reflexively responding to their special context, ethos and stakeholder expectations. It is these elements that build community and a welcome place for every student that passes through their doors. Governing bodies of independent schools and schools more generally can learn from the governance principles and practices of the corporate and nonprofit sectors; however, they should not be slavish followers as many of the 'best practice' principles and guidelines are designed for a different world and not supported by empirical research. Governance practices founded in a conception of 'shared

accountability' offer a means within which to respond to the specificities of school governance, including the complexities of their context and stakeholders. Knowledge of the underlying assumptions about a school and its governing body can inform governing practices for all school councils. 'Making the familiar strange', that is, by disclosing and making obvious the assumptions upon which practices are built, school councils can be consciously critical of their governance role and practices. Other studies could extend the scope of this research, for example by seeking the views of stakeholders. A comparative study could take these findings and explore their relevance for other independent schools through further case studies or the use of quantitative research methods, such as a survey of independent school governors. The choice of research method for this research and the methodological issues addressed during the study could also contribute to the ongoing development of qualitative research approaches to educational research.

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APPENDICES

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Appendix A Table of Council and Committee Meetings Attended 2010

Month	Council	Finance Sub-Committee (10 scheduled meetings)	Education Sub-Committee (9 scheduled meetings)	Investment Sub-Committee (4 scheduled meetings)	Child Care Sub-Committee (commenced 2010)
January	x	no meeting	no meeting		
February	√	x	x		
March	√	√	x	√	
April	√	√	meeting cancelled		
May	√	√	√	√	x
June	no meeting	no meeting	no meeting		
July	√	√	√		√
August	√	√	meeting cancelled	√	
September	√	√	√		√
October	√	√	√		
November	√	√	x	√	
December	no meeting	x	no meeting		

Appendix B Table of Interviews of Councillors

Person	Position	Dates of Interviews		
		Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3
Chairman	Chairman of Council	3 March 2010	14 April 2010	28 February 2011
Deputy Chairman	Deputy Chairman and Chair Finance and Investment Committees	2 March 2010	10 November 2010	
Councillor D	Council Member and Member Finance Committee	16 March 2010	28 October 2010	
Councillor F	Council Member and Chair Education Committee	11 March 2010	28 October 2010	
Councillor Y	Council Member and Member Finance Committee	11 March 2010	23 November 2010	
Councillor S	Council Member and Member Education Committee	24 March 2010	28 October 2010	
Councillor C	Council Member, Chair Child Care Centre Committee and Member Education Committee	8 March 2010	6 December 2010	
Councillor R *	Council Member and Member Education Committee		24 November 2010	
Headmaster	Non-voting Council Member and Headmaster	12 March 2010	26 October 2010	

*Councillor R joined Council in September 2010 and was therefore only interviewed once

Appendix C Interview Questions Interview #1 Council Members

Interview #1 - Questions to Guide Discussion

1. How would you describe your role as a member of the School Council?
2. How would you describe the purpose and role of the School Council?
3. Do you think members of the School Council have a shared view of the Council's purpose and role?
4. Who do you see having a significant or determining influence on Councils' view, other than members of the Council?
5. Do you think the School Council's view of purpose and role is supported by key stakeholders?
6. How would you describe the governance framework within which the School Council seeks to carry out its work (ie purpose / role)?
7. What do you think are the external and internal factors that enable or constrain the work of the School Council?

Appendix D Interview Questions Interview #1 Council Secretary

Interview #1 - Questions to Guide Discussion

1. How would you describe your role as Secretary to the School Council?
2. How would you describe the purpose and role of the School Council?
3. Do you think members of the School Council have a shared view of the Council's purpose and role?
4. Who do you see having a significant or determining influence on Councils' view, other than members of the Council?
5. Do you think the School Council's view of purpose and role is supported by key stakeholders?
6. How would you describe the governance framework within which the School Council seeks to carry out its work (ie purpose / role)?
7. What do you think are the external and internal factors that enable or constrain the work of the School Council?

Appendix E Interview Questions Interview Executive Director Schools Commission

Questions to Guide Discussion

1. How would you describe the role of the Schools Commission?
2. How does the Schools Commission view the School?
3. Does the Schools Commission have views on the School Council, and in particular the role of School Council, its composition and its relationship with the Schools Commission?
4. Do the roles of the School Commission and the School Council overlap in any way?
5. Is there a relationship between the School and the Church separate to the Schools Commission?

Appendix F Areas nominated for discussion in second round interviews with Council Members

- Council composition and succession planning for Council
- Role and functioning of council sub-committee on education
- Board performance assessment
- Areas where Council members think Council could do things differently

Appendix G Abbreviated Instructions to Transcriber

It is important for qualitative research that transcripts be verbatim accounts of what transpired in the interview; that is, they should not be edited or otherwise "tidied up" to make them "sound better."

Pauses	Denote short pauses during talking by a series of dots (. . .), the length of which depends on the amount of time elapsed (e.g., two dots for less than half a second, three dots for one second, four dots for one and a half seconds). Denote longer pauses with the word pause in parentheses. Use "(pause)" for two- to three-second breaks and "(long pause)" to indicate pauses of four or more seconds.
Laughing, coughing, etc.	Indicate in parentheses; for example, "(coughs)," "(sigh)," "(sneeze)." Use "(laughing)" to denote one person, "(laughter)" to denote several laughing.
Interruptions	Indicate when someone's speech is broken off midsentence by including a hyphen (-) at the point where the interruption occurs (e.g., "What do you-").
Overlapping speech	Use a hyphen to indicate when one speaker interjects into the speech of another, include the speech of the other with "(overlapping)," then return to where the original speaker was interrupted (if he or she continues). For example: R: He said that was impos- I: (overlapping) Who, Bob? R: No, Larry.
Garbled speech	Flag words that are not clear with square brackets and question mark, if guessing what was said (e.g., "At that, Harry just [doubled? glossed?] over"). Use x's to denote passages that cannot be deciphered at all (number of x's should denote approximate number of words that cannot be deciphered). For example, "Gina went xxxxx xxxxx xxxxx, and then [came? went?] home."
Emphasis	Use caps to denote strong emphasis; for example, "He did WHAT?" (Do not use boldface or underlining because such formatting is often lost when text files are imported into qualitative analysis software programs.)
Held sounds	Repeat the sounds that are held, separated by hyphens. If they are emphasized, capitalize them as well. For example, "No-o-o-o, not exactly" or "I was VER-r-r-y-y happy."
Paraphrasing others	When an interviewee assumes a voice that indicates he or she is parodying what someone else said or is expressing an inner voice in the interviewee's head, use quotation marks and/or indicate with "(mimicking voice)." For example: R: Then you know what he came out with? He said (mimicking voice) "I'll be damned if I'm going to let YOU push ME around." And I thought to myself: "I'll show you!" But then a little voice inside said "Better watch out for Linda." Sure enough, in she came with that "I'm in control now" air of hers.

Appendix H Table of Identifiers and Contextual Characteristics for Stage 2

Interview Participants

Council Member Identifier	School Identifier	Number of Contextual Characteristics from List A shared with Case Study School
Councillor ST	A	11
Councillor GH	B	11
Councillor MB	C	10 (Co-educational until year 9)
Councillor KL	D	9 (No religious affiliation and years 5 – 12 only)
Councillor VP	E	8 (No religious affiliation, girls only with enrolments slightly less than 1000)
Councillor QO	F	9 (Girls only with enrolments slightly less than 1000)

Appendix I Areas nominated for discussion with Stage 2 Interview Participants

- The governance framework for the school
- The role of the Council vis-à-vis the Principal
- Council engagement with stakeholders
- Role and functioning of council sub-committee on education

Appendix J Ethical Clearance

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION Response to Application for Ethical Clearance

Applicant Name

Sally Anne Majella Pitkin

Principal Supervisor:

Bob Lingard

Applicant email address: sally.pitkin@uconn.edu

Participants/Recruitment (Qs 1-3) -
Sufficient information provided.**Project Summary/Research Plan (Qs 4-5)**
Excellent.**Ethical Considerations (Qs 6-17)**
Clearly articulated ethical considerations.**Consent Form/Information Sheet**
Well written.**Questionnaire**
NA**Gatekeepers**
NA**Presentation (correct form, typed, error free)**

Good. One minor error in section 17 – contribution should be replaced with contribute. However, information sheet and consent forms are without error.

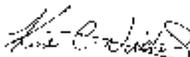
Comments & Recommendation

This application is approved only with regards to the currently proposed research plan and data collection strategies. If there are any amendments to the research plan or data collection strategies requested by the Confirmation of Candidature panel, a second (additional) application requesting an amendment to this request for ethical clearance will need to be submitted to the UQSE Research Ethics Committee.

Please note on your forms that the term 'principal advisor' rather than 'project supervisor' should be used.

(Signed) Chair of UQSE Research Ethics Committee:

Kim Nichols Chair of UQSE Research Ethics Committee



Date: 8/2/10

Appendix K Table of Core Values for Australian Schools

CORE VALUES FOR AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS

1. **Care and Compassion**
(Care for self and others)
2. **Doing Your Best**
(Seek to accomplish something worthy and admirable, try hard, pursue excellence)
3. **Fair Go**
(Pursue and protect the common good where all people are treated fairly for a just society)
4. **Freedom**
(Enjoy all the rights and privileges of Australian citizenship free from unnecessary interference or control, and stand up for the rights of others)
5. **Honesty and Trustworthiness**
(Be honest, sincere and seek the truth)
6. **Integrity**
(Act in accordance with principles of moral and ethical conduct, ensure consistency between words and deeds)
7. **Respect**
(Treat others with consideration and regard, respect another person's point of view)
8. **Responsibility**
(Be accountable for one's own actions, resolve differences in constructive, non-violent and peaceful ways, contribute to society and to civic life, take care of the environment)
9. **Understanding, Tolerance and Inclusion**
(Be aware of others and their cultures, accept diversity within a democratic society, being included and including others)

Source: DEST (2007)